

Notes on

The Good Message, as attributed to Markus

Authorship and Date

The earliest direct mention of the authorship of this account of Jesus' life is that of Papias, who probably wrote prior to 130 CE. Papias' original account no longer exists, but he is quoted by Eusebius as having written that, "Indeed Markus, since he was the Peter's translator, wrote accurately, but not in order, the things either said or done by the Lord as much as Peter remembered."

This appeared to identify the author with Johannes Markus, a man who was also a companion of Paulus at one time. There were attempts during the Second Century to identify accounts of Jesus' life with Peter (including the so-called "Gospel of Peter"), so the reference to Markus as Peter's scribe is not surprising. The author is unknown, however, making no mention of anyone called Markus. Linguistic evidence shows that the account includes several embedded Latin words as well as a number of Semitisms. Coupled with the author's reference to the sons of Simon of Kurene and the fact that history wound up associating him with Peter (who is thought to have died in Rome), it is reasonable to believe that the author was a Roman Jew who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah.

The account does mention (ch. 13) the destruction of the temple, in language that indicates that the event had not yet happened. The association with Markus may predate the association with Peter, so that whether or not Peter's memoirs have any connection with Markus it is still quite possible that Johannes Markus was the author. There is no reason to doubt the tradition pointing back to the middle of the first century, perhaps around the time of Peter's death in about 65 CE.

As to the "priority" of the three synoptic accounts, there are quite a few hypotheses. Although the hypotheses of Markan priority are the most popular, there is also good reason to suppose that Markus is secondary, depending at least on Matthaiah's account, and probably on Lukas' as well. I adopt the Matthean priority hypothesis of the synoptics, but the timing of the books will seldom factors into understanding the events.

Structure

Markus abbreviates Matthaiah's account, including specific episodes that advance his comparison of Jesus to Elijah and Elisha, and adding segments that focus the reader on the power of trust.

[Click here](#) to see a brief comparison of themes for Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus. As far as the number of miraculous signs, you will notice that Markus' Jesus performs three times as many miracles as Elijah did. Just as Elisha had a "double" measure of Elijah's spirit, so Jesus has a "triple"

measure. In specific instances where the details warrant comparison, the commentary will also mention how this author shows Jesus to be greater than Elijah (Elisha).

Markus divides the story of Jesus into two parts, separated by a midword. In Part One, Jesus readily identifies himself via various signs and wonders. The midword emphasizes a key element of Markan philosophy: trust. In Part Two, elements of trust are strong, and Jesus seldom works miracles.

BOOK ONE

The beginning of the good message of Anointed Jesus, God's son:

For this author, the beginning of the Messianic story is the transition between John the Baptizer (an antitype of Elijah) and Jesus (an antitype of Elisha); therefore, the story begins with John out in the desert, and with an allusion to Elijah. Already at the commencement, Jesus is referred to as the Anointed One, and by another Messianic title ("God's son").

1:2 *Just as it was written in Isaiah the prophet:*

"Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of your presence," who "will prepare your way." "A voice crying out in the desert, 'Make ready Yahweh's way. Make his paths straight.'"

There are two quotations here. The first, from Mal 3:1, identifies John the Baptizer as the "messenger" whom God would send in advance of the Anointed One. Malachi refers to this messenger as an Elijah figure; thus, for Markus the primary role of John was as the successor to Elijah. This is also borne out in his citation of Isa 40:3. God was about to do something spectacular (in bringing the Messiah), and so John (who lived in the desert) was heralded by Markus as a prophetic forerunner of the Messiah...just as Elijah introduced Elisha.

It happened that John was baptizing in the desert and heralding a baptism of mental change into forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea went out to him, and all the Jerusalemites, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan river, fully acknowledging their sins. And John was clothed in camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and he was eating locusts and wild honey.

John was "heralding." This activity is limited to those who were sent officially by someone great. In this case, God had sent John as a herald. The central subject of John's heralding is given below.

As we also read in the other accounts of John's work, he was calling people to a national reformation. Pointing out that the Messiah was about to come and go, and that God would soon destroy the temple, he urged the people to acknowledge their faults and seek the true teaching. Markus borrows the description of the Baptizer as a prophet from Matthaiah's account.

And he heralded, saying, "The one who is stronger than me is coming after me, the strap of whose sandals I am not enough to bend down and loosen. I am baptizing you in water, but he will baptize you in holy breath."

Markus edits out the context of the Matthean baptizer. There, John had been chastising the religious leaders, and in doing so, he pointed to the destruction of the temple that was to follow the coming of the Messiah. Markus' portrayal of John centers on his Elijah-like role. Here, the subject of his heralding is that he is to pave the way for the Anointed One.

9 And it happened during those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilaiah and was baptized in the Jordan by John. And immediately as he came up from the water, he saw the heavens split open and the Spirit descending to him like a dove. And a voice from the heavens happened: "You are my son, the beloved, in whom I delight."

Markus' account of the baptism of Jesus is briefer than Matthaiah's, making use only of the important transition between John and Jesus. Markus adds a single note about Jesus being from Nazareth. Markus has changed the wording slightly, so that instead of speaking to the crowds, God speaks directly to Jesus -- affirming his anointing to him.

12 And immediately the spirit cast him out into the desert, and he was in the desert for forty days, being tested by the Enemy, and he was among the wild animals, and the messengers served him.

Markus' account basically follows Matthaiah's. However, he uses "the Enemy" as the title rather than "the Accuser" (as in both Matthaiah and Lukas). Also, whereas the others merely indicate that Jesus was hungry during the forty days, Markus adds that God's divine messengers were present, serving Jesus. Markus' account makes no mention of Jesus' hunger. At this point, the author has edited out the details (which do not suit his literary purpose).

14 Now after John had been delivered over, Jesus went into Galilaiah, heralding God's good message and saying that, "The season has been fulfilled, and God's kingdom is near. Change your minds and trust in the good message." And as he was going by the Sea of Galilaiah, he saw Simon and Simon's brother Andreas, casting a dragnet into the sea, for they were fishers. And Jesus said to them, "Come, behind me, and I will make you become fishers of human beings." And immediately, leaving the nets, they followed him. And after going forward a little, he noticed Jacob the son of Zebediah and Johannes his brother. They were also in the ship, repairing the nets. And immediately he called them. And, leaving their father Zebediah in the ship with the hirelings, they followed after him.

We find out a few more details from Matthaiah about Jesus' travels, but Markus is more direct. After the baptizer was in Roman custody, Jesus began to herald a specific message. As with John's message, Jesus' heralding itself takes center stage. What was he saying? Perhaps echoing the transition between Elijah and Elisha, Jesus here repeats and strengthens the message brought by John. John had urged mental change because the Messiah was coming. now that the Anointed One had come, the time "has been fulfilled," and it was necessary for people to trust.

21 *And they went into Kafar-Nahum, and immediately he entered into the gathering on the Sabbath and taught. And they were amazed at his teaching, for he was teaching them as though he had authority, and not as the scribes taught.* According to Matthaiah, the remarks about Jesus teaching "with authority" began with the Sermon on the Mount (see Mt 7:24ff.). Markus collapses the sermon, and Jesus' walking around the region, into what seems to be a single event. Before explaining the principles to his readers, Markus finds it necessary to demonstrate Jesus' identity via various signs. Thus, while Markus indicates the gist of what Jesus has to say, his treatment of the Torah is not found here.

23 *And immediately, there was in their gathering a person with an unclean spirit, and he called out, saying, "What is there between us and you, Jesus, Nazarene? Have you come to destroy us? I know you, who you are: God's holy one." And Jesus censured him, saying, "Be voiceless and come out of him." And the unclean spirit gave him spasms, and it sounded with a loud voice and came out of him. And all people wondered, so as to inquire to themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority? And he directs the unclean spirits, and they listen to him." And the report of him went out immediately everywhere, into the whole countryside surrounding Galilaiah.*

Matthaiah's account does not mention this event, although it can be found in Lukas' (4:31ff.). The wording is close to identical, so one of the two is paraphrasing the other. Jesus' power over unclean spirits was a point of superiority, for neither Elijah nor Elisha had had such authority.

29 *And immediately after leaving the gathering, he went into the household of Simon and Andreas with Jacob and Johannes. Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying down with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he went to her and raised her up, taking hold of her hand. And the fever left her, and she served them.*

Markus' version appears to be a redaction from Lukas' account rather than Matthaiah's here. Matthaiah refers to Simon as "Peter," whereas both Markus and Lukas use "Simon." Markus adds a reference to Peter's brother, Andreas," also mentioning two witnesses to the event -- Jacob and Johannes.

32 *Now after evening happened, when the sun had set, they carried to him all those who had maladies and those who were affected by spirit beings, and the whole city was gathered at the door. And he cured (of various diseases) many who had maladies, and he cast out many spirit beings, and he did not allow the spirit beings to speak, because they knew him.*

Matthaiah's version mentions the role of Jesus as the "suffering servant" from Isaiah, quoting a segment of chapter 53. Markus' version follows Lukas, who indicates that the spirit beings were prevented from publicly identifying Jesus as the Anointed One. Markus adds to Jesus' fame, indicating that "the whole city" was watching him cure people. Markus also appears to separate the spirit beings who left people from (other?) diseases that might have gripped them.

35 *And after getting up very early in the morning, he exited and went out into a desert place, and he prayed there. And Simon and those who were with him were hunting him down, and after finding him, they said to him, "All are seeking you." And he said to them, "Let's go up elsewhere*

into towns around the city, so that I might herald there also. For it is for this reason that I have come out."

Again, Markus continues to follow Lukas' version. Here, Markus adds the detail that Jesus was not merely alone, but that he was praying. In Lukas, it is "the crowds" who were searching for Jesus, but Markus' account explicitly mentions his students. This mention of the students correlates to the close attention paid to Elisha by his student, Gehazi.

And he went into the whole of Galilaiah, heralding in their gatherings, and he was casting out spirit beings. And a leper came to him, calling him aside, kneeling, and saying to him, "If you want, you are able to cleanse me." And he felt compassion, and he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I want it. Be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy went away from him, and he was cleansed. And he agitated him, threw him out immediately, and he said to him, "See to it that you say nothing to anyone. On the contrary, go up and show yourself to the priest and present yourself concerning your cleansing -- do those things that Moses directed, for a testimony to them."

Markus expands Lukas' version again. Instead of merely going into the gatherings of Galilaiah, Markus spells out that he covered the whole territory. As the people trusted, Jesus was also casting out spirit beings. This segue permits Markus to omit the account of the miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5); instead, he continues to the next event -- the cleansing of a leper. Since the cleansing of Na'aman the Syrian was important in the Elijah/Elisha cycle, the cleansing of a leper was also important to Markus. Markus adds a point of emphasis: that Jesus felt compassion toward the leper. Lukas indicates that the word "got out" about Jesus, despite the fact that the leper was supposed to remain quiet. Markus' account returns to Jesus' teachings.

Comparing this cleansing to the healing of Na'aman the Syrian by Elisha (2 Kgs 5:1f.), we see that both lepers believed that God's prophet could heal them. However, whereas Na'aman was reluctant to do as Elisha asked, this leper was healed immediately and did as Jesus asked. Jesus merely spoke, and this man was healed. Na'aman was sent to perform a cleansing ritual. Another healing that might be compared to the curing of Na'aman is the healing of a blind man in Mk 8:22ff.. **45** *Now after exiting, he began to herald many things and to disseminate the message. And so, he was no longer able to enter into the city plainly, but he was outside at desert places. And they came to him from everywhere.*

Lukas says only that Jesus was withdrawing himself to deserted places. Markus adds the reason: Jesus' increasing fame. He also focuses on Jesus' heralding the message, rather than simply his healing people.

2:1 *And after he entered again into Kafar-Nahum after some days, it was reported that he was in a house. And many people were gathered together, and so the house could no longer contain them, nor could the places at the door. And he spoke the message to them.*

And they came, carrying to him a paralyzed person who was being borne by four people. And since they were unable to come near to him on account of the crowd, they unthatched the roof where he was, and, after getting through, they lowered the mat upon which the paralyzed person

was lying. And when Jesus noticed their trust, he said to the paralyzed person, "Child, your sins are forgiven."

Markus' account is longer than either of the others here, so that his additions set up the context of the healing with more detail. The lowering of the paralytic through the roof comes from Lukas, but Markus also indicates that four people were carrying him. All three accounts focus on the trust of the paralyzed man's friends.

6 *Now some of the scribes were sitting there, and they were reasoning in their hearts, "Who is this who speaks this way? He is speaking evil. Who is able to forgive sins, except the One God?" And immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that they were reasoning within themselves this way. He said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts this way? What is easier: to say to the paralyzed person, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, and take up your mat, and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed person, "I'm telling you, rise, take up your mat, and go up into your house." And he got up, and immediately he took up his mat and exited, in the presence of all. And so, they were all amazed, and they glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"*

Matthaiah and Lukas appear to portray the scribes as whispering to one another; Markus' "in their hearts" and "within themselves" may be taken to mean that Jesus was reading their minds. Alternatively, "within" may be replaced by "among," and "in their hearts" may merely mean that their confusion was sincere. The mention of hearts seems to be borrowed more from Matthaiah than from Lukas, but the conclusion is derived from Lukas. Matthaiah's conclusion to the matter is that the people glorified God for giving such power to people. The final quote in Lukas is that the people had seen something they didn't expect to see. Markus emphasizes their amazement, adding that the people exclaimed that they had never seen anything like that before.

13 *And again he went out by the sea. And all the crowd went to him, and he taught them. And as he was going along, he noticed Levi the son of Alfaius sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose up and followed him.*

And as he was lying down in Levi's house, it happened that many tribute takers and sinners reclined together with Jesus and his students. For they were many, and they followed him. And the scribes of the Perushim noticed that he was dining with the sinners and tribute takers, and they said to his students, "He is eating with tribute takers and sinners!" And when Jesus heard, he said to them, "The healthy have no need of a healer; rather, those who have a malady. I have not come to call just people but sinners."

Markus reports the account much as Lukas does -- therefore using the name "Levi" rather than "Matthaiah." However, Markus adds the detail that Levi was the "son of Alfaius." "Levi" (indicating a gift) would be an ironic name for a tribute taker, so quite possibly this is the name that he chose (or was given) after he began to follow Jesus. Matthaiah himself had provided few details, and Lukas indicates that Levi himself threw a feast. Markus' account downplays the feast, focusing on the question of eating with tribute takers (Levi himself) and "sinners" -- those who had left Priestly Judaism. This agrees more with Matthaiah's account, who also concludes with "but sinners," whereas Lukas adds "into mental change."

18 *And John's students and the Perushim were fasting. And they came and said to him, "Why do John's students and the students of the Perushim fast, but your students do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the sons of the wedding hall fast while the groom is with them? As long as they have the groom with them, they are unable to fast. But days will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.*

"No one sews a patch of unbleached cloth on an old cloak. But if they do, the fullness of the new is ripped away from the old, and a worse division occurs. And no one casts new wine into old wineskins. But if they do, the wine bursts the wineskins, and the wine and the wineskins are destroyed. On the contrary, new wine is cast into new wineskins."

Those who say that Markus was written before the other synoptics may point to this passage, in which Markus' account has a shorter ending. It is also slightly different as well. In Matthaiah's account, the students of John the Baptizer put the question to Jesus about fasting. In Lukas' version, Jesus' own students pose the question. Here, Markus appears to reconcile the two. Adding the comment that there was fasting going on, "they" probably refers (with Matthaiah) to the students of the baptizer.

The wording about ways of thinking (paradigms) -- here, "wineskins" -- follows Matthaiah's, but whereas both Matthaiah and Lukas explain the meaning slightly, Markus omits it, merely indicating that people only put new wine into new wineskins. The "new wine" is Jesus' teachings, and the "old wineskins" are Priestly Judaism.

23 *And during the Sabbath, as he was going through the cornfields, it happened that his students began to make their way, picking the ears of corn. And the Perushim said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is illegal on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he had a need, and when he and those who were with him were hungry? How he went into God's house, to Abiathar the high priest, and ate the loaves of design, which it is not legal to eat, except for the priests? And he gave them also to those who were with him."*

And he said to them, "The Sabbath happened on account of humanity, and not humanity on account of the Sabbath. And so, the Son of Man is also lord of the Sabbath."

This account continues to follow Lukas' version, adding mention of the role of the high priest. However, Markus' conclusion is different. Instead of merely indicating that since the Messiah is greater than David's people (Lukas) or that they did not understand the teaching about God wanting mercy rather than sacrifice (Matthaiah), Markus' Jesus adds the explanation that the sabbath-day rest was made in order to benefit people. Therefore Jesus, as human, was greater than any legalistic code that the religious leaders were imposing over the sabbath-day principle.

3:1 *And he entered again into the gathering. And a person was there who had a withered hand. And they were scrutinizing him, to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the person who had the withered hand, "Get up into the middle of the group." And he said to them, "Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil? To save a life, or to destroy?" But they were silent. And he looked them over with anger, sorrowful at the hardness of their hearts. He said to the person, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out,*

and his hand was restored. And the Perushim went out immediately with the Herodians, and they took counsel against him, as to how they might destroy him.

Lukas' version notes that this event took place on a following Sabbath day, but Markus has begun to follow Matthaiah's account more closely again, yet like Lukas, Markus omits the question from the Perushim. Markus adds a note that Jesus' statement silenced his would-be accusers. What was Jesus teaching here? That the sabbath principle extended beyond the legalistic interpretation provided by the religious leaders. Thus, the Perushim are shown here consulting with the Herodian party about executing Jesus. The Herodians were sympathetic toward the rule of the Herods, so that both Perushim and Herodians might ally together in preserving the *status quo*.

7 And Jesus withdrew with his students to the sea, and a great multitude followed him from Galilaiah, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond the Jordan. And when a great multitude around Ture and Sidon heard as much as he had done, they went to him.

Matthaiah mentions this retreat, but Lukas does not. Since Elijah often retreated by himself, and since Elisha would go off with his student(s), it was useful for Markus to mention this retreat to the sea. The details are different, though. Whereas Matthaiah again mentions the servant song from Isaiah, Markus plays up the size of the crowds following Jesus and adds that they were coming from a wider set of provinces.

And he said to his students that a boat should attend him, on account of the crowd, so that they would not afflict him. For he cured many people, so that as many as had scourges rushed him, so that they might touch him. And the unclean spirits, when they observed him, they fell toward him and called out, saying, "You are God's son." And he censured them many times, so that they would not make him apparent.

Again adding to Matthaiah's version, Markus reports that the crowds were somewhat frenzied. Everyone was hoping to be cured ... just by his touch. Thus, in a subtle way, Markus acknowledges their trust, even as he points out that they knew him to be the Messiah.

13 And he ascended into the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they went to him. And he made the Twelve (who are also named envoys), so that they might be with him, and so that he might sent them out to herald and to have authority to cast out the spirit beings:

They were: Simon, whom he had also surnamed Peter; and Jacob the son of Zebediah and Johannes (Jacob's brother), and he also surnamed them with the name, B'nai-Rogez [that is, sons of thunder]; and Andreas; and Filippos; and Bar-Talmi; and Matthaiah; and Thomas; and Jacob the son of Alfaius; and Thaddeus; and Simon the Jealous; and Judah Iscariot (who also delivered him up).

The account of the sending of the Twelve follows both Matthaiah's and Lukas' versions. The introduction comes from Lukas, with Jesus taking his students up the mountainside. Some of his descriptions of the members of the Twelve appear to follow Matthaiah's, including the use of

"Matthaiah" instead of "Levi." However, Markus moves Andreas' name later in the list, and he adds the description of Zebediah's sons as "sons of thunder."

20 *And they went into a house. And the crowd came together again, and so they were unable even to eat bread. And when the ones who were with him heard, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said, "The crowd is beside itself!"*

And those scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said that, "He has Ba'al Zebul," and that, "He is casting out the spirit beings with the ruler of the spirit beings!"

This account follows Matthaiah and is excluded by Lukas. Here, Markus excludes the actual healing of the possessed man (a deaf-mute, see Mt 12:22f.), focusing instead on the great crowds and on the accusation against Jesus.

And he called them to him and said to them (with analogies): "How can an enemy cast out an enemy? And if a kingdom should be divided upon itself, how can that kingdom stand? And if a house should be divided upon itself, how can that house stand? And if the Enemy rises up and is divided upon himself, how can he stand? On the contrary, he has an end. But no one is able to enter into the strong person's household to plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong person -- and then he may plunder his household."

Markus' version answers the rhetorical question about the enemy, whereas Matthaiah's leaves it rhetorical. The aside about the strong man is the same as in Matthaiah: If they know that God has the power, and if God has not been overcome, then they must realize who Jesus is.

"Indeed I am telling you that all things will be forgiven the sons of humanity, acts of sin and as many evil speakings as they should speak. But the one who should speak evil of the holy Spirit, he has no forgiveness for the age, but he is liable for an eternal act of sin." He said this because they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

Markus includes the saying about speaking evil: Whatever they might say against Jesus (or anyone else) would be forgiven. But if one tries to deny what God did, though you know it to be true, then one will not be forgiven. Denying God the recognition for the deeds you know he performed is unforgivable. Markus strengthens this when he summarizes Matthaiah's comment on the ages with the age-lasting connotation of "eternal." Afterwards, Markus omits the "brood of vipers" rebuke and the "sign of Jonah" statement that was important to Matthaiah.

31 *And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside, they sent to him, calling him. And a crowd was seated around him, and they said to him, "Look! Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, saying, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around at those who were seated around him, he said, "Look: my mother and my brothers. For whoever should do what God wants, this one is my brother, and sister, and mother."*

By this time, apparently Jesus' dad, Yosef, was dead. We know he was dead before the cross, because Johannes was given the charge of taking care of Jesus' mother, but he seems to have

died by this time. Jesus says then that relationship by physical birth is not so important. He doesn't mention Abraham and the Jewish sense of identity through physical birth, but this may have been in mind. He does say that whoever does what God wants is his brother, sister, or mother. In the spiritual sense, God's followers are relatives more than we could ever be otherwise. Here, Markus continues to follow Matthaiah's version.

4:1 *And again he began to teach by the sea. And a crowd, a multitude, gathered toward him, and so he went down into a boat, sat on the sea, and all the crowd was at the sea on land. And he taught them with many analogies, and he said to them with his teaching:*

"Hear! Look! The sower went out to sow. And while he was sowing, it happened that some seed indeed fell by the road, and the birds came and devoured them. And another fell on the rocky place, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, on account of not having any deep soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and it withered, on account of having no root. And another fell into the acanthus, and the acanthus plants sprang up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And another fell into the nice soil and yielded fruit, springing up and increasing. And one produced thirty, and one sixty, and one a hundred." And he said, "The one who has ears to hear, let him hear."

10 *And when it happened that he was all alone, the ones who were around him, with the Twelve, asked him about the analogies. And he said to them, "To you is given the secret of God's kingdom, but to those who are outside all things are done with analogies, so that "seeing, they would see and not notice; and hearing, they would hear and not understand...Otherwise, they would turn back, and it would be forgiven them.""*

Although Markus still follows Matthaiah's account, his reliance on the analogy of the sower is stronger. He presents this one, first, as a means of revealing meaning through all of Jesus' analogies. Thus, while the Sower is about the message being spread (see below), for Markus it is necessary to learn from this first analogy how Jesus employs analogies in his teaching.

And he said to them, "Don't you know this analogy? Then how will you know all the analogies? The sower sows the message. Now those that are by the road, when the message is sowed, and when they hear, the Enemy comes immediately and takes away the message that was sowed to them."

As Markus relates the Sower, he reports an additional saying of Jesus, identifying this as a sort of Master Analogy. In modern language, Markus interprets the explanation as pedagogy. Rather than simply telling his students the meaning of one analogy, Jesus was explaining to them his methods of instruction.

"And those that are sowed on the rocky place, when they hear the message, they immediately receive it with joy, and since they have no root within them, they are but seasonal. Then when affliction or persecution happens on account of the message, they stumble immediately."

"And others are those that are sowed in the acanthus plants. These are those who hear the message, and the cares of the age, and the deceit of wealth, and the remaining strong desires, go in, choke the message, and it becomes unfruitful.

"And the latter are those that are sowed on the nice soil, who hear the message, and accept it, and bear fruit: one thirty, one sixty, and one a hundred."

The sower might be God, or Jesus, or the Twelve themselves (who are assisting Jesus). Most likely, the sower is God.

The seed is identified as God's message. That expression in the New Testament always refers to the message brought by Jesus. As the author has explained it, the message includes a statement of Jesus' identity as the Anointed One and a deeper explanation of the Torah, for there would soon be an end to the nation that viewed the Torah superficially.

The fate of the seed sown by the road represents what happens to those who hear but do not understand. "...the Enemy comes immediately and takes away the message that was sowed to them." This category most fits the Perushim and scribes, although others surely belonged here as well.

The fate of the seed sown on rocky land represents what happens to those who experience only the emotion attached to the freedom that the message brings. Freedom from the legalistic view of the Torah was bound to be euphoric. But then what happens? If there's no foundation there other than a good feeling, when conflict arises, it's real easy to fall away altogether. For those of us who have accepted the "freedom from rituals and legalism," this is the pitfall that might most closely apply to us -- if we have no foundation!

The acanthus is a sticker plant, and the message that falls into the acanthus plants tells what happens to those who reject the message because of the higher priorities that it calls on them to have. They'd rather keep doing what they're doing than experience mental change and put God first. The message was so radical that change was difficult.

The one who hears and understands -- as Jesus put it elsewhere, the one who hears the Torah and does it -- that person experiences spiritual growth. Obviously, it's Jesus' intent that more and more people become fertile ground.

21 *And he said to them, "Neither does a lamp come so that it may be placed under a measure of grain or under the bed. Doesn't it come so that it may be placed on a lampstand? For there is no secret thing except that which is made apparent. Neither does it happen that something is hidden away, but so that it might come into appearance. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."*

Borrowed from the Sermon on the Mount, Markus includes the saying here, as does Lukas. Certainly it relates to the spread of the message, which was being revealed through the lives of those who lived its truth.

And he said to them, "Look at what you are hearing. With whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you and added to you. For to the one who has, it will be given to him, and to the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away from him."

"Look at how you hear." It is important to receive the message like "good ground." It is essential to open up and to start loving. Love generates love, and so, if someone "has," then he will have more. Markus adds to this saying from Lukas, flying in the segment about using an appropriate measure. In this context, the Perushim needed to be careful to put into practice what they believe to have learned, and to judge others appropriately and accordingly.

26 *And he said, "God's kingdom is like this: like a person who casts seed on the ground, who sleeps and wakes by night and day. And the seed shoots up and grows, and he does not know how. The ground bears fruit automatically, first the plant, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, he sends out the sickle immediately, because the harvest is ready."*

Expanding on the analogy of the Sower, Markus quotes a related saying from Jesus. Here, even the sower himself (presumably Jesus, or one of his faithful proclaimers) doesn't know how the seed grows. But the sower can tell when the harvest is ready; that is, he knows when the message is active within someone...for it becomes clear through the person's actions.

30 *And he said, "How should we liken God's kingdom? Or what analogy should we use for it? It is like a mustard grain, which when it is sowed on the ground, it is the smallest of all the seeds that are on the land. And when it is sowed, it grows up and becomes greatest of all the shrubs, and it makes great branches, so that it is possible for "the birds of the sky to nest" under its shadow."*

And with many such analogies he spoke the message to them, just as they were able to hear. But he did not speak to them without an analogy, but he explained all things to his students by themselves.

Inserted from Matthaiah's account is the analogy of the mustard seed, but Matthaiah and Markus refer to Daniel 4:12 slightly differently; Lukas (13:18f.) follows Matthaiah more closely but abbreviates the analogy. Here, as in Matthaiah, the emphasis is on the simplicity of the message being its power. Although "small," when the message grows within someone, that person flourishes (like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel).

35 *And during that day, after evening happened, he said to them, "Let's go over to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the ship, as he was, and other ships were with him. And a great storm of wind happened, and the waves were crashing into the ship, and so the ship was already full.*

And he was at the stern, asleep on a headrest. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, doesn't it concern you that we are being destroyed?!" And he got up and censured the wind, and he said to the sea, "Be silent. Be still." And the wind ceased, and a great calm happened. And he said to them, "Why are you timid? How little trust you have!" And they were afraid with a great

fear, and they said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea listen to him?"

Matthaiah's account contains additional analogies before this event, analogies omitted by Markus, as he continues (in general) to follow Lukas more closely than Matthaiah, even keeping with Lukas' chronology. Markus adds a detail not found in the other accounts -- that the crossing occurred after sundown. This appears to be implied in Lukas' account, since the students went to sleep, but Markus states it clearly, allowing to omit some of the details. Again, Markus' priority regarding Trust emerges, for instead of simply asking, "Where is your trust" (as Lukas), Markus' Jesus more bluntly asked his students why they were afraid. His question of their trust becomes a comment on how little trust the students had.

Who is he? God's anointed one, who called upon the power of God. Indeed, they should have trusted him!

5:1 *And they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And as he was coming out from the ship, immediately a person with an unclean spirit met him out of the sepulchers. He had his dwelling in the sepulchers, and no one was able to bind him any longer, not even with chains, on account of the fact that he had often been bound with fetters and with chains, and the chains had been burst off by him, and the fetters had been broken. And no one was strong enough to overpower him. And throughout every night and day he was in the sepulchers and in the mountains, calling out and cutting himself with stones.*

And when he noticed Jesus from a large distance, he ran and bowed down to him, and he called out with a loud voice, saying, "What is there between me and you, Jesus, son of the highest god?! I make an oath with you by God, don't torment me!" For he had said to him, "Unclean spirit, come out from the person." And he asked him, "What is your name?" And he said to him, "Legion is my name, because we are many." And he called him aside many times, so that he would not send them out of the country.

Now there was there, in the direction of the mountain, a great herd of pigs, feeding. And they called him aside, saying, "Send us into the pigs, so that we might enter into them." And he permitted them. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the pigs, and the herd, about two thousand of them, rushed down the cliff into the sea, and they were drowned in the sea.

And their swine herders fled and announced the message in the city and in the fields. And they came to see what it was that had happened. And they went toward Jesus and observed the one who had been affected by spirit beings -- the one who had had the Legion -- seated, clothed, and of sound mind. And they were afraid.

And those who had seen related how it had happened to the one who was affected by spirit beings, and about the pigs. And they began to advise him to go away from their borders.

And as he was going down into the ship, the one who had been affected by the spirit beings called him aside, so that he might be with him. And he did not allow him, but he said to him, "Go up into your house, to your people, and announce the message to them -- as much as the Lord

has done for you and has had mercy on you." And he went away and began to herald in the Dekapolis as much as Jesus had done for him, and all wondered.

Here as in Lukas' version, the group of unclean spirits is named "Legion." A Roman Legion might consist of several thousand men; therefore, the name was a point of intimidation. A slight difference here is that the spirits begin speaking directly to Jesus right away, whereas in Lukas' account the man himself appears to speak at first. The spirits were insisting that there were thousands of them within the man.

Pigs were considered unclean animals, according to the Torah (Lev 11:1-8). It was forbidden even to touch the corpse of a pig (Lev 11:8), and so there should have been no purpose to raise pigs. Maybe they were being raised for the consumption of gentiles. Regardless of the purpose, it does seem that the residents of the area ought not have been raising pigs. Even so, the story provides a contrast, allowing the spirits to be forced into a herd of unclean animals. The herd, being intelligent enough not to want spirits inside of them, committed suicide.

The residents later approached with astonishment, each of them noticing that the man was perfectly happy and was listening to Jesus' teachings ("seated" at Jesus' feet). Therefore, the formerly possessed man acknowledged Jesus as the Anointed One and recognized the importance of his teachings, but the people were frightened at the power Jesus had displayed. Again, Markus reports how Jesus' fame was spreading, but this time (as in Lukas) his renown was growing negative. Jesus was politely asked to leave. But Markus' version accentuates Jesus' fame again, for instead of reporting that Legion spread Jesus' fame throughout his own city (as Lukas does), Markus indicates that Legion spread the message about Jesus through the Dekapolis -- literally, a ten-city area.

21 *And after Jesus went over to the other side again [in the ship], a crowd of many people came gathered with him, and he was by the sea. And one of the rulers of the synagogue, named Yairos, came, and when he noticed him, he fell toward his feet and called him aside many times, saying, "My daughter is having her last moments. So, won't you come and lay hands on her, so that she would be saved and live?" And he went with him, and a crowd of many people followed him and thronged him.*

Instead of "the crowd received him" (Lukas), Markus notes that the crowd consisted of "many people" and that they "followed" and "thronged" him. The name of Yairos was probably reasonably well known in the area, and so the author mentions him as a witness to what transpired. Yairos asked for Jesus' intervention on behalf of his twelve year old daughter, and after Jesus agreed, he led Jesus to his house.

25 *And there was a woman who was in a flow of blood for twelve years. And having suffered many things from many healers, and having spent all her things, and having profited nothing, but rather having come into a worse state, when she heard about Jesus, she went in the crowd behind and touched his cloak. For she had said, "If I should touch even his clothes, I will be saved." And immediately the source of her blood was dried up, and she knew that her body had been healed from the scourge.*

And immediately, knowing within himself that power had exited from him, Jesus turned around in the crowd, saying, "Who touched my clothes?" And his students said to him, "You see the crowd thronging you, and you say, 'Who touched me'?" And he looked around to see the one who had done it. But the woman, afraid and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down toward him, and she told him all the truth. But he said to her, "Daughter, your trust has saved you. Go into peace, and be well from your scourge."

Markus adds a detail not found in the others -- that no matter what treatment the woman sought for her affliction, it was only made worse (until Jesus arrived). Markus continues to follow Lukas' account, though, omitting the brief exchange between Jesus and the woman (prior to the healing) that is found in Matthaiah's version. He also retains Lukas' use of the word "immediately."

Jesus was entirely unaware of the incident, but he knew that he had been responsible for curing someone. Therefore, he asked the people nearest him in the crowd who had touched him. Instead of naming Peter, Markus indicates that "his students" wondered why Jesus was concerned about someone bumping into him.

The woman who had been healed of her condition knew that she had been discovered, and so she "told the truth" about wanting to touch him. Jesus recognized that her trust in God was great and acknowledged to the crowd that a miracle had occurred, comforting the woman, so that she would be at peace.

Jesus did not have to make some sort of show in order to heal. He didn't even have to be aware of the healing! God was active through this greatest of prophets all of the time.

35 *While he was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue ruler saying, "Your daughter has died. Why trouble the teacher?" But having overheard the message that was being spoken, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Don't be afraid; only trust." And he did not allow anyone to follow along with him except for Peter, and Jacob, and Johannes, Jacob's brother. And they came into the house of the synagogue ruler, and he observed confusion and much crying and lamenting. And after entering, he said to them, "Why are you confused and crying? The child is not dead but asleep." And they laughed at him. But he threw them all out, took aside the child's father and mother (and those who were with him), and they went into where the child was. And he took hold of the child's hand and said to her, "Talitha Kum," that is, translated, "Girl, I am telling you, get up." And immediately the girl arose and walked around. For she was twelve years old. And they were amazed with a great amazement. And he gave a statement to them many times, that no one should make this thing known, and he said to give her to eat.*

As in Lukas' account, at this point someone informed Yairos that his daughter was dead. The wording in Lukas is more of an instruction not to bother Jesus, whereas the question here seems to be more of an expression of futility. Again Jesus emphasizes trust, and in this account, Jesus expels from his midst everyone who did not trust God.

Markus also reports the Aramaic saying spoken to the girl, and he alone indicates her young age. Although both Markus and Lukas make a point of noting that Jesus instructed the people not to tell anyone about the healing, Matthaiah's version indicates that the word spread anyway.

6:1 And after exiting from there, he went into his country, and his students were following him. And when a Sabbath happened, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many people heard and were filled up, saying, "Where are these things from? And what is this wisdom that he has been given to him? And what are these powers that are being done through his hands? Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Miriam and brother of Jacob and Yosef, and Judah, and Simon? And aren't his brothers here around us?" And they stumbled over him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet his not without honor, except in his country, and among his relatives, and in his household." And he was unable to do a power there for anyone, except for a few sick people that he cured, placing his hands on them. And he wondered, on account of their distrust. And he went around the surrounding villages, teaching.

Jesus has returned to "his own country," the area surrounding Nazareth, where Jesus had grown up. Here, the people were inquisitive. Where does he get his powers? Some recognized him, saying, "Isn't this the carpenter?" They remembered the names of his family members.

The confusion arose because the Anointed One was said to come from out of nowhere, yet they knew who Jesus was. And so, their familiarity with Jesus (his growing up, probably doing all the things that little children do) became a stumbling-block to their accepting the fact that he was the Anointed One. So Jesus said, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his country, and among his relatives...." Matthaiah reads that Jesus did not work many miracles "on account of their distrust"; Markus' wording is stronger: Jesus did almost nothing. From this account, we see a different kind of disbelief than we have seen before. These people have a preconceived view not only of the Messiah but also of JESUS. This expectation stemmed from their knowledge of him as a person. Some of them knew his family. Perhaps they had seen him growing up under the tutelage of his father, Yosef the carpenter. How could he be the Anointed One? Yet he continued to teach, and to heal those who did trust. Matthaiah's parallel is out-of-sequence, in chapter 13.

7 And he called the Twelve to him and began to send them out, two by two. And he gave them authority over the unclean spirits, and he charged them, so that they would take along nothing for the way except a staff alone: not bread; no bag; no copper for the belt. On the contrary, "Having your feet shod with sandals, you should not put on two tunics." And he said to them, "Wherever you enter into a house, stay there until you go out from there. And whatever place will not receive you or hear you, go away from there, shaking off the dust that is under your feet, for a testimony to them."

And they went out and heralded that the people should change their minds, and they cast out many spirit beings, and they anointed many sick people with oil (and they were cured).

Markus adds a detail here as well -- that Jesus' students were sent out in pairs. Markus disagrees with others about the Twelve being instructed to take a rod (staff) with them, but the point of the saying is not a list of specific forbidden items. A bag, food, money, and spare clothing might be used by someone who was going to spend an extended period of time somewhere, but the

Twelve were to take no such things. They were to be travelers, spending no more time than would be necessary to announce God's message, prove themselves with signs, and move on. The rabbis, too, acknowledged the carrying of certain objects into the temple (including some of those mentioned above) as being indicative of service other than to God (so Guzik); if the Twelve carried none of these they would be seen as devoted to God.

Shaking the dust from one's feet was a symbol. Some Jewish people would take this action after leaving a gentile city so as not to take anything from the city with them. The action represented the abandonment of the city, and in the Twelve's case may have indicated that they were treating its residents like gentiles. Notice that the mission of the Twelve was not to "convert" everyone in the city. Instead, they were merely there to share the message; any "conversion" came from God. If people would not accept them, they were to go somewhere else quickly. Jesus' students, too, had the ability to cure sick people and to cast out spirits. The casting out of spirits is a detail not shared by Lukas.

14 *And King Herod heard, for Jesus' name had become apparent, and he said, "John the Baptizer has risen from among the dead, and on account of this the powers are being worked by him." But others said that, "He is Elijah;" others said that, "He is a prophet like one of the prophets." But when Herod heard, he said, "John, the one whom I beheaded, he has risen."*

For Herod himself had sent out people who took hold of John and bound him in jail, on account of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother (because he had married her). For John told Herod that, "It is illegal for you to have your brother's wife." Now Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to destroy him, and she was unable. For Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man, and he protected him. And, hearing him, he did many things and heard him gladly.

And when a seasonal day occurred, when Herod made a feast to his birthday for his nobles, and for the commanders, and for the foremost people of Galilaiah, Herodias' daughter entered and danced. And since she pleased Herod and those who were reclining with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you." And he swore to her many times, "Whatever you ask me, I will give to you, up to half of my kingdom." And she went out and said to her mother, "What will I ask for?" Now she said, "The head of John the Baptizer."

And immediately she entered with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want that you would instantly give me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter." And the king became very sorrowful; on account of the oaths and those who were reclining, he did not want to reject her. And immediately the king sent out a sentinel, directing for John's head to be brought. Now he went away and beheaded him in jail. And he brought the head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. And when his students heard, they went and took his corpse, and they placed it in a sepulcher.

Markus follows Lukas' chronology here but adds the details of the incident that are otherwise found in Matthaiah's version. There is an interesting Elijah/Elisha connection that Markus clarifies, but which Matthaiah ignores. Was Jesus the returned Elijah? No, actually John the Baptizer had been the Elijah-figure who was supposed to come. Jesus was not John returned; he

was greater. Markus further adds that Herod himself believed that Jesus might have been John, raised from the dead.

Herod the Tetrarch was the son of Herod the Great, who was associated with events surrounding Jesus' infancy. Herod wanted to sleep with his half-brother's wife, Herodias, but John had told him, "It is illegal for you to have your brother's wife," for incest is against the Torah. Herod wanted to have him killed, but chose instead to imprison him.

Interestingly, the account says that Herod regretted having told Salome she could have anything and regretted ordering the death of the Baptizer. At any rate, that's how he met his demise on account of a vengeful woman.

Markus' account adds that Herod thought John to have been a holy man and that he used to enjoy listening to John, although he did not understand. Both accounts place the blame more on Herodias than on Herod Antipas.

30 *And the envoys were gathered to Jesus, and they related to him all the things that had been done and as much as they had taught. And he said to them, "You come by yourselves into a deserted place, and rest for a short time." For many were coming and going out, and it was not even seasonal to eat.*

And they went away in the ship to a deserted place by themselves. And many people saw them going, and they recognized them, and they ran together on foot from all the cities and went ahead of them.

As the Twelve returned, they related to Jesus what things they had done. How much time has now passed we do not know. It may be either the Summer prior to Jesus' death or the preceding Fall. At this time, Lukas reports that Jesus took his students into Beth-Saida, where they were followed by the crowds. By this time, Jesus primarily announces his message (rather than heals). The healings were secondary to the work that he needed to accomplish.

There were so many people around Jesus and the Twelve that they didn't even have time to eat, and so Jesus tried to take them to a secluded spot. Lukas notes that Jesus' students were displeased that the crowds continued to follow them, so that there was no real seclusion anywhere.

The Feeding of Thousands

34 *And when he exited, he noticed a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were "like sheep who have no shepherd," and he began to teach them many things.*

And since already many hours had passed, his students came to him, saying, "The place is a desert, and already many hours have passed. Let them go away, so that they would go away into the outlying fields and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered, saying to them, "You give them to eat."

And they said to him, "Should we go away and buy loaves for two hundred denarii and give them to eat?" But he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go see." And when they knew, they said, "Five, and two fish." And he directed them to have all recline, company by company, on the green grass. And they reclined, group by group, by hundreds and by fifties.

And, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up into the sky, blessed, and broke the loaves and gave them to his students, so that they would distribute them to the people. And he apportioned the two fish to all of them. And all of them ate and were well fed, and there were twelve baskets full of fragments, and from the fish. And the men who ate the loaves were five thousand.

Lukas merely says that dusk was approaching, whereas Markus indicates that Jesus' discussion with the people had gone on for "many hours." Jesus' students wanted Jesus to send the crowds away to buy food, but since thousands were present that would have been impractical. Jesus simply told his students to feed the crowd. Clearly, they couldn't do as Jesus expected them to do -- at least not by ordinary means.

Markus adds a point of practicality -- that Jesus' students offered to go to buy food, even though it would have been expensive. Jesus replied that they should feed the crowd with what they had. Lukas indicates only the groups of fifty, but Markus notes that the crowd also reclined in groups of one hundred to receive the distribution of food.

Just as God had provided the manna while the Israelites wandered through the wilderness (Ex 16), so also God provided for the crowd following Jesus around. Then, it had been the people who had complained; here, Jesus' own students were wondering how the group might be able to eat.

Reclining (lying back) was one method of eating. Jesus asked that the crowd be broken into groups, and that each group be made to recline for the meal. Then came the miracle: Jesus asked God to bless the meal, and God provided for the crowd. As Jesus broke the bread and fish, giving to his students to distribute group-by-group, there always seemed to be more. And when the people were full, there were twelve baskets of food remaining!

When Elisha was prominent as a prophet (2 Kgs 4:1-7), he was responsible for a similar but lesser miracle. The daughter-in-law of one of the prophets, whose husband had died, asked for his assistance in paying off a debt, so that her children would not be taken as payment and enslaved. All she had was a jar of oil -- not nearly valuable enough to pay the full amount. Elisha called upon God's power to direct others to pour the oil from its jar into other (similar) jars -- until the original jar became empty. As it turned out, they had enough to fill every empty jar that they could find. She sold the oil, and she and her sons lived off of the profit from the sale. Jesus provided not oil but food, and there was an overabundance remaining -- well beyond anyone's need.

45 *And immediately he necessitated for his students to go down into the ship and to go ahead to the other side to Bethsaida, while he was releasing the crowd. And after directing them to go away, he went away into the mountain to pray.*

And after evening happened, the ship was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land. And when he noticed that they were being tormented while rowing (for the wind was opposite them), at about the fourth guard of the night, he went to them, walking on the sea, and he wanted to go alongside them. But when they noticed him walking on the sea, they thought that he was an apparition, and they screamed, for they all saw him and were terrified.

Now immediately he spoke with them, and he said to them, "Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid." And he went up to them into the ship, and the wind ceased. And they were exceedingly, abundantly, amazed within themselves. For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were stupefied.

At this point in the narrative, Markus' account begins to follow Matthaiah's version more closely. The connection between the two accounts continues from here until the end, with a few deviations.

Jesus retreated alone onto a mountain, in a style perhaps reminiscent of Elijah. After that comes a water miracle. Elisha had parted the waters (2 Kgs 2:1-18) and had made an axe float on water (2 Kgs 6:1-7), but Jesus walked on water -- again, a greater miracle.

Markus omits the segment, found in Matthaiah, about Peter walking on water. Markus adds one detail as well. Why were Jesus' students amazed about this miracle? Because they didn't understand about the miraculous feeding. That is, they did not understand the power of trust.

53 *And after they passed over, they came to the land at Gennesaret, and they went to the shore. And after they exited from the ship, people immediately recognized him and they ran around that whole countryside, and they began to carry around on mats those who had maladies to wherever they heard that he was. And whenever he went into villages, or into cities, or into fields, they placed the weak in the marketplaces and called him aside, so that they might touch even the tuft of his cloak. And as many as touched him were saved.*

Markus' conclusion to the walk on water is similar to Matthaiah's, but (as often) Markus more strongly emphasizes Jesus' spreading fame. The account concludes with another comment about the people's trust.

7:1 *And when the Perushim and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered to him and noticed some of his students, that they were eating loaves with common (that is, unwashed) hands --*

for the Perushim and all the Jews do not dine unless they wash their hands with the fist, holding on to the traditions of the older people. And they don't dine after coming from the marketplace unless they ceremonially purify themselves. And there are many other things that were delivered over for them to hold on to: ceremonial purification of cups and pots and copper vessels --

Markus clarifies the account from Matthaiah. Whereas Matthaiah had merely indicated that Jesus' students were eating with unwashed hands, Markus makes a point of indicating that failure to wash their hands made the students ritually "common" in the eyes of the religious leadership.

The point of clarification went so far as to specify the details of the tradition. Rabbi Shammai considered the ritual cleansings to be of crucial importance.

In the Talmud, tractate Shabbath 62b, we read: "In a Baraitha it was taught: Three things bring man to poverty. viz., urinating in front of one's bed naked, treating the washing of the hands with disrespect, and being cursed by one's wife in his presence."

In tractate Sotah 4b, we also read: "R. Zerika said in the name of R. Eleazar: Whoever makes light of washing the hands will be uprooted from the world. R. Hiyya b. Ashi said in the name of Rab: With the first washing it is necessary to lift the hands up; with the latter washing it is necessary to lower the hands. There is a similar teaching: Whoever washes his hands must lift them up lest the water pass beyond the joint, flow back and render them unclean. R. Abbahu says: Whoever eats bread without first wiping his hands is as though he eats unclean food; as it is stated: 'And the Lord said: Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their bread unclean.'"

5 And the Perushim and the scribes questioned him, "Why don't your students walk according to the tradition of the older people? On the contrary, they are eating bread with common hands." But he said to them, "Isaiah prophesied well about you hypocrites, as it was written that, "This people honors me with the lips, but their hearts are far away from me. Now they revere me worthlessly, teaching as teachings human precepts." Leaving God's precept, you lay hold of human tradition."

And he said to them, "You are setting aside well God's precept, so that you might make your tradition stand. For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother" and, "The one who says a bad thing of father or mother should be completed to death." But you say that if a person should say to father or mother, 'Whatever you would have been profited from me is korban [that is, a gift],' then you no longer allow him to give anything to the father or mother, nullifying God's message for your tradition which you have handed down. And you do many such things."

And again he called the crowd to him, saying to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing that enters into a person from outside him which is able to make him common. On the contrary, the things which go out from a person are the things that make the person common."

In Jesus' time, the rabbis had begun to place great emphasis on certain ritual cleansings, including the cleansings before and after eating a meal. Jesus did not address the hand-washing subject directly, instead turning to something that he considered similar: the rabbis' use of a principle of temple sacrifice to override one of the Ten Commandments.

Jesus cites passages from the Torah which indicate that one's parents should be honored. It was normally recognized that a person should take care of his parents when they age. But the common practice was that if something were set aside for temple use, korban, then they could treat that money (or property) as though it did not exist. Therefore, they could claim that they were unable to provide support for their parents -- getting around the precept of honoring their parents. So Jesus says, "You are setting aside God's precept, so that you might make your

tradition stand." This clarifies the wording in Matthaiah's account, for the religious leaders wanted so badly to follow their tradition that they were willing to ignore the Torah.

God had told them about a principle: honor and respect. They had interpreted mechanically what this honor entailed, and then found legalistic ways around it. They had created similar Sabbath rules.

Now the Perushim, sticklers for detail, believed that they were clarifying in what situations different statements applied. But it was their externalization of internal principles that made them miss the point entirely.

Thus, Jesus continues by citing God's statement to Isaiah (Isa 29:13). They had made the Torah worthless, and their religion was the problem. This reverence of God in Isaiah is a "tremble in fear" reverence. Rather than tremble in fear of God, they preferred to follow that which was familiar: their own traditional opinions. Jesus is calling for "restoration" -- for a look back at what God originally said, and not at the human opinions and interpretations that had created the Jewish religious paradigm of his time.

In speaking against creating a ritualistic religion out of the internal principles of the Torah, Jesus says, "There is nothing that enters into a person from outside him which is able to make him common. On the contrary, the things which go out from a person are the things that make the person common."

For them, ritual cleansing made sure that the food that entered the mouth was not "unclean"; therefore, the person wouldn't be defiled. It was a precautionary measure that the Leadership had enacted. They'd been doing it for several generations -- perhaps 200 years. Jesus addressed their practice by saying that food doesn't rob someone of their holiness. Yet they looked at defilement from an external standpoint, and Jesus was internalizing it. No handwashing is going to help, and Jesus was about to explain exactly what sorts of things render someone useless for holy purposes.

17 And when he had entered into a house, away from the crowd, his students asked him about the analogy, and he said to them, "Are you too so without understanding?! Aren't you mindful that nothing that enters into a person from outside is able to make him common, because it does not enter into the heart but into the abdomen, and it goes out into the latrine, cleansing all the foods?"

But he said, "What goes out from a person, this makes a person common. For from inside, bad reasonings go out from the hearts of people: sexual sins, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, an evil eye, evil speaking, high mindedness, lack of wisdom. All of these evil things go out from within and make the person common."

In Matthiah's version, it is Peter who asked about the meaning of Jesus' statements about cleanliness; Markus extends that question to all of them. The list of internal sins is also longer here than in Matthaiah's account, and some are changed. The different items are: sexual sins; greed; evil; deceit; debauchery; an evil eye; high mindedness; and lack of wisdom. "False

testimony," from Matthaiah's list, appears to be omitted here, but "deceit" was probably intended to broaden "false testimony."

Some translations of v. 19 read that in making the statement about food, JESUS declared all foods to be clean, while other translations (as the NET) say instead that the body itself cleanses foods. Either way, the thrust of Jesus' statement is that foods themselves are incapable of making someone "clean" or "unclean."

The Reluctant Healing

24 *Now after getting up from there, he went within the borders of Ture. And he entered into a house, wanting no one to know it, and he was unable to be concealed. On the contrary, a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him immediately. And after coming, she fell down toward his feet. Now the woman was a Hellenist, Surofoinikian by birth, and she asked him that he cast out the spirit being from her daughter. And he said to her, "Allow the children to be well fed first. For it is not a good thing to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs."*

But she answered, saying to him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table dine on the children's crumbs." And he said to her, "On account of this saying, go on. The spirit being has exited from your daughter." And after she left into her house, she found the child lying down on the bed, and the spirit being had exited.

Matthaiah's account refers to the woman as a Canaanite; Markus says she was Surofoinikian -- Markus is more precise, also adding that she was a Hellenist, and in his usage a Hellenist is equal in status to a gentile. It does appear, though, that Markus makes her out to be Jewish, for he omits Jesus' statement that the Messiah had been sent only to Jewish people.

After testing the woman's trust and resolve, Jesus noted that because she had humbled herself her daughter would be healed. Of course, this is what happened. Jesus appears harsh, but he told the truth in that his mission was not to her. Still, if she demonstrated the requisite trust in God, he was naturally willing to help her daughter. Could anyone complain that he had healed her, after she so humbled herself before God's servant?

The Stammerer Healed

31 *And again, after he exited from the borders of Ture, he went through Sidon into the Sea of Galilaiah, through the middle of the borders of Dekapolis. And they carried a deaf person, a stammerer, to him, and they called him aside, so that he might place his hands on him. And he took him away from the crowd by himself and cast his fingers into the man's ears, and he spit and touched his tongue. And he looked up into the sky, groaned, and said to him, "Effatha," that is, "Be fully opened." And immediately his ears were opened, and the bond on his tongue was loosened, and he spoke properly. And he gave a statement to them, that they would tell no one. But the more statements he gave them, they rather more abundantly heralded. And they were astonished, saying, "He has done all things well," and, "He makes the deaf to hear and the speechless to speak."*

Markus is more specific as to Jesus' travels. Adding to that detail is his unique account of Jesus' healing of the stammering man. It is interesting that in two healings found in Markus' account alone Jesus' mechanism for healing includes touching and spitting. The aftermath of this healing served to add to Jesus' spreading fame, despite his own objections.

More Thousands Fed

8:1 *During those days, when there was again a great crowd who did not have anything to eat, he called the students to him, saying to them, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been continuing with me for three days already, and they don't have anything to eat. And if I release them, fasting, to their homes, they will go faint on the way. And some of them have come from a long distance!" And his students answered him, "How will anyone be able to feed them well with loaves, here at a desert?"*

And he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" But they said, "Seven." And he charged the crowd to recline on the ground. And, taking the seven loaves, he gave thanks, broke them, and gave to his students, so that they would distribute them. And they distributed them to the crowd. And they had a few fish. And after blessing them, he also said, "Distribute these."

And they ate and were well fed, and the abundance of the fragments was seven large baskets full. Now they were four thousand people; and he released them. And immediately, he went down into the ship with his students and went to the parts of Dalmanutha.

Some of the people who were healed along with the stammerer stayed with Jesus for so long that they had exhausted their food supply. This time, in Matthaiah's version, his students didn't question him. Markus' wording is more doubtful: instead of asking how they might feed the crowd, his students wonder how anyone could do such a thing. Jesus intends to feed them, as he fed the thousands before, and they obliged. Seven loaves and a few fish are turned into a feast for 4,000 men (plus women and children). They ate until they were full, and seven baskets of pieces were collected. Until his approach to Jerusalem, this would be the last time he healed people for the simple purpose of curing them. Markus' version adds one healing for a specific purpose...soon to come!

MIDWORD

11 *And the Perushim went out and began to question him, seeking a sign from him from heaven. They tested him. And groaning in his spirit, he said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Indeed I am telling you, no sign will be given to this generation." And he left them, going back down, and went to the other side.*

And they had forgotten to take loaves, and except for one loaf they did not have any with them in the ship. And he gave a statement to them, saying, "See, look out for the yeast of the Perushim and the yeast of Herod." And they were reasoning to one another because they had no loaves. And, knowing this, he said to them, "Why are you reasoning because you don't have loaves? You

are not yet mindful, neither do you understand. Have your hearts been made stupid? "Having eyes, you do not see, and having ears, you do not hear." And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve."

"When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets of fragments full did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." And he said to them, "How is it that you don't understand?"

And they went into Bethsaida. And they carried a blind person to him and called him aside, so that he might touch him. And he took the blind person's hand and led him out from the village. And he spit on his eyes, placed his hands on his eyelids, and asked him, "Do you see anything?" And looking up, he said, "I can see the people, like trees. I see them walking."

Then again, he placed his hands on his eyes, and the man saw clearly and was restored, and he could again see all things plainly. And he sent him away into his house, saying, "You shouldn't enter into the village."

In Matthaiah's account, this occasion (16:1f.) was one of several instances where Jesus predicted what would happen to the people of his generation. In that respect, for Matthaiah their importance connects them together. Markus, on the other hand, uses this event as a test of trust -- both for his students and for his readers.

When prodded to provide signs, Jesus chided them for not recognizing the signs that he had already shown them. The timing here is unspecified; it could be much later than the portions that precede. What we do know is that by this time Jesus expected people to realize who he was on their own.

Although Matthaiah ties this to his own chapter 12 by referring to "the sign of Yonah," Markus omits this detail. To him, Jesus is done producing signs (even if the resurrection might be considered one). A single (important) demonstration, provided only by Markus' version, follows immediately.

This time, Jesus was approached by people who brought a blind man to him. As far as we know, the people who were leading the blind man believed that Jesus could heal him. However, we know nothing about the trust of the blind man himself, or about the citizens of the region. Since Markus places such a great emphasis on trust, he appears to indicate here that the people of Bethsaida were having doubts. This is underscored by his telling the healed man not to enter the village.

Markus draws a connection between the two-stage healing of the blind man and the trust level of the citizens of Bethsaida. The patient himself had his trust increased twice as a result of the healing, but the people nearby appeared to be unaffected. Not only did this cause Jesus to ask his students exactly what people thought of him (8:27ff.), but also from this point on his healings (9:14ff., 10:46ff.) are always tied to lessons about trust.

Contrasting this to the curing of Na'aman by Elisha, we see that blindness was thought to be a more "impossible" disease to cure than was leprosy. In both cases water was used, although Jesus required much less water to effect the healing. In both cases doubt was involved -- here, Jesus healed the man despite the doubts of many people. Both here and with Na'aman, a lesson about trust emerged, with two results: if you trust God, even miraculous things will happen; only a kernel of trust is necessary in order to do great things.

BOOK TWO

Who Am I Now?

27 And Jesus and his students went out into the villages of Filippos' Caesarea, and on the way he asked his students, saying to them, "Who do people say me to be?" Now they told him, saying, "John the Baptizer; and others say Elijah; but others say one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say me to be?"

Peter answered, saying to him, "You are the Anointed One." And he censured them, so that they would tell no one about him.

Markus' account of what is termed "Peter's confession" replaces the circumlocution, "the Son of Man," with the simpler form "me": "Who do people say me to be?" He also removes a reference to Jeremiah, which was unimportant to his purpose. The first question, appearing in Markus' version to stem from his earlier encounter of the lack of trust of the people in Bethsaida, asks what people think of him. Sometimes they think he can work miracles, but sometimes they doubt. So, what do they believe?

The reference to Elijah comes up again. Some people believe him to be the Elijah-figure who was to come in advance of the Anointed One. However, John the Baptizer had been this person, and so the people who thought this were slightly off base. Jesus should be compared rather to Elisha than Elijah.

Markus' point appears to be to compare what people think about Jesus to Jesus' true identity. Thus, the details of Peter's statement and Jesus' reply are unnecessary here. Jesus' students know him to be the Anointed One, even though the people are somewhat misguided. We have already read that Jesus' students were able to perform great miracles, even though their trust was small. The people who do not trust at all are able to do nothing, because of their distrust.

The End is Near

And he began to teach them that it is necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and to be rejected by the older people and the high priests and the scribes, and to be killed, and to rise again after three days. And he spoke the statement with freedom of speech. And Peter took him aside and began to censure him. But he turned around, and looking at his students, he censured Peter, saying, "Go, behind me, enemy, because you are not minding God's things but the things of human beings!"

34 *And after calling the crowd and his students to him, he said to them, "If someone wants to follow behind me, he should deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life on account of me and the good message will save it. For what does it profit a person to gain the whole universe and to forfeit his life? For what should a person give in exchange for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my sayings among this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy messengers."*
And he said to them, "Indeed I am telling you that there are some of those who are standing here who will by no means taste death until they see God's kingdom when it has come with power."

Following Matthaiah, Markus indicates that Jesus began to focus on his upcoming death from that point on, and so we see that a transition in focus has occurred. Immediately after his brave pronouncement, even Peter wished to impede Jesus' mission, for which he was censured. The imperative "go behind me," appears to carry the same force as "get out of my way."

This prompted Jesus to call his students around him (Markus adds the crowd as well), to tell them about "the cost" of being his student. Jesus' student must not hinder his mission but must be willing even to die for it.

Markus adds what appears to be a rebuke not only of Peter but of all those who were not committed to living the kind of life that he had been teaching about: *...whoever is ashamed of me and of my sayings among this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy messengers.* Matthaiah's account only states here that Jesus reminded them of his return, but Markus includes the rebuke, followed by the same saying (from Matthaiah's version) promising that the return would follow his death very soon -- within 40 years, as it turned out. Jesus then forecasted the remainder of his work: more teaching; death; resurrection; and return in judgment.

The Transformation

9:2 *And after six days, Jesus took aside Peter, and Jacob, and Johannes, and he carried them up into a high mountain by themselves alone. And he was transformed in their presence, and his clothes became glowing, exceedingly white, like no bleacher on earth is able to whiten. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were speaking with Jesus.*

And Peter answered, saying to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is nice for us to be here, and let us make three tents: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." For he didn't know what to answer, for they had become frightened. And it happened that a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice happened from the cloud: "This is my son, the beloved one. Hear him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them.

And as they were descending from the mountain, he gave them a statement, that they should relate what they had seen to no one, except after the Son of Man should be raised from the dead. And they took hold of the statement to themselves, inquiring, "What is it 'to be raised from the dead'?"

According to Lukas it was late at night. Jesus took with him his so-called "inner circle": Peter, and Jacob, and Johannes. As night marched on, he was transformed. Matthaiah says that Jesus' face shone like the sun, which was similar to what had happened to Moses when in the presence of God; Markus adds to the description of Jesus' glowing raiment. Not only was God present, but figures identified as Moses and Elijah were seen with Jesus.

Peter indicated that he still didn't quite "get it," wishing to set up tents for the three of them. Moses represents the Torah, and Elijah is certainly representative of all the prophets. At any rate, Jesus is their successor -- the promised Anointed One. And so, God said, "This is my son, the beloved one." God himself identified Jesus as the Messiah. Here then is God's own testimony, coupled with the testimony of the great ones in Jewish history. Seen only by Jesus' inner circle, we have God's instruction that Jesus is the Anointed One. He has God's blessing and teaching.

To the students, this was already known. As early as Jesus' baptism (ch. 3), God had been testifying to Jesus' identity. But "the testimony of three witnesses is true," and what witnesses! Lukas records that both Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus about his death (Lk 9:31), and so this event can also be seen as both a strengthening and a preparation of Jesus before the time of his departure from this world.

Markus' account adds some additional discussion between Jesus and his students. After he told them that they shouldn't discuss the transformation until after Jesus' resurrection, they began wondering what it meant to be raised from the dead. Thus, Markus' account begins to foreshadow the proposed conclusion: Jesus' return from the dead -- something that will require his students' trust.

Elijah/John and Elisha/Jesus

And they asked him, saying, "The scribes say that 'It is necessary for Elijah to come first.'" But he said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first, to restore all things," and he told them how it was written about the Son of Man that he would suffer a lot and be despised. "But I am telling you that indeed Elijah has come, and they have done to him what they wanted, just as it was written about him."

His students may have been thinking of Elijah on account of what had just happened, which may explain why a question arose about Elijah. At any rate, they now knew for sure that Jesus was the Messiah, but wasn't Elijah supposed to come before the Anointed One?

Jesus explained that indeed that was true, and that Elijah had already come, but "they did not recognize him. At this point, they understood that John the Baptizer was the antitype of Elijah. At this point, Markus understates the pronouncement, leaving it to his readers to trust that John the Baptizer had been the Elijah-figure.

Jesus then emphasized that his death would come soon, and if they understood his teachings, they might have realized how he was going to die.

Distrusting Generation!

14 *And as they came to the students, they noticed a great crowd around them and the scribes questioning them. And immediately, when all the crowd noticed him, they were astonished, and they ran toward him and greeted him. And he asked them, "Why are you questioning them?"*

And one of the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you. He has a speechless spirit, and wherever it takes hold of him, it causes him spasms, and he foams up, and grinds his teeth, and makes him shrivel. And I told your students, so that they would cast it out, and they were not strong enough."

Now he answered them, saying, "Oh distrusting generation! Until when will I be with you? Until when will I bear you? Carry him to me." And they brought him to him. And when it noticed Jesus, the spirit immediately caused the son spasms, and he fell on the ground and rolled, foaming. And Jesus asked his father, "How long a time is it that this has been happening to him?" Now he said, "From childhood. And often it throws him both into fire and into water, so that it might destroy him. But if you are able, have compassion on us; help us."

Now Jesus said to him, "If I am able? All things are possible for the one who trusts." Immediately the child's father called out, saying, "I trust. Help my distrust!"

Now when Jesus noticed that the crowd was running there, he censured the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Speechless and deaf spirit, I direct you, come out from him, and enter into him no longer." And after calling out and causing many spasms, it went out. And he became as a dead person, and so the majority said that he had died. But Jesus took hold of his hand and lifted him up.

And after his students entered into a house, they asked him by themselves, "We were unable to cast it out." And he said to them, "This kind is able to exit by nothing but prayer [and fasting]."

This account is longer in Markus than in Matthaiah, for Markus adds an extended lesson about trust. Jesus' students had not been able to cast out a spirit being, because their trust had not been great enough. Jesus responded not by censuring his students but by censuring the distrust of the people of his generation. He also implied that his time on earth would be short.

Markus provides details about the curing of the epileptic, also noting that the boy's father asked Jesus to heal his son IF he was able. Jesus' reply contains a lesson about trust, and he prompted the father to express his trust.

"I trust. Help my distrust!" was the man's reply. This connects to the two-stage healing of the blind man (8:22), in which the man's trust was certainly increased in stages... although the people in the city still distrusted. Here too, Jesus cured the boy, and the father's trust was helped, but most of the people believed that he had killed the boy instead of healing him!

Instead of reporting Jesus' comment about "trust like a grain of mustard" (Mt 17:14ff.), Markus notes that Jesus instructed his students that they could have cast the spirit out by praying to God. Reliance on God would have allowed them to overcome the distrust of the people around them -- and their own distrust.

Jesus' Upcoming Death

30 *And after exiting from there, they went around through Galilaiah, and he did not want that anyone would know it. For he was teaching his students, and he told them, "The Son of Man is being delivered over into sinners' hands, and they will kill him. And after being killed, he will rise after three days." But they did not comprehend the declaration, and they were afraid to ask him.*

Matthaiah's account of this is more brief, not mentioning that Jesus was traveling incognito. Markus makes a point of mentioning that Jesus was providing special instructions for his students, teaching them that he was about to be murdered and that he would raise from the dead. Matthaiah says here that Jesus' students were filled with sorrow that they were about to lose him; Markus adds that they did not understand the resurrection -- something that he has already hinted at.

Equality Among Believers

33 *And he went into Kafar-Nahum. And when it happened that he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you disputing on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had been discussing to one another who was greatest. And after sitting down, he sounded for the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he will be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child and stood it in their midst, and he hugged it and said to them, "Whoever accepts one of these children at my name, he is accepting me. And whoever accepts me is not accepting me but the one who sent me out."*

Markus details Jesus' students' own shame at the fact that they were discussing which of them would be the greatest -- which would occupy the highest rank or position.

Jesus' reply here was that they must not desire to be first but last. His students must desire to serve one another, not to rule one another. Whereas Matthaiah emphasizes the child's capacity for humility, Markus puts the burden on the students. They must accept "these children." The child represents the other students, and each student must accept the others lovingly. A lesson about acceptance follows:

Accept One Another

38 *Johannes said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out spirit beings in your name and we forbade him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for there is no one who will do a power at my name who is also able to quickly speak bad of me. For the one who is not against us is on our behalf. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in a name because you are the Anointed's, indeed I am telling you that by no means will he lose his reward. And whoever causes one of these little ones who trust in me to stumble, it would be nicer for him rather if an upper millstone were hung around his neck and if he were thrown into the sea.*

"And if your hand makes you stumble, chop it off. It is a nicer thing for you to enter into the life maimed than to be destroyed in Gehenna (in the unextinguished fire), having the two hands.

"And if your foot should make you stumble, chop it off. It is a nicer thing for you to enter into the life lame than to be cast into Gehenna, having the two feet.

"And if your eye should make you stumble, pluck it out. It is a nicer thing for you to enter into God's kingdom one-eyed than to be cast into Gehenna, having two eyes, where "their maggots do not finish and the fire does not extinguish."

"For each one is salted with fire. Salt is a nice thing, but if the salt becomes tasteless, in what will you season it? You have salt within yourselves; also be at peace with one another."

This is perhaps the strongest lesson about accepting one another that we read in the New Testament. Anyone, even a stranger, who follows Jesus deserves the respect due an equal. Absolutely nothing must prevent Jesus' students from accepting one another, or they risk losing everything -- for love and trust are at the core of Jesus' teachings. If they lose the love, his students would be worthless; and so it is necessary to "be at peace with one another."

Teachings About Commitment

10:1 *And he rose up from there and went into the borders of Judea and the other side of the Jordan, and crowds were going together to him again, and he taught them again, as he was accustomed.*

And Perushim went to him and asked him, testing him, if it is legal for a man to let his wife go. Now he answered, saying to them, "What precept did Moses give you?" Now they said, "Moses permitted a scroll of separation to be written, and to let go."

But Jesus said to them, "He wrote this precept for you, directed toward your hard-heartedness. But from the beginning of creation "he made them male and female." "On account of this, a person leaves his father and mother [and unites with his wife], and the two will be one in flesh." And so, they are no longer two; on the contrary, they are one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being should separate."

And when in the house again, the students asked him about this, and he said to them, "Whoever should let his wife go away and should marry another is committing adultery upon her. And if she should let her husband go away and should marry another, she is committing adultery."

At this point in time, Jesus left to enter Judea, apparently beginning his final trip to Jerusalem. Matthaiah indicates that as the crowds trailed Jesus, "he cured them there"; however, Markus' priority includes the people's distrust, and so he omits that detail.

As he arrived, Perushim came "testing him." Their question was based on a topic of debate between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel. The Hillelites took the view that a man

could divorce his wife if ANYTHING about her displeased him. The school of Shammai, however, believed the teachings on divorce to be limited to situations of marital unfaithfulness.

These were both interpretations of Dt 24:1-4, where Moses authorizes divorce/separation -- the passage that Jesus asked them about:

"When a man takes a wife and becomes her lord, if she loses favor in his eyes because he has found something indecent in her, and if he writes her a certificate of separation and puts it in her hand...." [then if she becomes another man's wife, then the former may not take her back, if she separates from him or he dies.] He "may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before Yahweh." (Once she has had sex with another man, the first husband cannot take her back.)

The matter of what constituted "something indecent" caused Rabbi Akiba to write that it was enough if the husband found another woman more attractive (Gittin 9:10, according to Einspruch). Therefore, the Perushim were questioning Jesus about his opinions on the divorce issue. Jesus replied by citing the Genesis accounts of creation (1:27; 2:24). When a man and woman unite, they become one. Paul takes this view as well, citing it in Eph. 5 and in 1 Cor 6.

Jesus appears to take a still stronger view -- that once a couple has had sexual intercourse, they are together for life. If we understand Dt 24:1-4 to be referring to an indecency discovered after the couple have made commitments to one another but before they have had sex (a period which may have been as long as a year), then once the second man has slept with her, the first cannot take her back. Jesus says this is not only because she was considered "indecent" by the first man but also because she and the second man are one and cannot be separated. Of course, this applies within the context of God's covenanted people. Paul refers to a different sort of situation (1 Cor 6-7) if one of the partners is an unbeliever.

The Perushim asked Jesus why there is a separation statute, but that question and answer are omitted by Markus. Here, Jesus merely took a side in the debate.

Children and Jesus

13 *And school children came to him, so that he might touch them. But the students censured them. Now when Jesus noticed, he was indignant, and he said to them, "Allow the school children to come to me. Don't hinder them, for God's kingdom belongs to such people. Indeed I am telling you, whoever does not accept God's kingdom like a child, by no means will he enter into it." And he held them in his arms and praised them, placing his hands on them.*

In this interlude, Jesus' students tried to prevent some school children from having Jesus' lay hands on them and pray. This may be a reminder of his earlier meeting with the child. In fact, Markus' Jesus refers here to the childlike attitude of humility, mentioned earlier in Matthaiah's account (18:1f.). The attitudes of children make Jesus accessible to every one of them.

A Rich Young Man

17 *And as he went out into a road, one ran up and knelt to him. He asked him, "Good teacher, what should I do so that I might inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you say me to be good? No one is good except one: God. You know the precepts, "You will not murder. You will not commit adultery. You will not steal. You will not testify falsely. [You will not defraud.] Honor your father and mother.""*

But he said to him, "Teacher, I have guarded all of these things from my youth." Now as Jesus looked at him, he loved him, and he said to him, "You lack one thing. Go, sell as much as you have, and give to the poor. And you will have a treasure in heaven. And come follow me." But he was dejected by the saying, and he went away sorrowful, for he was someone who had many possessions.

Someone approached Jesus, asking a deep question. His focus was still on the externals, but Jesus was about to make it 100% personal: "Keep the precepts." Jesus cited various references from the Torah, and the man replied that he had done those things. Hmm.... One of the precepts that Jesus had NOT quoted was, "You will not have any other gods besides me." And so, Jesus told him to give away that which he valued the most.

The account does not tell us what happened to the young man afterward, but Jesus' statements had created a conflict of priorities in the man, because he valued his possessions. This provides a specific application of Jesus' teachings about priorities. Jesus pointed out what a stumbling block possessions can be.

23 *And Jesus looked around and said to his students, "With such difficulty those who have high-priced things enter into God's kingdom!" But the students wondered at his words. Now Jesus answered again, saying to them, "Children, how difficult it is to enter into God's kingdom. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a wealthy person to enter into God's kingdom."*

Now they were abundantly astonished, saying to themselves, "And who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With people, it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

Peter began to say to him, "Look, we left all things and followed you." Jesus said, "Indeed I am telling you, there is no one who has left a house, or brothers, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or fields on my account and on account of the good message except for the one who would receive a hundredfold now in this season: houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and fields -- with persecutions -- and eternal life in the coming age. But many will be first who are last, and last who are first."

Whether certain small city entrances were called "needles' eyes," or whether Jesus meant a literal needle is irrelevant. He was illustrating the virtual impossibility of wealthy people making God their top priority. They have been so accustomed to depending upon what they possess or can buy! Depending on God, then, is more difficult for them.

His students began to wonder who could be saved, if it was indeed that hard. He reassured the Twelve, and anyone else who was planning to give up everything else to put God first.

"But many will be first who are last, and last who are first."

The wealthy may discover themselves "poor" in the afterlife, but the ones who are poor (see the beatitudes) will become wealthy (spiritually) in the afterlife. Jesus' aside about persecutions is mentioned by Markus but not Matthaiah. In metaphor, those Jewish people who embraced Jesus' teachings and his set of priorities would have a hundred times more than they gave up, but they would face persecution from their kinsmen. Markus omits the analogy of the vineyard found in Mt 20:1-6.

Another Prediction of Death

32 *Now they were on the road going up into Jerusalem, and Jesus was going ahead of them, and they were wondering, and the ones who followed were afraid. And again he took aside the Twelve and began to tell them the things that were about to transpire to him: "Look, we are going up into Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the high priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and they will deliver him over to the gentiles. And they will mock him, and spit on him, and whip and kill him. And after three days he will arise."*

This time, Jesus added one thing: that his impending death was going to take place during this trip to Jerusalem. Markus adds that this frightened his students. Like many Jews, Jesus and his students were going to the area for the feasts. A later account (c.65 CE) estimates that over 1,000,000 people were gathered in Jerusalem during that time of year. But Jesus told his students that this trip would be his last.

This time, too, the details of the final day are sketched out more clearly. The Jewish leaders would become ultimately responsible, including even some of the high priests. The Romans, too, were going to play a role, mocking and beating and crucifying Jesus. But once again, the prediction ended with a prophecy about the resurrection "after three days." Markus always uses this wording, and the actual timing (see below) indicates that he meant the same as Matthaiah's "during the third day."

More About Equality

35 *And Jacob and Johannes, the sons of Zebedaiiah, went to him, saying to him, "Teacher, we want that you do for us whatever we might ask." Now he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" Now they said to him, "Give to us that we may sit, one at your right and one at the left, in your glory."*

But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you're asking! Are you able to drink the cup that I am drinking? Or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am being baptized?" Now they said to him, "We are able."

Now Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup that I am drinking, and you will be baptized with the baptism with which I am being baptized. But to sit at my right or at the left is not mine to give, but to those for whom it has been prepared."

And when the Ten heard, they began to be indignant about Jacob and Johannes. And Jesus called them to him, saying to them, "You know that those who presume to rule the nations are lords over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It is not so among you. On the contrary: whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many people."

Matthaiah's account indicates that it was Zebediah's wife, the boys' mother, who actually spoke on their behalf. Since the request had come indirectly, Markus merely indicates the source of the request: Jacob and Johannes were hoping to receive positions of authority in the kingdom.

Jesus asked them, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am drinking?" Markus' account adds, "...or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am being baptized?" Both of these analogies mean the same thing: suffering. Great suffering. "Are you prepared to suffer also?" They agreed that they could do it, and indeed they probably could.

By this time, they were probably making that statement confidently. They were aware that there would be suffering attached to being close to Jesus, and they claimed that they were able to handle it. So Jesus said that they would suffer, alright, but Jesus could not grant them positions.

The others became enraged. Given Jesus' reply, their anger probably arose over the two going behind their back to make a secret deal with Jesus for positions. Perhaps some of them wished they had thought of it first! Even up to the last day (see Lk 22), the Twelve were still considering holding positions over one another.

Jesus' reply directly related to their current attitude of being 'greater' or 'of higher rank.' Let's examine his teaching in detail:

A reference is made to "gentile" authority. Later (Mt 23), a parallel reference would be made to the positions held by Jews. Jesus attributes two sorts of functions to these gentile leaders.

The former of these is that they "are lords". All it means to "be lord" is to "occupy a superior position." Anyone who was viewed as holding a superior position of any kind was lord of his station, even if all that meant was being a shopkeeper or husband, in their society. This should not be misconstrued to imply that it is acceptable to occupy a superior position, so long as one's authority is not "abused." It is the holding of such a position that Jesus attacked.

The latter attribute is that of "exercising authority." The verb here has to do with decision-making. To exercise authority over another person is to make decisions for that person. If someone makes decisions for you (such as who may speak, who may teach, who may pray, when we will meet, how much money you should donate to the corporation, etc.), then they have authority over you in the sense that Jesus was addressing here.

But Jesus' followers were to participate in no such activities. Instead, they were to be servants and slaves to one another. This does NOT say, "If you want a position, you have to serve." This does say, "Instead of seeking a position, you need to seek servitude." Whoever tries to hold a position will be humbled. This is the same as "the first shall be last."

"--the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many people."

Jesus pointed to his own example. "I didn't assume a position. I came to serve." That's it. He doesn't claim anything for himself other than the role of the "suffering servant" of Isaiah 52-53. That's his role; that's the role of anyone who truly follows him: serving others until you die.

Bar-Timaeus Healed

46 And they went into Jericho. And as he was going out from Jericho, with his students and a considerable crowd, the son of Timaeus, Bar-Timaeus, who was a blind beggar, sat by the road. And when he heard that Jesus the Nazarene was there, he began to call out and say, "Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!" And many people were censuring him, so that he would be silent, but he called out rather more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

And Jesus stood and said, "Call for him," and they called for the blind person, saying to him, "Take courage, get up. He is calling for you." Now, casting away his cloak, he leapt up and went to Jesus. And Jesus answered him, saying, "What do you want that I should do for you?" Now the blind person said to him, "Rabboni: I want that I should see again." And Jesus said to him, "Get up. Your trust has saved you," and immediately he arose and followed him in the road.

Matthiaiah notes that there were two blind men healed here, but Markus mentions only one -- perhaps the one whose name he knew (since Matthiaiah omits the name). Who was Timaeus? We do not know, but it is possible that Markus' readers were aware of Timaeus and knew that Jesus had healed his blind son.

The crowds here played the role that Jesus' students played earlier -- they wanted to get rid of that beggar who was screaming. Markus follows Lukas, indicating that he was a beggar. By this time, Jesus' students did not call for the blind man to be sent away; at this point, we suppose that they have learned more completely about Jesus. In fact, Markus does not mention them at all.

With compassion, he healed Bar-Timaeus, "and immediately he arose and followed him." So simply, the once-blind man realized that God had sent Jesus. This example of trust re-established Jesus' identity (for Markus' readers) as he was about to enter Jerusalem. So much doubt had arisen among the people, but anyone reading the account should have no doubts.

The Triumphant Entry

11:1 And when they neared Jerusalem, Bethfagge, and Bethany, in the direction of the mountain of Olive Trees, he sent out two of his students and said to them, "Go up into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter into it you will find a colt, bound, on which no people have

ever sat. Untie it, and bring it. And if someone should say to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it out here."

And they went away and found a colt, bound to a door outside, at the street, and they let it go. And some people who were standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" But they told them just as Jesus had given the precept, and the people allowed them.

And they brought the colt to Jesus and cast their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many people spread out their cloaks on the road, but others were cutting off branches from the fields, and those who went ahead and those who followed were calling out, "Hosanna, "Worthy of praise is the one who comes in Yahweh's name!" Worthy of praise is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! "Hosanna in the highest places!"

And he entered into Jerusalem into the temple court. And after looking around at all things, since it was already the evening hour, he went out into Bethany with the Twelve.

Before entering Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of his students into town and bring Jesus' steed to him: a donkey. From the wording, this had been arranged by Jesus via messenger some time earlier. Markus omits the citation from Zechariah about the fulfillment of prophecy, instead following the two students into town.

Israel's enemies have been eliminated, and now the Messianic king rides in, declaring peace. He is both triumphant and humble. Peace with the nations will come (Acts 10) under Jesus.

As Jesus entered the city, people spread out branches in front of his steed, as they would do for a king, and they shouted praises. The crowds were fully acknowledging that he was the Anointed One. "Hosanna" was originally a call for God to save. It became a cry of extreme joy. Jesus was the promised descendant of David; he had come to his people in God's name.

Markus reports that Jesus and his students then went to Bethany because it was late.

12 *And the next day, while they were coming out from Bethany, he was hungry. And when he noticed from a large distance a fig tree that had leaves, he went to see if he would find anything on it after all. And when he came to it, he found nothing except leaves, for it was not the season of figs. And he answered, saying to it, "No one may eat fruit from you any longer -- for the age." And his students heard him.*

This cursing of the fig tree is found only in Markus' version. Both Elijah and Elisha are recorded as having issued one curse. Elijah's curse (1 Kgs 21:1-28) was on Ahab and Jezebel for having murdered Naboth in order to take his vineyard. The curse was, "In the place where your dogs licked Naboth's blood, dogs will lick your own blood." This was fulfilled soon, in 1 Kgs 22:38. Elisha's had cursed a band of juvenile delinquents (2 Kgs 2:23-25) who had referred to him by a slang term for leper and who had told him to die -- something that may have been understood as a threat to his life. This was fulfilled immediately, as God sent two bears to disperse the crowd, mauling forty-two members of the gang.

Jesus' curse on the fig tree was stronger, for it represented the end of the nation of Israel and Priestly Judaism. Since ritual religion was fruitless, the whole way of thinking was about to be torn down.

Cleansing of the Temple

15 And they came into Jerusalem. And after entering into the temple court, he began to throw out those who were selling and buying in the temple court, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling the doves. And he did not allow that anyone should carry a vessel through the temple court.

And he taught, saying to them, "Wasn't it written that, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a 'den of robbers'." And the high priests and the scribes heard, and they sought how they might destroy him, for they were afraid of him (for all the crowd was amazed at his teaching). And when evening happened, he went out of the city.

This is actually the SECOND temple cleansing, for Johannes reports that he did so the first time near the beginning of his work. Both times, the details were similar:

Jesus noticed that people had booths set up in the temple courts. It had become the custom for people to place themselves at the temple, selling things that might be useful during various temple ceremonies (such as animals for sacrifice). This was naturally a manner of convenience. If someone had been traveling, who was not carrying any animals with him, he might purchase one in the temple courts. In the event that he was not carrying local currency, money changers were also present. The common purpose of all of these people was not to provide some sort of service but to make money.

Jesus overturned their tables and prevented them from buying and selling. He was much nicer in this cleansing than in his earlier one, when Johannes reports that he made a whip and drove them out! Here, the second time, he merely created a scene. This scene not only stopped the people from making money; it also attracted attention, so that Jesus could teach.

First, he quoted Isa 56:7, saying that the purpose of the place was prayer. Then he cited an expression from Jer 7:11 -- the place was now a "den of robbers" because of the people trafficking merchandise. His attitude may have soured in three years, for Jesus' original complaint (Jn 2) was that they'd made it a supermarket. Now he said it was filled with thieves!

A Lesson from the Fig Tree

20 And as they were going by at morning, they noticed the fig tree, withered from its roots up. And Peter, remembering, said to him, "Rabbi, look. The fig tree that you cursed has been withered." And Jesus answered, saying to them, "Have trust in God. Indeed I am telling you that whoever should say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and cast into the sea,' and should not doubt in his heart but should trust that what he says happens, it will be his. On account of this I am telling you: As many things as you wish and pray for, trust that you receive, and they will be yours. And

when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father, the one who is in the heavens, may also forgive your wanderings."

Forecasting what was about to happen to Priestly Judaism, the fig tree was withered. Jesus' remedy (so that his students would not wither, spiritually) was Trust. If they trusted God, the Twelve would not only be fruitful, but also they would be miraculously abundant. Thus, the lesson of the fig tree is a lesson of trust. Matthaiah's account indicates that the withering had taken place immediately (at this time) rather than in two stages.

Jesus' Authority

27 And again they went into Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple court, the high priests and the scribes and the older people came to him, and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave this authority to you, that you might do these things?"

But Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one saying, and you answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. Was John's baptism from heaven or from people? Answer me."

And they reasoned to themselves, saying, "If we should say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then didn't you trust him?' But if we should say, 'From people,' we fear the crowd. For all hold that John really was a prophet." And they answered Jesus, saying, "We don't know."

And Jesus said to them, "Neither am I telling you by what authority I am doing these things."

Since Jesus was both healing (omitted by Markus) and teaching in the temple courts, some members of the priestly class questioned him. After all, they believed themselves to have the only authority in the temple. Did the High Priest give Jesus the authority to do what he was doing? No, and they knew it. So they asked about his authority. Which rabbinical school was he following? Or what priestly school? They all disagreed with him on major issues, so presumably, they believed he would claim that he was acting on his own. Instead, he turned their question back on them, asking about John the Baptizer.

Had they realized that John's ministry was from God, they should also recognize the Anointed One, and they would listen to both John and Jesus. Then they would know where his authority came from for sure. But how could the leaders acknowledge this? Jesus would have asked, "Why didn't you trust him?"

On the other hand, if they denied that God had sent John, they feared that the crowd would rise up against them, for the crowd knew that he had been a prophet.

So they replied, "We don't know," an answer that made them appear stupid, but at least Jesus couldn't trap them ... the way they had TRIED to trap him. So Jesus said, "Neither am I telling you by what authority I am doing these things." His refusal to answer showed the crowds that if the religious leaders could not understand John's authority, they would not understand his

authority either. His explanation of himself continues with analogies, one of which Markus records.

Priests Analogy: Kill the Messengers

12:1 *And he began to speak to them with analogies.*

"A person planted a vineyard, and placed a hedge around it, and carved out a wine vat, and constructed a tower, and leased it to gardeners. And he traveled abroad.

"And at the season, he sent out a slave to the gardeners, so that he might receive from the gardeners the fruits of the vineyard. And they took and whipped him, and sent him away empty.

"And again he sent out another slave to them. They wounded this one's head and dishonored him.

"And he sent out another one -- they killed this one -- and many others: some indeed they whipped, but some they killed.

"He still had one beloved son. He sent him out last to them, saying that, 'They will respect my son.' But those gardeners said to one another that, 'He is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' And they took and killed him, and they threw him out of the vineyard.

"Therefore, what will the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the gardeners, and he will give the vineyard to others.

The ruler is God; the vineyard is Israel. The class of leaders, and in particular the priestly class, are the gardeners. God sent various prophets, and the leaders did not listen, murdering the prophets. God sent Jesus, and they were about to kill him too, thinking that this would somehow save Israel. (In fact, Johannes reports it this way.)

What will God do? He will destroy the entire system! The new spiritual Israel will be under the care of "others" -- what we call Christians -- those who are following God from the heart.

"Haven't you even read this writing: 'a stone that was rejected by the builders, this one has become a cornerstone. This was done by Yahweh and is a wonderment in our eyes.'?"

And they sought to take hold of him, and they were afraid of the crowd, for they knew that he was telling the analogy to them. And they left him and went away.

Psalm 118:22-23 was regarded by many as being a sign of the coming of the "suffering servant," whom Christians take to be the Anointed One. Jesus cited that passage in reference to himself, adding a conclusion about the end of both the political state of Israel and the destruction of priestly "authority."

The author continues by saying that the high priests and Perushim "knew that he was telling the analogy to them." Well, he was being quite transparent at this point, wasn't he?

The builders, the leadership, have rejected Jesus, a foundation stone, but that stone has become the cornerstone -- the stone around which the entire structure (the new covenant) will be built. Therefore, those who rejected him will lose their place. Spiritual Israel was going to be given to others, who will produce the "fruits of the kingdom." These are the same fruits as the "fruit worthy of mental change" that both John and Jesus were talking about. Matthaiah's account notes that stumbling over Jesus' teachings was compared to a bruise, but rejecting his teachings (the stone falling on them) would cause the Jewish leadership to be pulverized -- reduced to powder.

Tribute to Caesar

13 And they sent out to him certain of the Perushim and the Herodians, so that they would trap him with speech. And they went and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and that you are not concerned for anyone, for you don't look into a person's face. On the contrary, you teach the God's way in truth. Is it legal to give tribute to Caesar or not? Should we give, or should we not give?"

But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius, so that I may see it." Now they brought one, and he said to them, "Whose image is this, and whose inscription?" Now they said to him, "Caesar's." Now Jesus said to them, "Give Caesar's things to Caesar, and God's things to God." And they were amazed at him.

The Perushim took off and met together, deciding to send their students and the Herodians to question Jesus -- trying to trap him, of course. The question was deliberately divisive. If he came out in support of paying tribute to Caesar, the Perushim would have been pleased, because they saw no problem living under Roman rule, as long as they had some autonomy. The Zadokites and especially the Zealots, however, would have loathed him. The Zealots in particular appear to have regarded the tribute collection as a demeaning act. They were Jews and should be subject to no one but God. On the other hand, if Jesus rejected the tribute collection, the Perushim could get him into hot water with the Roman government, saying he was a rabble rouser.

The question about legality concerned whether it was acceptable under the Torah or not. Jesus asked to see a denarius, the basic silver monetary unit, emblazoned with the image of Tiberius Caesar. The wording merely says that "they brought" one, probably to indicate that he did not actually touch the coin. This would make the Zealots happy. They were in favor of their own coinage and did not care for the use of Roman currency with so-called god-emperors on it, and deities on the reverse. Jesus asked:

"Whose image is this?"

"Caesar's." Naturally, it was Tiberius Caesar whose portrait appeared on the current denarius. His answer pleased both factions. In saying that it belonged to Caesar -- so let him keep it, he could be viewed as supporting the Zealots and their rejection of Roman rule. But he DID say to give the money to Caesar, which supported the idea of paying tribute to him.

Jesus added the final statement, to focus things back on God. Sure, give Caesar his property, but pay God his due!

Another Divisive Question: The Afterlife

18 *And Zadokites went to him, who say there is no resurrection. And they asked him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that, "If someone's brother should die" and leave behind a wife, "and leave no children," that, "his brother should take the woman and raise up seed for his brother."*

"There were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and he died, leaving no seed. And the second took her, and he died, not leaving behind any seed. And similarly with the third. And the seven did not leave any seed. Last of all, the woman died also. In the resurrection, which of theirs is the woman? For the seven had her as a wife."

Jesus said to them, "Aren't you going astray through this, knowing neither the writings, nor God's power? For when they rise from among the dead, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. On the contrary, they are like messengers in the heavens."

"But about the dead, that they rise: haven't you read in the scroll of Moses--at the bush--how God told him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaak, and the God of Jacob?" He is not a god of dead people, but of the living. You are going astray greatly."

After he passed a test from one set of opponents, the Zadokites approached him. They adhered more strongly to the teachings of the Torah. No afterlife is explicitly mentioned there, although it is alluded to in a few places. The Zadokites believed that "life after death" was symbolic of one's memory living on through one's descendants. They did not believe in any afterlife or "resurrection of the dead" as the Perushim believed.

They provided Jesus with a reminder of a precept from the Hebrew Bible: "If someone should die without having children, his brother will add his wife in marriage and raise up seed for his brother."

Then they gave him a situation to unravel. What if this happened seven times? Whose wife would the woman be in the so-called afterlife? The Zadokites' reasoning was that this passage showed that the notion of an afterlife was ridiculous.

The purpose of the precept, though, was not to grant one man his brother's wife. The purpose was to ensure that the man's lineage continued after his untimely death. The man's brother would "raise up seed for his brother," so that his lineage would not end. Therefore Jesus insulted the Zadokites: "Aren't you going astray...knowing neither the writings nor God's power?"

His solution to the problem was that people "will neither marry nor be given in marriage" in the afterlife. Instead, "they are like messengers."

On this issue, unlike many others, Jesus took a direct stand, clearly in support of an afterlife. He added a famous citation from Ex 3:6 -- "the god of Abraham...of Isaac...of Jacob." If he is still Abraham's god when speaking to Moses, then Abraham must still be alive (in the afterlife). The people understood his logic and were amazed.

Summing Up the Torah: the Duty of Humanity

28 And one of the scribes went toward him, having heard them debating. Noticing that he had answered them well, he asked him, "Which is the foremost precept of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost one is: "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God. Yahweh is one. And you will love Yahweh your God out of the whole of your heart, and out of the whole of your soul, and out of the whole of your mind, and out of the whole of your strength." The second one is this: "You will love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other precept greater than these."

And the scribe said to him, "Very well, teacher. You said in truth that "he is one, and there is no other besides him," and, "to love him out of the whole of your heart, and out of the whole of your understanding, and out of the whole of your strength," and "to love a neighbor as yourself" is abundantly more than all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And, noticing that he had answered discreetly, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from God's kingdom." And no one dared to question him any longer.

In chapters 5-7, Jesus attempted to explain by using detailed examples that the Torah was not meant to be taken as a series of regulations but as descriptives of various internal principles. In this "summary" portion, the author presents us Jesus' own summation of the entire Torah: all of the precepts, which many modern Jews believe number six hundred thirteen.

When the scribes heard that everyone had been answered "well," they gathered with Jesus and asked a trick question. It was a trick in that nearly anything he answered would cause debate. They could use such a question to see what teachings Jesus might be emphasizing to the exclusion of others.

Jesus answered directly, citing two sections of the Torah. The first citation is from Dt 6:5 (the passage which begins, "Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God. Yahweh is one.") This section is known simply as the "Shema Yisrael" (hear, O Israel), and holds a major place of importance among the rabbis and historically. The second quote comes from Lv 19:18, which deliberately prevents people from taking a self-centered mindset.

So much can be said here, because Jesus has replaced the regulatory view of the Torah with one internal principle: love. This "love" is commitment-based. It is not an emotion, as we understand emotions. One may love someone in this sense, and often feel things that "feel nothing like love." This "love" is a commitment to the other person's well-being, a desire to make that person's needs a priority -- even a higher priority than one's own!

If you love God, you will revere him; you will not profane him. If you love your neighbor, you won't steal from him, kill him, or sleep with his spouse. Thus, the whole Torah flows from love.

The parallel in Lukas indicates that Jesus was asked "Who is my neighbor?" and responded with what we call the analogy of the "good Samaritan." He was also commended for having answered the question infallably. Markus moves the statement about no longer questioning Jesus to this position, apparently considering that the following question actually originated with Jesus.

The Anointed One Identified

35 And, while teaching in the temple court, Jesus answered, saying, "How do the scribes say that the Anointed One is David's son? David himself said, with the holy Spirit, "Yahweh said to my lord, 'Sit at my right side until I place your enemies as a footstool for your feet.'" David himself says he is Lord; so how is he his descendent?" And the great crowd heard him gladly.

And he said during his teaching, "Watch out for those scribes who want to walk around in long robes, and who want greetings in the marketplaces and the front seats in the gatherings and front couches at the feasts. The ones who devour the households of widows and pray for a long time for appearance, these will receive an abundant judgment."

After going through an inquisition, Jesus turned a question around to the Perushim, asking them how the Anointed One could be David's son (his descendant). Here, Jesus was secretly about to point out to them that not only was he the Anointed One, but also, God had given the Anointed One a greater authority than even David had.

Markus' wording portrays the religious leaders as having nothing to say to the question. Jesus asked that if he is David's descendant, why does David call him "lord" (Psa 110:1 -- "Yahweh said to my Lord....")? An ancestor was revered over his descendants, and in particular, David was such a great figure in Jewish history. Without being able to acknowledge that the Anointed One had greater authority (from God), the leaders were unable to answer Jesus' question. Instead, they would begin making specific plans to have him murdered. The crowd, however, responded positively, according to Markus.

The Two Lepta

41 And, sitting opposite the treasury, he observed how the crowd was casting bronze coins into the treasury. And many rich people were casting in much. And one poor widow came and cast in two lepta; that is, a quadrans. And he called his students to him and said to them, "Indeed I am telling you that this poor widow has cast in more than all those who are casting into the treasury. For everyone has cast out of their abundance, but she cast out of her poverty -- as much as she had, her whole living."

This account is borrowed from Lukas, whose version is now paralleling Matthaiah's reasonably well. Markus makes a point of noting that Jesus was near the temple treasury at the time. The lepton was a small copper coin having very little value. The wealthy people believed that the amount of their gifts indicated their generosity, but the old widow's generosity was demonstrated in her desire to give whatever she had. True, she was giving to support a temple that would soon be destroyed, but it was her selfless attitude that Jesus praised. Although today there are to be no

temples or religious hierarchies, we might learn from the widow and give to help one another with such generosity!

The Destruction of the Temple

13:1 *And as he was going out from the temple court, one of his students said to him, "Teacher, look! What stones! And what buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Look at these great buildings. By no means will there be one stone left here on a stone which has not been cast down."*

And as he sat at the mountain of Olive Trees, opposite the temple, Peter, and Jacob, and John, and Andreas asked him by themselves: "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be concluded?"

Now Jesus began to say to them, "Watch out, so that no one deceive you. Many will come on my name, saying that, 'I am he,' and they will deceive many. Now when you hear of wars and reports of wars, do not be alarmed. It is necessary to happen. But the end will not be yet.

As the conversation begins, it is plain to see what is the topic of discussion. Looking at the temple and its "great buildings", Jesus indicated its certain destruction. Jesus was then asked, "When will these things be?" That is, when will the temple be thrown down? Confusion over the meaning arises because of the wording of the second question in Matthaiah's account: "And what will be the sign of the presence and of the conclusion of the age?" The "presence" or parousia, usually translated "coming," is the so-called second coming. And on account of this, many people identify the conclusion of the age with the end of the world. However, this is not what they were asking about.

Markus has: "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be concluded?" This connects well with what Lukas has. It is clear, then, from the wording in Markus that Matthew's "completion of the age" is when "all these things are about to be concluded." Lukas's account of the question reads: "Teacher, how then will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to happen?" The end of the world was not the subject of discussion. The end of the pre-Messianic age was seen as coinciding with the destruction of the temple. Thus, asking about its desolation was the same as asking about the end of the pre-Messianic age. Jesus indicated that many human beings would come along claiming to be the Anointed One. But Jesus' students knew that he was the genuine article: the son of God.

The First Revolt

"For nation will rise up upon nation, and kingdom upon kingdom. There will be earthquakes in places. There will be famines. These things are a beginning of sorrows.

"But watch out for yourselves. They will deliver you over to councils and to gatherings. You will be beaten, and you will stand before governors and kings on my account for a testimony to them.

"And it is necessary first for the good message to be heralded into all the nations. And when they lead you and deliver you over, do not be anxious ahead of time about what to speak. On the

contrary, whatever is given to you in that hour, speak it. For it is not you who is speaking but the holy Spirit.

"And brother will deliver brother over to the point of death, and father will deliver over child, and children will rise up upon parents and cause them to die. And you will be hated by all people on account of my name, but the one who endures to the end, this one will be saved.

This is Jesus' explanation as to what has to happen before the temple would be destroyed -- before the conclusion of the age. The famines and earthquakes are the same kind of apocalyptic talk as found in Revelation. The image of the war, however, is vivid. "They" will hand Jesus' students over to be persecuted. Who are they? So far, Jesus has not said, but in the context of Jesus' work on earth, he means the Jewish leaders. The reference to gatherings ("synagogues") also points this direction. In all of this horrid war, "the one who endures to the end...will be saved." This is essentially the same message of endurance as found in Revelation. Jesus includes in his description a positive point: that "the good message [would] be heralded into all the nations" before the end of the age. By the time of Paulus' letter to the Colossaeans, he was already capable of saying that the good message had been proclaimed to every creature under heaven (1:23); the message was everywhere. What Jesus had in mind would start in Acts 2, when Peter announced the message to Jews from "every nation under heaven" (Ac 2:5) and would continue throughout the years between his resurrection and the fall of the temple. This account adds to the description: "They will deliver you over to councils and to gatherings. You will be beaten, and you will stand before governors and kings on my account for a testimony to them." The words used here, councils and gatherings, indicate that until the time of the war, the Jewish leaders would form the largest resistance to the Christian message. "Councils" indicates the Sanhedrin, and "gatherings" is the English translation of the word usually transliterated as "synagogues." Because of these people, the students would "stand before governors and kings," merely because they were testifying about Jesus. In the case of Peter and Paulus, this was definitely the case. Tradition holds, too, that almost every one of the ones who heard Jesus say this wound up being martyred -- killed for Jesus' sake. We also read here of the betrayal as being "brother against brother," an indication that few of their Jewish kinsmen would stand up for the envoys during the affliction. All of this proved to be true.

The Temple's Fall

"Now when you notice "the desolating detestable thing" standing where it is necessary not to be - the reader should be mindful -- then those who are in Judea should flee into the mountains. Now the one who is on the roof should not descend, neither should he enter to take away anything from his house. And the one who is in the field should not return to the things that are behind to take away his cloak. Now woe to the ones who have babies in their bellies and the ones who are nursing in those days!

"Now pray, so that it would not happen in winter. For those days will be affliction; such a great affliction has not happened from the beginning of creation (which God created) until now--and by no means should it happen! And unless Yahweh cuts the days short, no flesh would be saved. But on account of the chosen ones, whom he chose, he has cut short the days.

The original "desolating detestable thing" is found in Daniel 11:31 and in Daniel 12. There, the expression indicates the presence of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the temple, where he sacrificed swine -- thus profaning the temple. Here, the expression indicates the presence of the Romans in the temple, led by Titus (son of Emperor Vespasian, who would later become Emperor himself). Suetonius' ancient account may allude to the possibility that Titus died regretting having invaded the temple. Basically, then, Jesus told his students that when the Romans entered the temple, the desolation of the city was coming soon. Therefore, Jesus' followers should "flee into the mountains." Fortunately, the siege of the city would be relatively short. In total, the attack on Jerusalem lasted from April of 70 CE until September -- only five months. By late Spring of 73, the fortress at Masada had been taken and the war was over.

Lukas has Jesus wording it as follows:

"Now when you notice Jerusalem surrounded by encampments, then you should know that its desolation has come near. Then those who are in Judea should flee...." There, Jesus urges his followers not to go back into Jerusalem. And so, it is clear that he is still talking about the destruction of the temple and desolation of Jerusalem.

False Prophets

"And then if someone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Anointed One! Look there,' do not trust him. For false Anointed Ones and false prophets will arise, and they will give signs and wonders toward the deception, if possible, of the chosen ones. But you watch out: I have told you all things ahead of time.

"But during those days, after that affliction, 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling' from the sky. 'And those powers that are in the heavens' will be shaken. And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with much power 'and glory.' And then he will send out the messengers and gather up his chosen ones from the four winds, from the farthest point of the land to the farthest point of the sky.

Jesus mentioned that people would show up on the scene before and during the war claiming to be prophets and the Anointed One. Indeed, the coming of the false prophets began immediately after Jesus died. Some are recorded in the New Testament. Some of the Jewish Christians began claiming that Jesus was not really the Anointed One; these are the one whom Johannes calls "the ones who oppose the Anointed One," throughout his first letter. Because of the transliteration "antichristos," many people believe that this is referring to a person to be called the Antichrist. Although Revelation never uses the term, people wrongly identify that figure with the wild animal (Beast) of Revelation. While Caesar (the wild animal) was certainly opposed to God's people, Johannes makes clear the identity of the "antichrists":

Beloved, do not trust every breathing, but examine the breathings to see if they are from God. Because many false prophets have gone out into creation. In this way we know God's breath: every breathing that acknowledges Anointed Jesus to have come in the flesh is from God, and no breathing that does not acknowledge Jesus is from God. And this is the one who opposes the Anointed One whom you have heard is coming. And now he is already in creation. (1J 4:1ff.)
Anyone who denies that Jesus was the Messiah is an "antichrist."

So when Jesus predicted that such persons would come, many such people did come -- before the fall of the temple.

Returning to what we read in Markus, Jesus adds to his mention of false prophets that the true presence (or second coming) would be obvious. Hmm.... Let's keep reading.

We see a description of the Second Coming. The second coming is the coming in judgment, which Jesus has mentioned earlier. The description of the heavenly portents, taken from Isaiah 13 (or Ezekiel 32, Amos 8), is the usual indication that God is coming in judgment. Then "all the tribes of the land will lament" -- over the judgment. The people were going to see "the Son of Man coming in the clouds" -- borrowed from Daniel, the 'coming in the clouds' also indicates judgment. The "gathering of the chosen ones" is what Johannes terms the "first resurrection" in Revelation. This statement of Jesus' is directed at the faithful, and so it focuses on the outcome of the war for those who remain loyal to God and Jesus. Lukas' version expressly mentions "the things that are coming to the Empire" (21:25-8).

Once again, Jesus has stayed within the context of the First Revolt (66-73 CE). When Jesus comes, the redemption of the faithful is nearing. This redemption will become the state of affairs during the Messianic Age -- the age that began as the war ended in 73 CE.

28 *"Now the analogy from the fig tree. When its branches have already become tender and it puts out leaves, you know that the summer is near. Similarly also, when you notice these things happening, know that it is near at the doors. Indeed I am telling you that this generation will by no means pass away until all of these things happen to them. The sky and the land will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.*

"But no one except the Father knows about that day or hour: neither the messengers in heaven or the son. Look, watch out. For you don't know when the season is. Like a person, one who travels abroad, leaves his household and gives each of his slaves the authority to do his work, he also gave the doorman a precept, so that he would watch. Therefore, watch -- for you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, if at evening, or at midnight, or at the rooster crow, or at morning)--lest he come suddenly and find you sleeping. Now what I tell you, I am saying to all people: watch."

Jesus gave an analogy to indicate that his listeners should watch carefully for these things. What things? The advent of false prophets. The surrounding of Jerusalem by Roman armies. So, "when you notice all these things happening, know that it (the Second Coming) is near, at the doors." In case there is doubt as to how soon the temple would be destroyed and the age would end, he adds, "this generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen to them." Lukas has: "In the same way also, when you notice these things happening, know that God's kingdom is near. Indeed I am telling you that this generation will by no means pass away until even all things have happened." This occurrence is also called the coming of God's kingdom.

Markus's record has already foretold this (Mk 8:38-9:1), talking about the people who were alive in his day. Jesus' final phrase, "my words will by no means pass away," is talking about his

prophetic statements about the destruction of Jerusalem. They should not be extended further than that.

The Conspiracy Expands

14:1 *Now after two days was the Passover; that is, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the high priests and the scribes were seeking how to lay hold of him with deceit, to kill him. For they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a riot of the people."*

And while he was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining, a woman who had an alabaster box of balsam (of genuine, high priced, spikenard) came. And she broke open the alabaster box and poured it down on his head. Now some were indignant (to themselves): "For what reason has this loss of balsam happened? For this balsam was capable of being sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they agitated her.

But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why are you bringing her troubles? She has worked out a good deed in me. For you always have the poor with you, and you are able to do good for them when you want, but you do not always have me. The one who has this balsam has done this to anoint my body beforehand for burial. Now indeed I am telling you: wherever the good message is heralded, in the whole of creation, this thing that she did will also be spoken for her remembrance."

And Judah Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve, went out to the high priests, so that he might deliver Jesus over to them. Now when they heard, they rejoiced and promised to give him silver. And he sought how he might deliver him over seasonally.

Markus' account follows Lukas' here, omitting some of the analogies contained in Matthaiah's version. In this case, the author emphasizes a particular incident.

There are various traditions surrounding the identity of the woman who anointed Jesus, but Markus' account says only that she met Jesus at the home of Simon the leper. The expenditure of valuable ointment in anointing was considered an act of devotion, and in this case, Jesus interprets the anointing as though it were the ritual preparation of a body -- his body -- for burial.

Of interest here is the reaction of Judah Iscariot. His concern over the great expense seems genuine, as though he had been expecting Jesus to live -- despite all of his talk about death. The segment concludes with Judah leaving immediately afterward, in order to betray Jesus. Because of the timing, it is quite possible that Judah's plan was not to have Jesus executed but to force him to declare himself to be the kingly Messiah. We only know, however, the results of Judah's actions. They follow this in all four accounts.

Preparing an Early Repast

12 *And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his students said to him, "Where do you want us to go out and prepare, for you to eat the Passover?" And he sent out two of his students, and he said to them, "Go up into the city, and a person bearing a*

pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he should enter, say to the ruler of the house that the teacher says, 'Where is the guest chamber, where I may eat the Passover with my students?' And he will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. And prepare the Passover for us there." And the students exited and went into the city, and they found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

As the sun began to set, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was approaching. Although strictly speaking, only the second day of the seven-day feast was THE Passover, colloquially, people celebrated the feast at any time during the week. In fact, the entire week was known as the "Passover" (Lk 22:1), even though the proper name was the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

However, it was inappropriate to eat the meal until after dusk. Between evening and dusk was the time for preparation. Thus, Jesus directed his students to go and prepare the passover meal with him.

Here, it is plain that Jesus had made some pre-arrangements, for Jesus informs his students to find a specific person and tell him who they were. Markus copies Lukas' account, which says that the signal for finding this person was that he'd be carrying a pitcher of water. This would have been normal only for women and servants. Consequently, if he were male and not a servant, he would have been easy enough to locate -- unless 1000 other feastgoers were using the same signal!

Is It I?

17 *And when evening happened, he came with the Twelve. And as they were reclining and dining, Jesus said, "Indeed I am telling you that one of you who are dining with me will deliver me up." They began to be sorrowful and to say to him, one by one, "Is it I?"*

But he said to them, "It is one of the Twelve -- the one who dips into the dish with me. Because indeed the Son of Man is going, just as it was written about him. But woe to that person through whom the Son of Man is delivered up! It would be a nicer thing for him if that person had not been born!"

And as they dined, he took and blessed a loaf, and he broke it and gave it to them. And he said, "Take. This is my body." And he took a cup and gave thanks, and he gave to them, and they all drank from it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out on behalf of many. Indeed I am telling you that by no means will I drink any longer of this product of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in God's kingdom."

Markus all but ignores the Passover seder, it being unimportant to his cause. However, the dipping of the pieces of bread takes place within that context. As Jesus was dining with the Twelve, they were reclining (as opposed to sitting), which was normal during such a meal. Some people ask why it was possible for one person and not others to hear what was being said. The way that they were positioned, with such a large crowd, if a person spoke softly only the ones closest to him could hear.

Markus includes only those events that advance the progress toward the crucifixion. Jesus said, "Indeed I am telling you that one of you who are dining with me will deliver me up." Here, Markus' wording is more precise than Matthaiah's, for in his account Jesus does not say "you who are dining with me." This revelation from Jesus must have come as a shock. Jesus would not only be captured but betrayed, and betrayed by one of his closest friends. Jesus has intimated this before, but such a blunt statement-- so close to the time of the event -- prompted worry and discussion. Everyone seemed to be hoping that it wouldn't be THEM. "Is it I?"

Markus reports that Jesus pointed out explicitly that his betrayer would be "one of the Twelve." Then Jesus gave a secret sign -- that the one who dipped a little piece of bread in the bowl with Jesus would be the betrayer. Of course, this was probably a bowl of spices (or the bitter herb sauce, if that tradition was in place) in which all would dip their pieces of lamb and bread. Those who heard him say this probably tried hard NOT to dip into the bowl at the same time as Jesus. Therefore, it might be said that they were more interested in what THEY were doing than in what Judah or the others were doing.

Judah Iscariot was the one who dipped his hand into the bowl with Jesus (see Johannes), and Jesus apparently handed him a piece of bread and lamb. The others were unaware that this had happened, but Judah asked quietly, "Is it I, Rabbi?" "You have said it." At this point, the other accounts point out that Judah left the meeting, with the others thinking that Jesus had instructed him to go purchase something.

Jesus took a piece of matzoh, one of the elements of the seder. He thanked God for it, broke it, and gave it to his students, saying, "This is my body." In doing so, Jesus took one of the emblems of the Passover and made it reflect forward onto what was about to happen to him. His body would be broken for them.

Jesus took one of the cups of wine, thanked God for it, and poured some into their (smaller) cups, saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is being poured out on behalf of many." Another wording has "this is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor 11). Jesus took another of the elements of the Passover meal and made it reflect not only on his coming crucifixion but also on the fact that his crucifixion would inaugurate the new covenant that was proclaimed by Jeremiah (31:31f.).

It is also interesting that Markus does not report the line that only Lukas' account contains, "Do this for my remembrance." This is a sure indicator that Jesus was not starting a ritual during the dinner. Instead, the accounts indicate that he was trying to focus them on their relationships with one another. See my notes on Lukas for more.

As usual, Markus deliberately omits things that are not central to his focus. Although Lukas reports that the group had a conversation about equality, the focus here now is the crucifixion. The washing of the feet (Jn 13), talk about equality (Lk 22), and discussion about what will happen after Jesus leaves (Jn 14-6) are less important to the author at this point. As with Matthaiah, Markus must bring us to the crucifixion.

Prediction of Peter's Denial

26 *And after singing, they went out to the mountain of Olive Trees. And Jesus said to them, "All of you will stumble, because it was written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after my raising, I will go ahead of you into Galilaiah."*

But Peter said to him, "Even if all of them stumble: on the contrary, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Indeed I am telling you that today, this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he spoke more abundantly, "If it is necessary for me to die with you, by no means will I deny you!" Now all said similarly also.

Jesus initiated the singing of the Hallel (Passover psalms), and the group went out to the Mountain of Olive Trees.

As they reached the mountain, Jesus delivered a prophecy. This prophecy was very specific about two things that would happen. The latter of these involves the resurrection, which has not received much attention thusfar. Jesus was going to be raised and meet the Twelve up north in Galilaiah.

The former prophecy cites Zech 13:7, part of a Messianic passage. That passage continues, "'In the whole land,' says Yahweh, 'two thirds will be cut off and perish, and one third will be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire and refine them as one refines silver and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them.'" The passage concludes with the traditional New Covenant saying, that God would say "They are my people," and the people will proclaim, "Yahweh is my God."

The passage in Zechariah starts with the suffering of the Anointed One and continues through the events of the first century, culminating in the slaughter of Jews (who defended Jerusalem and Masada) by the Romans. The faithful ones would be "refined" as in fire. In applying this passage to himself, Jesus clearly identified himself as the Messiah, although for Markus now such identification is unnecessary.

All of Jesus' students then denied that they would "be scattered" or desert Jesus. Peter was particularly vocal, in his usual style, but Jesus predicted: "this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."

Naturally, Peter was confident. With his reply, he expressed confidently that indeed he understood what was about to happen to Jesus, even if he did not know the details. Were they all going to be scattered? The reader must see for himself.

Something should be said about the "rooster crow." Normally, there would have been no roosters (male chickens) in Jerusalem. Some say that the rarity of a rooster crowing is what Jesus was pointing to. However, others say that the trumpets which sounded the nightly watches, separated by four hours each, were called the "rooster crowing." Markus was particular in noting that it would be the late night watch trumpet that crowed when Peter had denied Jesus three times.

In the Garden

32 *And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane, and he said to his students, "Sit here until I have prayed." And he took along Peter and Jacob and Johannes with him, and he began to be astonished and anguished. And he said to them, "'My soul is surrounded with sorrow" to the point of death. Remain here and watch."*

And he went ahead a little way, and fell to the ground, and prayed so that, if possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But not what I want; on the contrary, what you want."

And he went and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Aren't you strong enough to watch for one hour? Watch and pray, so that you would not come into trial. Indeed, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same message.

And again he went and found them sleeping, for their eyes were burdened, and they did not know what to answer him. And he went the third time and said to them, "Have you been sleeping and resting for the remaining time?" Stop. The hour has come. Look: the Son of Man is being delivered over into the hands of sinners. Get up. Let's go. Look: the one who is to deliver me up is near."

When Jesus and his students reached the garden, he took his three dearest friends with him to a quiet place to pray. These were the same three, Peter and the sons of Zebediah, who had observed the transfiguration -- and who had been with him since the beginning, enjoying a close relationship with the Master. Lukas reports that it was Jesus' custom to go to this location, which explains how Judah and the band of soldiers knew where he was.

This time, the mood was a grim one. Jesus began by quoting a portion of Psa 42:6 -- "My soul is surrounded with sorrow," adding "to the point of death." That psalm is a cry of someone longing for God's presence, the call of someone who feels forgotten but yet knows that God is near.

Jesus began to pray. His prayers appeared as calls for help, long and painful, lasting an hour in all. The content was summarized by the statement, "Take this cup away from me." Jesus knew the full extent of what was about to happen, and he longed not to endure it. But, being who he was, he subjected himself meekly to God's greater knowledge and plan, uttering the famous words, "But not what I want; on the contrary, what you want."

By this time, it was probably after 10PM, and Jesus' three students were asleep. Waking them, he urged them to be vigilant. For probably another hour, Jesus continued to pray, asking that he be allowed not to be crucified unless it is impossible. The students fell asleep this time too.

He went a third time, possibly for a third hour, and continued to pray similar things. Through his prayers, he found the strength to do what he knew God required of him. The other synoptics say the same things. The account of Johannes skips straight to the arrest...perhaps because that author was asleep!

After the third prayer session, Jesus returned to the three and to the Eleven, noting that his betrayer was near. At this time, recall, the Eleven were still unaware that Judah Iscariot was part of the plot to arrest Jesus.

Jesus Arrested

43 And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judah, one of the Twelve, happened by, and with him was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the high priests and the scribes and the older people. Now the one who delivered him up had given them a signal, saying, "Whoever I kiss is the one. Take hold of him, and lead him away safely." And immediately after coming, he went to him and said, "Rabbi," and he passionately kissed him. Now they threw their hands onto him and took hold of him. But one of those who were standing by drew a sword and struck the high priest's slave, and severed his earlobe.

And Jesus answered, saying to them, "As upon a robber, you have come out with swords and clubs to take me. By day, I was directed toward you in the temple courts, teaching, and you did not lay hold of me. But this is so that the writings would be fulfilled." And they all left him and fled. And a certain young man followed him, whose nakedness was wrapped by a linen cloth. And they took hold of him, but he abandoned the linen cloth and fled naked.

Judah is immediately presented to us, as soon as Jesus has finished speaking. Judah had arranged a signal for the Jewish leadership, so that they would know whom to arrest -- remember that it was the middle of the night. "Whoever I kiss is the one. Take hold of him."

Having said that, he walked into the group, approached Jesus, and greeted him with a kiss. Markus omits Jesus' question to Judah about what he wanted, skipping straight to the soldiers' approach. These soldiers were part of a manipule (100 men or more) who were attached to the temple. With permission from the Roman government, they were allowed to act as temple guards or police.

Jesus had told his students to carry swords, but he never intended violence. When Peter (named in Johannes' account) cut off the ear of the high priest's slave, Jesus' reaction to the attack on the servant is not given in this account. Instead, we read only of his words to the crowds.

Jesus went away peacefully because it was necessary to fulfill the writings. Even as he was being arrested, Jesus pointed out his Messianic fate. Lukas adds that this time was their hour -- the authority of darkness.

Notice, though, that the faithfulness of his students already has come into question. Markus indicates unflatteringly that all of them fled the scene, leaving Jesus in the hands of the religious leaders and the Romans. At this point, Markus adds a detail that many believe may be intended to point to himself (the author). A "certain young man" began to follow Jesus, but after his garment was grabbed, he fled in his underwear ("naked"). Was the author intending to include himself? Or was this encounter added only to demonstrate that the average person trusted Jesus as Messiah to a point, but when trouble came ... he (they) abandoned Jesus? Proponents of the

so-called "Secret Gospel of Mark" claim that this passage is evidence that Markus' account was actually longer at one time.

Jesus Before Kaiaphas

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest, and the high priests and the older people and the scribes came together. And Peter followed him from a large distance, as far as going into the palace of the high priest. And he was sitting together with the officers, and he was being warmed facing the light.

Now the high priests and the whole of the Sanhedrin sought testimony against Jesus, for his being put to death, and they did not find any. For many testified falsely against him, and the testimonies were inconsistent. And some stood up and testified falsely against him saying, "We heard him saying that, 'I will destroy this handmade temple and through three days I will construct another which is not handmade.'" And not even their testimony was consistent this way.

And the high priest stood up in the middle and asked Jesus, saying, "Are you answering nothing to what these people are testifying against you?" But he was silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, saying to him, "Are you the Anointed One -- the son of the Blessed One?" Now Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right side of power and "coming with the clouds of the sky.""

Now the high priest ripped his clothes and said, "Why do we still have any need of witnesses?! You heard his evil speaking! What is apparent to you?" Now they all condemned him to be deserving of death.

And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to punch him, and to say to him, "Divine," and the officers slapped him with open hands.

Although the high priest had no power to condemn Jesus to die, he had the authority to test whether Jesus had said or done anything worthy of death. After that, he could have Jesus taken to the Romans for punishment -- if he found it necessary. Kaiaphas (Kaifa) had involved himself very little in the affair thusfar, although he was working behind the scenes, for Johannes records that he had predicted earlier that Jesus would die on behalf of the Jewish nation (Jn 11:49-52).

Violating the precept against bearing false testimony, and violating the precept that they should not carry on business during a festival, the whole Sanhedrin convened, seeking to find people who would lie to get Jesus convicted. Markus provides few details, only noting that the witnesses' testimony was inconsistent.

Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple, but not in that context. What appears here is true, but Jesus had been speaking about his own body. To the Jewish leadership, this was a threat to the temple. Markus gives us only the gist of what happened.

Jesus did not answer the charges against him; they were ridiculous, but when asked whether he was the Anointed One, Markus' Jesus simply acknowledged that he was. In Matthaiah's version, Jesus' comment, "You have said it," may be taken as agreement with Kaiaphas, or it may simply mean, "That is your opinion." At his reference to Psalm 110, "the high priest ripped his clothes" in anger, which the Torah forbade him from doing (Lv 21:10). Consequently, at this point, Kaifa had defiled himself. At that point, he accused Jesus of speaking evil, a crime worthy of death (Lv 24:16) under the Torah. Therefore, those in attendance judged that the Torah condemned him.

Then they spit in his face, punched him, and slapped him. Having blindfolded him, they asked whether he could tell who had struck him -- a mockery of his status as a prophet.

Peter's Triple Denial

66 And since Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's servant girls went there. And when she noticed Peter being warmed, she looked at him and said, "You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor comprehend what you are saying." And he went outside into the outer court, and a rooster crew.

And the servant girl noticed him and began to say again to those who were standing around, "He is one of them." But he denied it again.

And after a little time, those who were standing around said to Peter, "Truly you are one of them, for you too are Galilaian." But he began to curse and swear: "I don't know this person that you are talking about." And immediately a rooster crew a second time. And Peter remembered the declaration as Jesus had told him, that, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And as he reflected, he cried.

Johannes was known to the high priest, and his own account reveals that he was allowed to enter the room where the trial was held, but Peter stood outside, warming himself by a fire. He was in a position where he could see what was going on, and as he watched, a servant girl said she had witnessed seen him with Jesus. Peter denied it. Some time passed, with Peter walking around, and a watch trumpet sounded.

A second witness provided corroboration that Peter was one of Jesus' associates. He denied it again. As the group of servants noticed that he spoke with a Galilaian accent, he started cursing and swearing that he didn't know Jesus. He had been there for several hours, and a watch trumpet sounded. Peter recalled what Jesus had said, looked at Jesus, and ran off to cry. He would never deny Jesus again.

Jesus Before Pontius Pilatus

15:1 *And immediately at morning, the high priests made a council with the older people and scribes, and the whole Sanhedrin, binding Jesus, and they brought him to Pilatus and delivered him over.*

And Pilatus asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" But he answered him, saying, "You are saying it." And the high priests accused him of many things, but Pilatus asked him again, saying, "Aren't you answering anything? Look at how many things they are accusing you of." But Jesus answered nothing any longer, and so Pilatus was astonished.

When morning came, this was the morning of the first day of the feast -- the day when paschal lambs were normally slaughtered in preparation for the Passover proper, which would begin that evening. Jesus spent that morning being led from Kaifa to Pontius Pilatus, the Roman Governor of the region. Only by transferring Jesus to Roman authority could the religious leaders have Jesus crucified as a criminal.

Pontius Pilatus was Governor of the Judean area for a short time, and it is rumored that he received the post because he was not a good politician. The term "governor" used in the NT is correct, for the title "Procurator" was not used until after Pilatus.

In all four accounts, Pontius is portrayed as a man whose life was ruled by the masses. He had power, but feared those over him as well as fearing the populus. Toward Jesus, he displays curiosity and even compassion, but the accounts show him to be more concerned about what others would do to him than about murdering a man who could be a deity. Jesus always gave Pilatus quizzical answers, if he replied at all.

"Are you the King of the Jews?" "You are saying it." Then he kept silent, so that Pilatus asked him to defend himself. No reply, prompting the governor to wonder about him.

If you were in Pilatus' place, you might wonder too. Who is this guy? Why do they want to kill him so badly? Why doesn't he speak up for himself? He doesn't seem to have done anything wrong...Does he really claim to be a king?

Pilatus is Pressured

6 *Now at a feast, he would release one prisoner to them -- the one they asked for. Now there was the one who was called Bar-Abbas, who had been imprisoned with the rebels, who had done murder during the revolt. And the crowd went up and began to ask, just as he did for them. But Pilatus answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" For he knew that the high priests had delivered him over on account of envy. But the high priests stirred up the crowd, so that he would release Bar-Abbas to them instead.*

Now Pilatus again answered, saying to them, "Then what should I do with the King of the Jews?" But again they called out, "Crucify him!" But Pilatus said to them, "For what bad thing that he has done?" But they called out abundantly, "Crucify him!"

Now Pilatus, willing to make satisfaction for the crowd, released Bar-Abbas to them and delivered Jesus over after whipping him, so that he would be crucified.

Pilatus apparently looked forward to releasing Jesus during the feast, when there was a custom to free one prisoner. In Markus' account, Pilatus merely offers Jesus to them, but the crowd

demands that the murdering son of Abbas be released instead. Markus says that Pilatus said this because "he knew that the high priests had delivered him over on account of envy." He wanted them to be forced to choose to set Jesus free.

But the religious leadership "persuaded the crowds" to ask for Bar-Abbas instead of Jesus, so when Pilatus asked them, they said they wanted Bar-Abbas released, and Jesus crucified. "For what bad thing that he has done?" Again, Pilatus found nothing wrong with Jesus. Johannes' account tells more of Jesus' encounter with the Roman, stating bluntly that from a certain point on, Pilatus sought to free Jesus. The crowd again indicated that they wanted Jesus crucified, and the leadership stirred up the people into a riot. The governor's question of what to do with Jesus was apparently met with a surprise answer. The general tone of the event in all four accounts is that Pilatus expected them to want Jesus to go free as well, but the people had been stirred to near uproar.

With that, Pilatus released Bar-Abbas and gave Jesus to them to be crucified. All of this was necessary due to the fact that the Jewish leadership had no authority to have anyone crucified. Again, though, Markus (following Matthaiah) has deliberately shortened his account of the events of the morning, so that the crucifixion scene comes quickly.

The Crucifixion of the Anointed One

16 *Now the soldiers led him away into the courtyard, which is the Praetorium, and they called together the whole manipule. And they clothed him with purple and placed around him a braided crown of acanthus. And they began to greet him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck his head with a reed, and they spit on him, and (putting their knees down) they bowed down to him.*

And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple garment and clothed him with his own clothes.

And they led him out, so that they might crucify him. And they forced a certain Simon (a Kurenian who was passing by, having come from a field), the father of Alexandros and Rufus, that he would take up his cross.

After the sentencing, Pilatus' soldiers mocked Jesus, placing a military cloak over him (pretending it was a royal robe). They braided a crown of acanthus (as though it were a laurel wreath) and put it on his head. The acanthus plant has stickers, but the expression "crown of thorns" is inaccurate. The stickers on the acanthus plant are not long (as in some portraits), nor were they meant to cause pain. The acanthus plant was a common plant, and its purpose on Jesus' head was a mockery. During this mocking, they also spit on Jesus and struck him with the reed. Then they stripped him naked and led him out to be crucified.

NOTE: None of the four accounts says that Jesus dropped the crossbar to the cross which he was supposed to carry. Catholic tradition holds that he dropped it three times before Simon the Kurenian was picked from the crowd and forced to carry the crossbar. Markus deliberately mentions that Simon was the father of two other men, and so possibly these men would have been known to the readers.

22 *And they carried him to the Golgotha place, which is translated, Skull Place. And they gave him wine mixed with myrrh, which he did not take. And they crucified him and "divided his clothes, casting lots for them," for what each should take. Now it was the [sixth] hour, and they crucified him.*

And the inscription of his accusation was written over him: "The King of the Jews." And they crucified two robbers with him, one at the right and one at his left.

And the passers-by spoke evil to him, "shaking their heads" and saying, "Oh, the one who would destroy the Temple and construct it in three days! Save yourself! Come down from the cross!" The high priests likewise were mocking to one another, with the scribes, saying, "He saved others. Isn't he able to save himself? The Anointed One. The King of Israel! He should descend now from the cross, so that we would see and trust!" And the ones who were being crucified together with him reproached him.

They brought Jesus to "Skull Place," where they nailed him to the cross. The nails were hammered through his ankles and wrists (not through the palms of his hands). In some cases, people were tied with rope as well, to prevent their arms from falling down. One foot is often depicted on a prop. If Jesus was crucified this way, the prop allowed the crucified person to push his torso up into a position that made breathing easier, for once the person lost energy to breathe, he would suffocate. Being able to breathe, the crucifixion would last longer. When the thieves' legs were broken (later), this prevented them from propping themselves up to breathe, and so they'd die faster.

They offered Jesus a bitter drink, which he refused.

The soldiers sat down and cast lots for one of his garments, which was seamlessly woven.

The timing here is a problem, for Markus' account alone reads that it was the *third* hour. Any popular theory of composition for the synoptics has them dependent on one another; therefore, it is highly improbable that three authors intended to write "sixth" while another wrote "third." Instead, it is more likely that a very early manuscript of Markus' version held the early Greek letter form of six -- a digamma, which resembles the Latin letter "F". A later scribe, not recognizing the digamma (which was all but eliminated from the language by this time), copied it as a gamma: Γ. And gamma was read as "three" instead of the intended "six."

Pilatus also had ordered an accusation placed over Jesus' head, in several languages. In one form or another, it read, "This is Jesus (of Nazareth), King of the Jews." In its Latin form, the expression is abbreviated: I.N.R.I., which is what you will find on crucifixes that are sold in stores. Johannes reports that the Jewish leaders were upset that Pilatus had written, "King of the Jews." They wanted him to write that Jesus had CLAIMED to be King of the Jews. Pilatus replied, "What I have written, I have written," an indication from Johannes that even Pilatus knew who Jesus was (in whatever capacity he could understand).

The others report that thieves were crucified with Jesus, but Markus virtually omits them as unnecessary -- attributing to the crowd in general anything that they may have said. As the

crowds mocked Jesus, "those who were crucified with him" agreed with the mocking. Lukas notes that one of the thieves relented.

Jesus Dies

33 *And after the sixth hour happened, darkness happened to the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice: "'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani," which is, translated, "'My God, my God, for what reason have you abandoned me?'" And when some of those who were standing by heard, they said, "Look, he's calling for Elijah." Now someone ran, and, filling a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Leave him. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down." But Jesus, uttering a great sound, expired.*

And the curtain of the Temple was divided in two from top to bottom. Now when the centurion that was standing by opposite him noticed that he expired, he said, "Truly, this person was a god's son."

This darkness was symbolic of the darkness that reigned in Israel, perpetuating and necessitating Jesus' murder. The darkness lasted for three hours, from noon until 3PM.

At 3PM, Jesus shouted in Aramaic, and some heard "Eloi" (God) and thought that he was calling for Elijah. The account reports that he took a drink then, but many people were still mocking him, to see if Elijah would come. The reason for Jesus' citation of Psalm 22:1 ("Oh my God...") was both as a shout of human emotion and as a final sign, pointing out to any pious Jews present that David's prophecy (in Psalm 22) was coming true before their eyes.

Verse 1 contains Jesus' shout.

Verses 6-8 talk of the mocking he received, including the phrase, "skaking their heads," which is applied to the crowd.

Verse 8 in particular is the same as what the religious leaders say of him: "The Anointed One. The King of Israel! He should descend now from the cross, so that we would see and trust!"

Verses 12-13 describe the religious leaders -- his enemies

Verses 14-15 describe the crucifixion itself: bones out of joint, heart feeling melted, strength wasted, tongue dry.

Verse 16 adds, "They have pierced my hands and feet."

Verse 18 refers to the soldiers taking his clothes and casting lots for his robe.

Verses 19 and following refer to the fact that although the author FELT forsaken, he realized that God would never abandon his beloved one. "He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted one; and he has not hid his face from him, but he has heard, when he cried to him."

After pointing these things out, Jesus spoke again and then died -- at the time during the afternoon when the Passover lambs were normally sacrificed, for the meal that evening.

At that, "the curtain of the Temple was divided in two from top to bottom," standing as a symbol that the Jewish system was in the process of being destroyed and possibly representing that

temples and rituals were not necessary for true worship. Jesus had shown people the way into the true "holy place" (see Hebrews 9).

A centurion was in charge of the triple crucifixion -- they would have kept people away from the bodies and prevented general mayhem. When he noticed the things that were happening, he and those with him proclaimed, "Truly, this was a god's son." Not knowing the Hebrew God but knowing the charges against Jesus, even these impious Gentiles realized that whatever it was Jesus claimed for himself, he WAS that person. Observe that the Jewish religious leaders, who were also standing right there, said nothing of the sort.

The Burial

40 Now there were also women watching from a large distance, among whom were Miriam the Magdalene, and Miriam the mother of Jacob the Little One and of Yosef, and Salome. When he had been in Galilaiah, they followed him and served him. And many others were there, who had gone up together with him into Jerusalem.

And since evening was already happening, since it was the Preparation Day which is before a Sabbath, Yosef from Arimathea came: a ranking Senator who was also expecting God's kingdom. He daringly entered to Pilatus and asked for Jesus' body. Now Pilatus wondered if he had already died, and he called aside the centurion and asked him if already he had finished dying. And after obtaining knowledge from the centurion, he gave the corpse to Yosef.

And after buying linen, he took him down and wrapped him in the linen and placed him in a tomb which had been carved out of rock. And he rolled a stone over the door of the tomb.

The other accounts indicate that Jesus' body was taken off the cross before sundown, so that there would not be a crucifixion during the Passover Day -- remember that the reckoning of the start of a "day" (in both Roman and Jewish time) began at sundown.

Although the male students (save Johannes) had fled the scene, many of Jesus' female students were nearby when he was crucified. These women sought to have the body of Jesus placed in a fitting grave.

Yosef of Arimathea, a wealthy student of Jesus (who conducted his affairs secretly) got permission from Pilatus to have Jesus' body taken and placed in a tomb that had been hewn out of rock for Yosef himself. And so, Jesus was "with the wealthy in his death" (Isa 53). The body was placed into the sepulcher, and a large boulder was rolled over the entrance.

The Empty Tomb

16:1 Now Miriam the Magdalene and Miriam the mother of Yosef observed where he was placed. And after the Sabbath happened, Miriam the Magdalene, and Miriam the mother of Jacob, and Salome bought spices, so that they might come anoint him. And very early on the first of the week, they went to the tomb, after the sun rose. And they said to themselves, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?"

And, looking up, they observed that the stone had been rolled away, for it was exceedingly large. And after entering into the tomb, they noticed a youth sitting at the right side, with a white robe wrapped around him, and they were astonished. But he said to them, "Don't be astonished. You are seeking Jesus the Nazarene, the one who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. Look at the place where they placed him. But go tell his students, including Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilaiah. You will see him there, just as he told you."

And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and amazement held them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

At around dawn on the first day of the week, several of the women (including Miriam of Magdala and Jesus' mother) went to the sepulcher to anoint him with spices. Assistance from the guards would have been necessary to accomplish this, since there was no way for them to roll the heavy stone away from the entrance to the tomb.

Markus and Lukas conflict as to when the spices were purchased -- before or after the Sabbath. Nevertheless, they were there, and they had aromatic spices with them.

Markus omits the detail about the divine messenger rolling the stone away with an earthquake, but when the women arrive the messenger is there. This messenger told the women that they need not be surprised (Matthaiah says "afraid"), because Jesus had risen from the dead, just as he said. Then he showed them the empty tomb. Finally, the messenger pointed out that Jesus would meet them all in Galilaiah, as he had promised.

Markus then depicts the women as leaving the area terrified. Some say that a resurrection appearance in Galilaiah naturally follows from the information that the author has already provided. They claim that the original ending, then, must have been lost very early. Others claim that the empty tomb and the reminder from the messenger were proof enough to the reader who was willing to trust in God. There were other accounts indicating Jesus' resurrection appearances; perhaps Markus found the appearances unnecessary.

At any rate, the canonical text ends here, although two conclusions were constructed for Markus' version in the second century.

By this time, the reader who is prepared to trust Jesus should be fully aware that he was a prophet from God -- greater even than Elijah and Elisha, the archetypical prophets.

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