



# “The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ”

Mark 1:1 – 8:21

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## Introduction

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We start with the book of Mark because it is likely to have been the first written account of Jesus’ life and ministry, and of his trial, crucifixion, and death. It is the shortest of the four gospels.

“Mark” is probably John Mark, missionary companion of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 12:25. Mark apparently came from a wealthy family in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12) and was Barnabas’ relative (Colossians 4:10). Though he left Paul and Barnabas in the middle of a mission (Acts 13:5, 13), generating some hard feelings from Paul, he went again with Barnabas to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-40). He and Paul clearly reconciled later because he was Paul’s companion again for a time (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24), and served with Paul’s close friend, Timothy (2 Timothy 4:11). He was also with Peter in Rome (1 Peter 5:13), and tradition is that he wrote his gospel in Rome when he was there.

Two ancient writers discussed Mark’s authorship of the book that bears his name. The first is Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.1), who said that Mark wrote after Peter’s death, thus dating the gospel to about AD 64 in Rome (where by tradition, Peter was killed).

Second, Eusebius, in his book *Church History* (6.14.6-7), quoted an early church leader, Clement of Alexandria, saying:

When, by the Spirit, Peter had publicly proclaimed the Gospel in Rome, his many hearers urged Mark, as one who had followed him for years and remembered what was said, to put it all in writing. This he did and gave copies to all who asked. When Peter learned of it, he neither objected nor promoted it.

Mark thus wrote while he was there with Peter, just before Peter was killed (AD 64-65). Eusebius also quotes Papias, an early Church leader from about AD 120-140, saying:

Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote down accurately, but not in order, all that [Peter] remembered of the things said and done by the Lord. For [Mark] had not heard the Lord or been one of his followers, but later, as I said, a follower of Peter. Peter used to teach as the occasion demanded, without giving systematic arrangement to the Lord’s sayings (Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39.15-16).

We do not know exactly when Mark wrote his gospel, but modern scholars tend to date all the gospels later than people did in the past.<sup>1</sup> LDS scholars, such as S. Kent Brown, argue for an early date of Mark (about AD 64).<sup>2</sup> For Latter-day Saints and others who believe in the ability of Jesus and prophets to predict the future, this especially makes sense. Scholars who don’t believe in prophecy (and there are many today) feel compelled to date New Testament books well after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 simply because Jesus is recorded to have spoken of it. In their view, he could not have given such accurate details *before* the event, so the gospels must have been written after AD 70. Because we believe that Jesus indeed could and did predict the future, his disciples likely would have written it down well before the event. Thus, if Matthew and Luke are written before AD 70, Mark, which was probably written first, must be written well before that date as well. Such an earlier dating of Mark also agrees with the ancient sources already mentioned about how and when Mark wrote it.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, one commentary proposes a date around “the Jewish revolt against imperial Rome (66-73 CE),” though acknowledging that it could have been tied to the earlier persecution of Christians by Nero in 64 CE (*The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 658).

<sup>2</sup> Other conservative scholars argue for a similar date, such as *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, 1682.

Mark’s audience was probably Gentile, because he gives and interprets Aramaic phrases (e.g., 5:41; 15:34), explains Jewish customs (e.g., 7:1-4), and describes Palestinian geography (7:2-4, 31, 34). He also includes Latin customs and vocabulary, pointing to an Italian origin (5:9; 10:12; 12:42). Mark teaches that Jesus was misunderstood, even by those closest to him, and that though he died a humiliating death, he finally triumphed over all things. Mark emphasizes what Jesus did more than what he taught, though some of Jesus’ teachings are certainly recorded. It is a fast-paced book—indeed, the Greek word for “immediately” (*euthus*) is used over forty times in recounting Jesus’ deeds. His followers have a sense of wonder about Jesus, even as they don’t fully understand who he is. A third of his story is about the *Passion* of Jesus, meaning the events leading up to and including his suffering and crucifixion.

As mentioned, most scholars believe that Mark’s gospel was the first written. Thus, in a sense, it was completely unique at the beginning—it was the only written account of the atonement of Christ available. Then Matthew and Luke both used Mark as their foundation, adding additional information and changing some of the things Mark wrote for their own purposes. In many cases, they tell the same story but with better grammar or small additional details that add color.

Mark is the least unique of the four gospels. The substance of 606 of Mark’s 661 verses appears in Matthew, and 380 of Mark’s verses are found in Luke with minor changes. Some are identical in wording. In the end, only thirty-one verses in Mark are not found in either Matthew or Luke in some form. In tabular format, we can see it like this:

<b>Gospel</b>	<b>Exclusive</b>	<b>Common</b>
Mark	7%	93%
Matthew	42%	58%
Luke	59%	41%
John	92%	8%

That might lead one to think that a class on what is unique in Mark would be very short—after all, we could read all thirty-one verses in just a few minutes. But the numbers don’t reflect the real story of what makes Mark unique, which is his structure.

## Unique Organization

Though sometimes Mark’s gospel’s is noted for its poor grammar in Greek (Matthew and Luke can tell the same story, correcting Marks’ Greek), a careful study reveals that it is a complex and thoughtfully constructed work. In fact, the way he wove together the stories of Jesus’ ministry is what makes Mark most unique among the synoptics. He effectively uses intercalation (also called *inclusio*, ‘bracketing,’ or ‘sandwiching’) which puts related events at the beginning and ending of sections to group what is in between together as a theme. He also uses intercalation which means inserting one story in the middle of another, letting the outer story help interpret the inner one, and vice versa. We’ll explore some of this artistry in composition in going through the stories.

Mark has several themes, which come out in a detailed study but can also be noted by reading it out loud, which is how most people in the first century would have encountered his gospel. This is also a wonderful way to hear the intercalations. If possible, you should experience that way yourself, either reading it aloud yourself, or listening to it (such as on lds.org or using the Gospel Library app on your phone or device). One theme that is commonly identified is discipleship, so listen for passages that highlight that topic as you hear it.

## Some Unique Passages in Mark

As mentioned, Mark has a small number unique verses when compared to the other three gospels. Here are ten of the unique items that Mark presents, some of which are interesting details to stories also told in the other works. Other unique items will be mentioned later in conjunction with various stories.

1. When Jesus was in the wilderness, he was with wild beasts (1:12-13).
2. The Parable of the Growing Seed (4:26-29).
3. Jesus' words; Jairus' daughter was 12 years old (5:41-42).
4. Jesus healed a deaf and dumb man by putting his fingers in the man's ears and touching his tongue (7:32-36).
5. Jesus healed two blind men, one at Bethsaida (8:22-26) and one named Bartimaeus, whose name we only learn from Mark 10:46 (Matthew says two, Luke one, neither supply a name).
6. More details about the conversation and the healing of the paralytic boy (9:21-27).
7. While Matthew talks about the hand or the eye offending, Mark adds a similar comment about the foot (9:45-46).
8. When the rich man came to ask how to have eternal life, Jesus loved him (10:21).
9. The scribe who came to question Jesus was nearly converted (12:28, 32-34).

## The Messianic Secret

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Some scholars see in Mark a tendency for Jesus to request secrecy about his identity before the resurrection. They have given this tendency the name 'The Messianic Secret,' and see it reflected in the following references: 1:25, 34; 3:12; 1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26; 8:17-21; 9:32.

However, in other cases, Jesus did very public things without asking for people to remain quiet (e.g., 2:11-12; 3:1-5; 5:19). He also taught openly about his mission (4:10-20, 34) and didn't always silence demons (5:7-10). A careful look at all of these passages shows that Jesus' motivation was specific to each event—don't talk about the transfiguration until later; don't attract huge crowds that would inhibit his ability to minister; etc. This leads to the conclusion that the Messianic Secret isn't a secret as much as it is a precaution to help him progress in his ministry;<sup>3</sup> "Jesus in Mark is a cryptic figure who conceals as much as he reveals."<sup>4</sup>

## Outline of Mark

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An overall outline for the book of Mark is as follows (with the focus of this lesson in bold):

- 1. Prologue: The Wilderness (1:1-13)**
- 2. Preaching and Healing (1:14-45)**
- 3. Five Stories of Conflict (2:1 - 3:6)**
- 4. Ministers in Galilee (3:7 - 6:6)**
  - a. **Healings and the Twelve called (3:7-19a)**
  - b. **Rejection scenes (3:19b-35)**
  - c. **Four parables (4:1-34)**
  - d. **Four miraculous deeds (4:35 - 5:43)**
  - e. **Rejection at Nazareth (6:1-6)**
- 5. The Twelve Sent, Teaching and Feeding (6:7 - 8:21)**
6. The Journey to Jerusalem; Heals Blind Eyes; Teachings on Discipleship (8:22 - 10:52)
7. In Jerusalem (11:1 - 12:37)
8. Last Supper, Gethsemane, Trial, Crucifixion, and Burial (14:1 - 16:8)
9. Postlude: The Longer Ending (16:9-20)

In the beginning of Mark, Jesus appears for baptism and the start of his mission—there is nothing about his birth or childhood. He is the Christ immediately—that is how Mark introduces the book (1:1), and that is confirmed at his baptism. He ministers in Galilee, progressively teaching about the coming kingdom of God, but his disciples don't comprehend his teaching that he must suffer and die for them.

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<sup>3</sup> *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, 1682-1683.

<sup>4</sup> *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 658.

Then he moves toward Jerusalem, healing and teaching along the way. In Jerusalem, he confronts the established leadership and publicly proclaims himself as Messiah, which brings his arrest and death and the abandonment of his closest disciples. A large portion of the work is devoted to this last week of Jesus in Jerusalem, and especially the atonement, trial, and crucifixion.

Note: In each lesson on the gospels, where there are overlapping or parallel texts, those will be noted in the heading. References in bold are the preferred reading(s) and will be the principal section of analysis, though some unique points in the current gospel will be noted, as well as helpful JST changes.<sup>5</sup>

## Prologue: The Wilderness (1:1-13)

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Mark's gospel opens in the wilderness with John the Baptist calling people to repent and be baptized. Jesus came to be baptized, and then goes further into the wilderness for forty days.

### Introduction – Mark 1:1

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1:1 ***The beginning***. John also starts similarly, “In the beginning” (both using Greek *archē*, the origin, first, leader), echoing the start of the first book of the Bible, Genesis.

1:1 ***the gospel***. “Gospel” is Greek *euangelion*, which means ‘good tidings’ or ‘good news’ (NRSV; NIV).

1:1 ***Jesus Christ***. This is English version of his name in Greek, which is *Iesous Christos*. In Aramaic his name was likely Yeshua, similar to Joshua in the Old Testament, which means ‘salvation.’ *Christos* is equivalent to the Hebrew “Messiah” (*mashiyach*), meaning ‘anointed.’ Priests and kings were anointed in the ancient world to represent their consecration and blessing in their office. This is the only time these two words are found together in the entire book.

1:1 ***the Son of God***. Some ancient mss of Mark do not include this phrase, but support is strong enough for it to be included in nearly all modern translations. It aligns with the declaration of the centurion (15:39) that Jesus “was the Son of God,” bracketing the two confessions with nearly the entire story of Jesus’ life.

### John’s Preaching – Mark 1:2-8 (Matt 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-18)

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See Luke. John came preaching repentance and baptism, living in the wilderness in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (40:3). He was to prepare the way for “one mightier” (v. 7).

### Jesus’ Baptism – Mark 1:9-11 (Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34)

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See Matthew and John. Jesus presented himself for baptism and was baptized by John. In Mark’s version, only Jesus hears the voice announcing him as the beloved son (but see JST note below on v. 11).

#### 1:8 ***JST***

KJV	JST
I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.	I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall <b>not only</b> baptize you with <b>water but with fire and</b> the Holy Ghost.

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<sup>5</sup> Not all JST changes are noted, only those of textual or doctrinal interest. Interested readers are encouraged to see Wayment, *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament* or the manuscripts themselves on the Joseph Smith Papers website ([josephsmithpapers.org](http://josephsmithpapers.org)).

KJV Mark sounds exclusive: John baptizes with water and Jesus with the Holy Ghost. JST shows that Jesus will do both and adds the language of “fire and the Holy Ghost” which harmonizes with words that both Matthew and Luke use in the same context.

1:11 *JST*

KJV	JST
And there came a voice from heaven, <i>saying</i> , Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.	And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. <b>And John bare record of it.</b>

KJV Mark leads to the conclusion that Jesus was the only one to hear the voice (spoken to him in the second person). JST adds that John was a witness and bore record of the voice, which harmonizes with the accounts in Matthew and especially John.

Temptations in the Wilderness – Mark 1:12-13 (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13)

See Matthew and Luke. Right after his baptism, Jesus is driven deeper into the desert, where he remained forty days, evoking the image of Moses communing with God on Mount Sinai. He is tempted by Satan, spends time among animals, and is strengthened by angels.

1:12 *JST*

KJV	JST
And immediately the Spirit <del>driveth</del> him into the wilderness.	And immediately the Spirit <b>took</b> him into the wilderness.

The word “driveth” is from the Greek *ekballō*, meaning to forcefully throw or drive something, to be expelled, or sent away. The same verb is used in the LXX to describe Adam and Eve being driven from the garden (LXX Genesis 3:24). JST Mark’s “took” is softer, reflecting a gentler Spirit, and aligns with JST changes in Matthew 4:5, 8, where the Spirit takes Jesus to the various locations.

1:13 **with the wild beasts**. Greek *therion* can mean just animals but typically means non-domesticated ones, so most translations use “wild beasts” or “wild animals” (e.g., NRSV, NASB, NIV, ESV, NJB, CJB). Mark is the only one to mention animals in the wilderness with Jesus. Though the reason they are there is not stated in Mark, they could have been part of Jesus’ trial in the wilderness, or to show that, like Daniel in the lion’s den, Jesus was divinely protected while in the wilderness from the animals.

Preaching and Healing (1:14-45)

Mark’s readers have seen an ‘insider’ view of Jesus’ early experiences being proclaimed and baptized by John, having the voice from heaven proclaim his status, then overcoming temptations in the wilderness and being strengthened by angels. We know much about his identity and position with God from these stories. Now Mark introduces us to Jesus teaching in Galilee and calling his early disciples. They do not have the benefit of the prologue and are going to struggle for all of Mark’s gospel to understand and come to terms with Jesus’ mixed and non-explicit messages about his own status and mission. Mark also grouped stories of Jesus healing in this section.

Jesus’ Early Preaching; Disciples Called – Mark 1:14-20 (Matt 4:12b-25; Luke 4:14-15; John 2:12)

See Matt. John is imprisoned by Herod Antipas and taken to Machaerus, according to Josephus (*Antiquities*, 8:116-119), where he will later be killed. John’s fall transitions to Jesus’ rise (John 3:30). As Jesus begins to teach in Galilee (near population centers, not in the wilderness like John), he calls his

first disciples—two sets of brothers who are fishermen, Peter and Andrew, James and John—and invites them to fish for men with him. Unlike much fishing today, which is passive and patient, fishing in their day was a very active and labor-intensive activity; Jesus was calling them to work hard. Without hesitation, they are willing to walk away from everything for him (though later accounts show they maintained their fishing boats and even their business).

Jesus' calling of disciples is unusual; most teachers let the disciples come to them. Jesus instead calls them like a prophet—or like God—who calls others to follow his teachings and carry that message to the world.

One characteristic of Mark's book is intercalation, also called *inclusio*, bracketing, and sandwiching, all of which mean that one story (or more) is embedded in the middle of two stories, that are somehow related. In this case, the calling of the first disciples is embedded between two encounters with devils—Satan in the wilderness and the unclean spirit at the synagogue, perhaps foreshadowing with whom they will do battle in their discipleship.

### [Capernaum Jesus' Home – Mark 1:21-22 \(Matt 4:13-16; Luke 4:16-32; John 2:12\)](#)

See Luke. While Mark show Jesus just going to Capernaum, other gospels show that this is his new home after being rejected at Nazareth.

### [One Sabbath Day – Mark 1:23-34 \(Matt 8:14-17; Luke 4:33-41\)](#)

See Luke. After Jesus' arrival in Capernaum, Mark tells the story of a single Sabbath day, which includes healing a man with an unclean spirit (Jesus' first miracle in Mark), healing Simon's mother-in-law, and many other healings "when the sun did set" (making it Sunday on their calendar). Though it's possible these all happened on a single day, Mark also could have conflated multiple events into a single day, in order to fit his needs.

1:30 *JST*

KJV	JST
<del>But</del> Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and <del>anon</del> they <del>tell</del> him <del>of</del> her.	<b>And</b> Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and they <b>besought</b> him <b>for</b> her.

KJV Mark is a passive tone, with people simply informing Jesus of her illness. JST Mark has the disciples demonstrate faith, beseeching Jesus to act in her behalf, as he had done already in the synagogue that morning.

### [Ministering in Galilee – Mark 1:35-39 \(Matt 4:23-25; Luke 4:42-44\)](#)

See Luke. Rising early in the morning before others, Jesus went "into a solitary place" to pray. His disciples followed him, telling him that everyone was seeking him, so they went from town to town, preaching and healing.

### [A Leper Cleansed – Mark 1:40-45 \(Matt 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-16\)](#)

A man who is an outcast from normal society because of his disease came to Jesus to seek help. He expressed faith in Jesus' ability but was uncertain of Jesus' willingness, but Jesus did heal him and charged him to make an offering to the priests that would restore his place in society, and not say anything about the miracle. The man apparently did the first but not the second, likely being asked many questions about his healing and wanting to give Jesus and God credit.

1:40 *a leper came to him*. A leper (perhaps suffering from what is now called Hansen's disease or perhaps from any of a number of other skin conditions that would be called leprosy in that day) was ritually unclean and thus not allowed to participate in Jewish society. Lepers had to wear torn clothing,

keep their face covered, and ring a bell and cry out, “Unclean! Unclean!” wherever they went. This man showed great faith.

1:41 ***Jesus, moved with compassion.*** Jesus felt compassion (which only Mark mentions) for the man, though some ancient mss have “anger” instead, which scholars consider a likely early reading. Why Jesus would be angry is subject for debate (and see v. 43), but it’s also true that the Aramaic words for “pity” and “rage” are very similar.

1:41 ***touched him.*** Jesus did not have to touch someone to heal them, as many stories in the gospels demonstrated. But he touched the leper, showing both that he did not fear the disease or the potential uncleanness it could bring up on him.

1:42 ***immediately the leprosy departed.*** Using one of his favorite words again, Mark portrays the disease as “immediately” leaving the man. It would be fascinating to watch that happen and see his skin go from sick to whole in an instant.

1:43 ***he straightly charged him.*** NRSV: “After sternly warning him...”; the French translation has “S’irritant contre lui,” meaning ‘Being irritated by him.’ Jesus does not calmly ask him to not tell others but does so with some sternness and even some anger. This matches the emotion in the early readings of 1:41 (anger instead of compassion) but doesn’t explain why Jesus would be angry or at least forceful with the man, unless you consider what happened (v. 45); perhaps Jesus anticipated his disobedience to the request to be quiet about the healing and the result it would have on his ministry?

1:43 ***and forthwith sent him away.*** The word translated “sent him away” (*ekballō*) is the same one used when casting out demons, and has the connotation of expelling or driving out;

1:44 ***shew thyself to the priest.*** Leviticus 14 outlines the steps necessary for someone inflicted with skin diseases to be reinstated into society. Jesus told the man to comply with the Law of Moses and do as that scripture outlines, so he could return to normal society in a way that would remove all controversy from his status.

1:45 ***they came to him from every quarter.*** Perhaps Mark intended some irony here: the leper can now return to society, but Jesus cannot, though not because he is unclean but because the crowds throng him. Jesus’ act of healing causes the two to essentially change places. Mark consistently portrays Jesus as being surrounded by crowds, to the point where it inhibits his movements. People came because they sought his blessings or teaching, but Mark also consistently shows that the crowds did not understand Jesus or his true mission; ultimately they sought him for the wrong reasons.

## Five Stories of Conflict (2:1 – 3:6)

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This section is intentionally arranged by Mark to show five particular stories of conflict in Jesus’ early ministry. The stories are not necessarily presented chronologically but grouped here to bring them together, as the previous chapter portrayed various healings and chapter four combines parables. They escalate in hostility toward Jesus from silent opposition to openly conspiring against him. They are possibly arranged chiastically, with parallels between the first and fifth and second and fourth stories, and the third story being the climax with its metaphor of the bridegroom being taken away, anticipating Jesus’ death, and the impossibility of mixing the old and the new. They also each tell us something about Jesus himself, bringing out various aspects of his person and mission—he can forgive sins, is a healer, is the bridegroom, is like or greater than David, and created the sabbath day.

### A Man with Palsy Healed – Mark 2:1-12 (Matt 9:2-8; Luke 5:17-26)

See Luke. Returning to Capernaum, many gathered seeking his blessing and teachings. Four people brought a paralyzed man but couldn’t get in through the door, so they opened a part of the roof and let the



man down into the room where Jesus was. Jesus forgave his sins first, causing a stir among those present, then demonstrated his power to forgive sins by also healing the man. No prophecy of the Messiah in the OT speaks of him forgiving sins; that authority is consistently reserved by God alone (e.g., Exodus 34:6-7; 1 Kings 8:39; Isaiah 43:25, and 44:22). Thus with this story, Jesus is establishing that he has authority to act in the Father’s name, and that he personally can forgive sins. The paralyzed man goes away healed in body and spirit.

2:12 *JST*

KJV	JST
And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw <del>it on this fashion</del> .	And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and <b>many</b> glorified God, saying, We never saw <b>the power of God after this manner</b> .

KJV Mark is not clear what “it” is that amazed the crowd, while JST Mark specifies it is “the power of God after this manner.” Though helpful, it could still refer to Jesus forgiving sins, healing the paralyzed man, or both.

Jesus Called Matthew and Ate with Sinners – Mark 2:13-17 (Matt 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32)

See Luke. Levi the tax collector is called to be a disciple and he hosts a dinner for Jesus and his friends. Scribes wondered disparagingly why he ate with such sinners and Jesus taught that he came to heal the sick and to call sinners to repentance.

Fasting and the Law – Mark 2:18-22 (Matt 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39)

See Matthew. Some ask Jesus why his disciples do not fast as others do, and he replies that it is a question of timing. He teaches with simple metaphors that mixing old and new (traditional Pharisaic teaching and his own) does not work.

Jesus and the Sabbath – Mark 2:23-28 (Matt 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5)

Honoring the Sabbath day has always been a mark of those who are the covenant people of God. By Jesus’ day, the Pharisees had developed elaborate rules about Sabbath activities to ensure that they did not violate the simple commandment of keeping the Sabbath day holy and not engaging in normal work, such as not walking more than one-half mile, what kinds of knots could be tied on the Sabbath, or how you could interact with and care for others. Jesus spent a good deal of energy debunking many notions about the Sabbath that had developed in their day without doing away with the fundamental law that was instituted from the beginning.

2:23 **the corn fields**. Greek *aporimōs* means ‘grain field,’ most likely meaning wheat or barley. No one in that part of the world ate corn at this time, but KJV translators used the word generically for ‘grain,’ just as they used ‘meat’ for many kinds of food.

2:23 **the sabbath day**. The day of the week is important for the story; what they were doing was fine on any other day, from the perspective of the scribes and Pharisees.

2:23 **to pluck the ears of corn**. “picking the heads of grain” (NASB). They are gathering small handfuls of grain to eat, which was not stealing but allowed according to the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 23:25). It’s possible that they were also going ahead of Jesus to make a path (a potential meaning of “as they went”) so he could easily pass through the field, which echoes the scripture, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3; also 60:10).

2:24 **that which is not lawful**. The Pharisees probably objected to both activities, since harvesting grain and clearing a path were both forbidden under their interpretations of the Mosaic Law.

2:25 *what David did*. The story Jesus referenced is found in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Notice that the high priest at that time was Ahimelech, not Abiathar, as v. 26 states, and both Matthew and Luke omit that detail in their telling of the story. Perhaps this was a scribal addition, or perhaps Mark got it wrong since Abiathar was high priest for much of the time of David’s reign?

2:26 *not lawful to eat but for the priests*. Leviticus 24:5-9 discusses the use of the bread in the tabernacle and temple. Each Sabbath, twelve loaves of bread (called the “shewbread” in the KJV) were placed in the holy place of the temple on the altar for that purpose. When the new bread was brought in a week later, the old bread was given to the priests to eat. In David’s case, they were in extreme need, and so the priest gave him five of the twelve loaves of the week-old bread.

2:27 *And he said unto them*. It’s not clear who “them” is. It could be the Pharisees accusing Jesus’s disciples of wrong-doing, or it could be the disciples themselves, either at this time or a later one, which Mark puts here because of the relevance of the comment to the story just told.

2:28 *the Son of man*. This was the second time Jesus had used this phrase.<sup>6</sup> He uses it many times throughout Mark and the other gospels, and seems to be a way to teach his disciples about himself without putting it in the first person. Unfortunately, it also seems to have masked his meaning to his disciples, who in Mark are not clear that he is, in fact, speaking about himself.

2:28 *JST*

KJV	JST
Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.	<b>Wherefore the sabbath was given unto man for a day of rest; and also that man should glorify God, and not that man should not eat; for the Son of man made the sabbath day,</b> Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

JST Mark expands Jesus’ comment significantly, building on the teaching in v. 27 that the sabbath was made for man. That day is to rest (meaning, not do normal, daily labor) and glorify God. Though fasting might be part of sabbath worship, that isn’t the reason for the day (a comment perhaps about the rules Pharisees had put around the preparing of meals). Because the “Son of man” created the sabbath day, he can also teach clear doctrines about it. Because in Genesis 2, God is clearly the creator of the sabbath day, this equates the Son of man with divine creation and is a statement about Jesus being God, though per the pattern in Mark, he continues to couch such statements in a third-person reference.

[A Man Healed on the Sabbath – Mark 3:1-6 \(Matt 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11\)](#)

See Luke. The fifth and final confrontation story is one of healing on the sabbath. A man with some kind of hand deformity was called out by Jesus, who asked those in the synagogue if it’s right to do good or evil on the sabbath, to save or to kill? Sad at their hard-hearted reaction, Jesus restored his hand to normal. That he did not touch the man but just spoke a command for him to hold out his hand was not a direct violation of any Pharisaic rules, so he had not broken any of their sabbath practices. Nevertheless, because the man was healed and because of his clear condemnation of them, the Pharisees began to conspire with the Herodians against him.

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<sup>6</sup> The first time was in Mark 2:10 with the paralyzed healing, which is discussed with Luke. It’s possible that v. 28 is a summary statement by Mark, not Jesus.

## Ministers in Galilee (3:7 – 6:6)

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A good example of intercalation or bracketing in Mark comes into play in this section. It opens with two scenes of rejection that are actually intercalated themselves but together serve as the opening bracket. First, Jesus' friends (or better translated, his family) tried to stop him because they believed he had gone insane (3:21). Mark then shows the scribes rejecting him because they believed he was possessed (3:22, 30). Finally, to tie it to the previous family rejection, his family came to seek him, and he left them cooling outside while he declared that his family was those who followed him (3:31-35). The end of the bracket is when the people of Nazareth also rejected him (6:1-5). They were intrigued by his doings and sayings, but pointed out that Jesus' family was right there—he was someone they had known all their lives. The Nazarean rejection and the references to his family at both ends are the larger brackets (though there is a 'mini-bracket' with the two family encounters and the scribes).

In the middle of the bracketed rejection stories are four parables followed by four miraculous deeds. The parables are:

- 1) The parable of the soils (4:3-20)
- 2) The parable of the lamp (4:21-25)
- 3) The parable of the growing seed (4:26-29)
- 4) The parable of the mustard seed (4:30-32)

These parables have a common theme—God does miraculous things and man has little impact on the outcome. The sower sowed ordinary seeds but got a one-hundred-fold return; the man cast seeds into the ground and did nothing else, but got a great harvest; the person that had little amazingly got much more; and the small mustard seed grew into a huge tree. These parables collectively illustrate the grace of God and his amazing gifts to us, where our meager efforts are richly blessed beyond what they deserve.

The four deeds then applied this same concept to Jesus' actions:

- 1) Jesus stilled a storm, showing his power over nature (4:35-41)
- 2) He healed a demonic, showing his power over spiritual matters and things beyond this world (5:1-20)
- 3) He healed the woman with the issue of blood, showing his power over illness (5:25-34)
- 4) He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, showing his power over death (5:22-24, 35-43)

The brackets of the two rejection stories show how people rejected Jesus in spite of the many signs and miracles that he presented (words and deeds) which again showed God's grace but also Jesus' power to dispense that grace. It returns to Mark's theme that people did not understand Jesus during his ministry.

Note also that two of the miracles act as another mini-intercalation. Jesus was requested to come heal Jairus' daughter and he left to do that, but while en route was interrupted by the woman with an issue of blood. He healed her, but during the delay, they learned that the daughter had died. Jesus continued anyway and raised her from death. This story and order is not unique to Mark but does serve to escalate the situation to show Jesus' full power to heal us today, just as he did these two women, whose stories are intertwined by several unique elements.

## Healings and the Twelve called (3:7-19a)

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### Jesus Heals Many – Mark 3:7-12 (Matt 12:15-21; Luke 6:17-19)

See also Matthew. This section picks up where 1:45 left off, with Jesus going out to places where the crowds would not overwhelm him, but the crowds followed him such that he had a boat ready to take him away when needed. Mark explains that Jesus was constantly being pursued by people wanting just to touch him and be healed, and unclean spirits falling down and declaring he was the Son of God, though he commanded them not to do so.

Given that 1:45 and this section both deal with large crowds coming to Jesus, Mark is probably bracketing the five stories of conflict with these two accounts, indicating that though Jesus was experiencing conflict with Jewish leaders, the common people were following him in increasing numbers.

**3:7 a great multitude from Galilee followed him.** “Followed” (Greek *akolouthēō*) can mean either to physically accompany him or that they were his disciples. Both meanings are perhaps helpful here.

**3:8 Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon.** Though ethnicity is not mentioned, these areas are decidedly Gentile, though there were Jews living in all these areas as well. The impression is that Mark’s “great multitude” comes from all over, not just Galilee where Jesus has been ministering. Idumaea is Edom, south and east of Judea; “beyond Jordan” is otherwise called Perea in the NT, which is east of Judea; Tyre and Sidon are cities on the western sea coast, northwest of Galilee. In other words, they came from south, east, north, and west (at least to the edge of the sea).

**3:9 a small ship should wait on him.** “And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him” (NASB). Mark doesn’t mention Jesus getting in the boat, just that it was there, ready for him to use. In other chapters, he will use a boat frequently to travel between destinations. The owner of the boat is not identified, but obvious candidates include James and John (and their father, Zebedee) or Peter and Andrew, all fishermen.

**3:10 they pressed upon him for to touch him.** “Pressed upon” (Greek *epiptō*) has the sense of pressing and pushing or even falling and throwing oneself at another. Combined with “they should throng him” (v. 9), it’s a crowd nearly out of control.

**3:11 Thou art the Son of God.** The unclean spirits cried out his identity in the hopes of gaining power over him (a belief common to that era). Of course, with Jesus, it has no effect, and he only has power over the spirits.

**3:12 they should not make him known.** As previously discussed, there are instances in Mark’s gospel where Jesus commands people not to say anything about his identity or his miracles, but other times where he explicitly gives instructions to share that information. Many have tried to identify the pattern in his behavior, so theories abound, but none with certainty. In this case, the testimony of those afflicted with unclean spirits was possibly unwanted by Jesus for any number of reasons (e.g., they were not desirable witnesses; their words might confuse his disciples; it would have increased opposition; it demonstrates humility on Jesus’ part).

### [Calls the Twelve – Mark 3:13-19a \(Matt 10:2-4; Luke 6:12-16\)](#)

See Luke. After going up to the mountain, Jesus called his disciples to him and selected twelve as apostles, giving them authority to teach and power to cast out demons. Their names are listed. The large crowds needing Jesus’ attention was surely a factor in the timing of their call.

### [Rejection scenes \(3:19b-35\)](#)

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Three scenes of rejection are given, two involving Jesus’ family and one with the scribes, which is bracketed in the middle of the other two. These in turn serve as a larger opening bracket for the message that in spite of Jesus’ many signs and miracles, he is rejected by many, which concludes with 6:1-6, his rejection at Nazareth (see the introduction above).

### [His Family Believes He Is Insane – Mark 3:19b-21](#)

This story begins a bracket with 3:31-35, both about Jesus’ family, with a story about Jesus being rejected by scribes from Jerusalem in the middle. The bracket thus starts with Jesus’ family rejecting him, then the scribes, so Jesus turns to his new ‘family,’ his disciples.

3:19 **they went into an house**. A couple textual notes are interesting here. First, in most Greek editions of the New Testament, this phrase begins verse 20 instead of ending verse 19. That fits better with the flow of the story. But the Greek text used by the King James Translators had the verse break after this phrase, so that is how it is in our scriptures. Modern translations end verse 19 after the comment about betrayal.

Second, the translation in the KJV doesn't match the sense of the verse; Jesus didn't go into just any house but into the house where he was staying (probably Peter's house in Capernaum), and the verb is third person singular ("he") not "they." In other words, the phrase should be as one translation says, "And he came home" (NASB).

3:20 **they could not so much as eat bread**. As soon as word got out that Jesus was back in town, the crowds not only surrounded his house but came inside to implore him for help. So great and constant were the crowds that it became impossible for them to even have a meal, which is an escalation from the other two instances of Jesus being in the house with a crowd (3:7; 2:1-4).

3:21 **his friends**. The Greek phrase, *par autou*, here translated as "his friends," has the implication of a close relationship, even family members. Most commentators agree that this is Jesus' family, perhaps even the brothers mentioned again in a bracketed reference in Mark 3:31 after the discussion about Beelzebub.

3:21 **He is beside himself**. "He is out of his mind" (NIV). His family had come to take him away ("lay hold on him") because they believed that he had lost his mind. This is indicative that Jesus' own family—at least his brothers—did not believe in his mission or even identity. Instead, they saw their older brother, who was supposed to be the responsible one, caring for and leading the family after Joseph's death, acting in a way that seemed to them as insane—calling disciples, teaching multitudes, healing, and traveling around drawing great crowds. Alternatively, they could have feared for his life, a very real threat demonstrated by the size of the crowds and their inability to even eat a meal, and other popular leaders of the people in that day who lost their lives to Rome. They also may simply have been ashamed of his behavior, believing he was bringing shame upon the family.

### 3:21 **JST**

KJV	JST
And when his friends heard <del>of it</del> , they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.	And when his friends heard <b>him speak</b> , they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

KJV does not specify what his "friends" heard, but JST Mark indicates it was not secondhand reports, but they came and heard him speak in person, perhaps when he was teaching a large crowd. Whatever they heard him say caused them to believe that he had lost his mind.

### Collusion with Satan – Mark 3:22-27 ([Matt 12:22-30](#); [Luke 11:14-23](#))

See Matthew. Scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus, accusing him of casting out devils by the power of the Devil. Jesus refuted their charge, reasoning that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

### 3:23 **JST**

KJV	JST
And he called them <del>unto him</del> , and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?	<b>Now Jesus knew this</b> , and he called them, and <b>he</b> said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

JST Mark explains why Jesus gave an answer to a question they had not asked him but only discussed privately: “**Now Jesus knew this**, and he called them...” The text doesn’t explain *how* Jesus knew it but the implication is that he knew it divinely, which matches the image that Mark presents that Jesus’ identity, mission, and power were not understood even by his disciples.

### Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost – Mark 3:28-30 (Matt 12:31-45)

See Matthew, with significant JST changes. Jesus taught that all sins could be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which potentially brought eternal damnation.

### Jesus’ Family Seeks Him – Mark 3:31-35 (Matt 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21)

See Matthew. The conclusion of the rejection bracket, Jesus’ family came seeking him out—his mother, brothers, and sisters. Because of the crowd, they could only call out to him, which others relayed to Jesus. Hearing of their calling him, Jesus taught those gathered around him that those who do the will of God were his family.

### Four parables (4:1-34)

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The parables in chapter 4 are unique in that they portray more lengthy words of Jesus without any deeds. The only other place we see this is in Mark 13. Both this chapter and that one are mid-points in their respective sections—the Galilean ministry here and the Jerusalem ministry for chapter 13. Both teach about the need for discipleship in spite of controversy and challenges, a discipleship that looks to God for answers and support and doesn’t trust in the things of the world.

### The parable of the soils – Mark 4:1-20 (Matt 13:1-23; Luke 8:4-15)

See Matthew. Sometimes called the parable of the sower (though the focus of the parable is the different kinds of soils and how they accept “the word” or the good news Jesus is declaring), this first of four parables in this section that help define the kingdom of God, or the miraculous way in which God works with us. After giving the parable, Jesus explained it to the Twelve, also teaching them why he spoke in parables.

### The parable of the lamp – Mark 4:21-25 (Matt 5:15; 7:2; 10:26; 13:12; Luke 8:16-18)

4:21 ***Is a candle brought***. There were no candles in NT times; this is an anachronism from the KJV period. The word here is Greek *luchnos* or ‘lamp.’ Ancient oil lamps were typically made of fired clay with an opening on the side for the wick (often made of old clothing) and one in the middle in which to add oil. The “candlestick” mentioned here is a lampstand (Greek *luchnia*), an elevated platform either on a table or in a niche in the wall, that allowed the light to better spread across the room.

4:22 ***nothing hid***. Though this seemingly contradicted Jesus’ earlier requests to keep things quiet, he explained that it is a future activity to make all things known.

4:23 ***If any man have ears to hear, let him hear***. “Let him hear” is an imperative, a command to listen; “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” (NRSV). Learning the good news about the kingdom of God is not a passive activity but an active one requiring effort, thought, prayer, and sacrifice.

4:24 ***Take heed what ye hear***. Literally, “see what you hear,” building on the previous verse and teaching the disciples to carefully consider what they are hearing and hear the right things. This also leads into the proverbs in this and the next verse.

4:24 ***unto you that hear shall more be given***. The proverb given, that what you measure out will be measured back to you, is refuted by Jesus, saying that those that “hear” will be given more than they measured out. This echoes the theme of the four parables, here in the middle of all of them, that blessings from God are undeserved and unexpected.

4:25 ***he that hath, to him shall be given.*** Harkening back to the soils parable, Jesus taught that those who are willing will be given more, and those unwilling to embrace the message of the kingdom of God will lose that opportunity.

### The parable of the growing seed – Mark 4:26-29

This parable is unique to Mark, the story of a farmer that sows his seed and seemingly does nothing else. In spite of his minimal efforts, the seed grows into a wonderful crop, and “he knoweth not how.” The message is that the miracle of God’s work on the earth is accomplished by his power, and not man’s efforts. Some scholars see Jesus as the harvest here, with his miraculous life coming to an end as he first is buried and seemingly gone, but then springs into new life, or is surrendering himself to the ‘harvest’ and providing a miraculous crop that only he and God can achieve.

4:26 ***if a man should cast seed.*** Jesus’ parables were earthy and related to the everyday kinds of activities seen in an agrarian society, such as the Galilee.

4:27 ***should sleep, and rise night and day.*** “Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing” (NJB). The seed is always working, as it were, even as he sleeps, and the farmer doesn’t have any idea how that can be. The message may well be that we, as disciples and servants, can be ineffective and make mistakes, but God will make up for them and provide a great harvest anyway.

4:28 ***first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.*** As with other references to “corn” in the NT, this refers to a grain such as wheat or barley. “first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head” (NIV).

4:29 ***immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*** “Putteth” is Greek *apostellō*, related to the word for “apostle,” meaning sent one. This means that the sickle is sent because it’s time for the harvest. If the harvest is a symbol for the apostles and others sent with authority, this could imply their involvement in the harvest and also God’s good timing in their callings.

### The parable of the mustard seed – Mark 4:30-34 (Matt 13:31-32)

See Matthew. A small seed from a mustard plant can grow into a large bush (perhaps ten to twelve feet tall) with many branches that allow birds to gather and be safe.

### Four miraculous deeds (4:35 – 5:43)

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Having just presented four parables (what Jesus said), Mark now provides four miracles (what Jesus did). Each reveals more about Jesus’ identity, in a progression that has him showing power over nature, demons, illness, and finally death. Jesus’ mercy is available to everyone, regardless of social status, financial situation, and especially gender.

### Calming the storm – Mark 4:35-41 (Matt 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25)

See Matthew. Using the boat that is at his disposal (3:9), Jesus left the crowds, though several other ships followed him. Their fate is unknown in the storm that arises next; the scene focuses on Jesus’ ship. The great storm pounded the ship but Jesus slept. Finally, in fear, the disciples woke him up; doesn’t he care that they’re all going to die? Jesus rebuked the storm and it stopped, then he asked why they were afraid and lacking in faith. The disciples wondered what kind of a man could speak and the elements obey him.

### Casting evil spirits into swine – Mark 5:1-20 (Matt 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39)

See Luke. Jesus came to the country of the Gadarenes and saw a man with an unclean spirit who could not be detained. He came to Jesus and cried out, asking for Jesus not to torment him. Jesus commanded the spirit to come out, but it did not do so immediately. The spirit appealed to enter into some swine, Jesus conceded, and the spirits drove the swine into the sea. The herders told those in the city, who came

out and saw Jesus sitting with the man, now fully restored, and asked Jesus to leave. Jesus told the man who had been possessed to stay and share the great things God had done for him.

## Jairus' daughter raised and a woman healed by touch – Mark 5:21-43 (Matt 9:18-26; Luke 8:41-56)

5:21 **by ship unto the other side.** Meaning, the Jewish or western side of the Sea of Galilee. From Mark alone, we don't know what city, though Matthew says he returned "into his own city," which is usually understood to mean that the whole chapter was in Capernaum.

5:21 **he was nigh unto the sea.** Jesus barely had time to debark before people swarmed him.

5:22 **Jairus.** *Iairos* in Greek, though a Hebrew name perhaps meaning 'whom God enlightens' or 'he awakens or arouses.' Few people in the NT who are healed have their names mentioned. It's not clear why this synagogue leader does, except perhaps there is irony in his name, as his daughter is the one awakened and raised up.

5:22 **he feel at his feet.** Jairus was a leader in the community, and Jesus was a poor, itinerant preacher, dependent on others for his support. Jairus showed great humility by falling at Jesus' feet and seeking his help.

5:23 **my little daughter.** Luke tells us that she was his only daughter, probably even his only child.

5:23 **lay thy hands on her.** Jairus seeks Jesus' personal touch for his dying daughter. This is one element of how the two stories are interrelated.

5:24 **much people followed him, and thronged him.** Mark's point is that a huge crowd met Jesus at the beach and followed him through the city to Jairus' house, which was likely near the synagogue. Narrow streets and other blockages may have driven the crowds into many avenues, all heading to the same destination, making it nearly impossible to step out into the street in the middle of the throng of bodies.

5:25 **a certain woman.** Though we know Jairus' name, we don't know hers; they are at the opposite ends of the social spectrum, he the prosperous and well-known synagogue leader, she the woman in the shadows, excluded from normal society.

5:25 **issue of blood.** We don't know the exact nature of her problem, but it is probably related to uterine bleeding. During menstruation, women were considered unclean (see Leviticus 15:18-24). Her family could not lie on her bed, sit on her seat, or even touch her, or they were also unclean. After contact with one like her, to be clean again you had to immerse yourself, wash your clothes, and then still remain unclean until the next day (which began at sunset). Outside of Judaism, similar customs prevailed. Romans and Greeks write that menstruating women were not to talk to anyone as their breath was harmful. Men were not to greet a woman during this time, nor walk in her footsteps.

Potential cures for her problem are described in the Talmud: "Let them procure three *kapiza* of Persian onions, boil them in wine, make her drink it, and say to her, 'Cease your discharge.' But if not, she should be made to sit at a crossroads, hold a cup of wine in her hand, and a man comes up from behind, frightens her and exclaims, 'Cease your discharge!' But if not, a handful of cumin, a handful of saffron, and a handful of fenugreek are brought and boiled in wine, she is made to drink it, and they say to her, 'Cease your discharge.' But if not, let sixty pieces of sealing clay of a [wine] vessel be brought, and let them smear her and say to her, 'Cease your discharge.' . . . But if not, she should fetch a barley grain from the dung of a white mule. If she eats it and holds it in one day, her discharge will cease for one day. If she holds it in for two days, it will cease for two days. But if she holds it in for three days, it will cease forever."



5:26 ***spent all that she had.*** This was likely once a woman of means, or at least her family, as only wealthy people consulted with physicians in the first place. But now she was impoverished, stuck with her illness, and socially dead. It is difficult today to envision just how bad off she was, but in that day she would have been rejected by family and friends, unable to have any social contact, unable to marry or have children, and would have lost all legal rights and financial possibilities. Her situation was truly hopeless.

5:26 ***nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.*** Luke, being a physician, is less critical than Mark: "...neither could be healed of any" (Luke 8:43). Either way, she spent all of her money and still had her problem, which even grew worse with time.

5:27 ***came in the press behind.*** Somehow the woman navigated through the crowd behind Jesus in a way to get close enough to touch him. With so many others trying to do exactly the same thing (3:10) and many likely knowing her status prohibited her from doing this very thing, her effort was monumental and shows great determination.

5:27 ***touched his garment.*** This was perhaps the tassels at the four corners of his outer coat or mantle (more clear in Matthew and Luke), worn according to Jewish law (Numbers 15:40). However, in Mark, she is moving quickly, perhaps running, to catch up to Jesus. In that position, perhaps she touched his back or shoulder.

Mark has already mentioned that those who touched Jesus were healed (Mark 3:10), so perhaps she had heard this or just had accepted the commonly-held view that touching a holy man could bring you blessings (see Exodus 17:11-12; 2 Kings 13:20-21; Zechariah 8:23). But if she were to touch Jesus, she would make *him* unclean, so she desired to do it secretly, perhaps to avoid burdening him or even fearing he would say no if she asked.

5:28 ***I shall be whole.*** "Whole" is Greek *sōzō*, meaning to be 'saved' or 'delivered'; while poor health was a problem, her condition made her life a prison from which she wanted to be delivered, and could not do herself. She needed a redeemer. How long she had pondered this course of action, we do not know. But certainly she had heard of Jesus for some time, since he lived in her own town. How fervent were her extended prayers and how she must have sat and contemplated her final decision to touch him, violating social and religious customs of the day. The risk was large to both her and Jesus; but the Spirit must have prompted her, nudged her, encouraged her, and she finally made her resolve—she would be whole.

5:29 ***she felt in her body that she was healed.*** Having lived with this problem for so many years, which likely resulted in weakness and a dramatic lack of energy, among other symptoms, the change was immediate to her. Perhaps for the first time in a dozen years, she suddenly felt normal.

5:30 ***virtue had gone out of him.*** "Virtue" (Greek *dunamis*) means 'strength', 'power', or 'ability'. Just as spiritual experiences left Moses, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and others worn-out, so Jesus felt a depletion of spiritual strength, even though he had not consciously done anything. It also shows that he was highly sensitive to the needs of individuals around him. The experience was physically felt by both the woman and Jesus as strength transferred from Jesus to her.

5:31 ***sayest thou, Who touched me?*** The disciples who were walking with Jesus to Jairus' home were baffled. Hundreds were perhaps trying to touch Jesus or get a good look at him. Space was limited and the way was certainly crowded with humanity. The question seemed somewhat absurd.

5:32 ***looked round about to see her.*** Jesus turned around, knowing that the unknown person must be behind him. Mark's indication that he was looking for woman is intriguing, indicating that he may have already known who it was before he even saw her.

5:33 ***the woman fearing and trembling***. Mark’s audience expects this reaction from her—she has violated many societal norms by her actions, and she should fear a strong rebuke, or worse. What happens instead would have been surprising. Jesus needs to teach the woman and the crowd (and us) something far more profound than just her healing.

5:33 ***came and fell down before him***. It appears that she had already turned to leave, heard Jesus question, perhaps saw his glance her way, and overcame her fear to accept accountability for her action. Mark simply records that in abject humility, she “told him all the truth,” which is certainly how Mark and others knew to write her thoughts and emotions later.

5:34 ***Daughter***. Jesus’ response must have surprised everyone. Calling her “daughter” was a very personal and familiar term of endearment and is the only instance of Jesus using it. It implies a personal relationship with him, a title she received as a result of her faith and brave and public telling of her potentially devastating story (see 3:31-35 where Jesus calls faithful disciples his family). It could also have been a way of letting her know that she could freely associate with others now, that she was a full daughter of Abraham once again.

5:34 ***thy faith hath made thee whole***. Jesus debunked the notion that his clothing was somehow magical but pointed to the woman’s faith in God as the source of the power that healed her. To be “whole” her has both the meaning of physical and spiritual wholeness. This is echoed in his command to “go in peace,” since the Hebrew term *shalom* (“peace”) means a state of spiritual wholeness; she is physically healed by the touch and spiritually healed by her faith in Jesus.

5:35 ***Thy daughter is dead***. Many children died at birth, but as many as 60% of children born alive still died by their mid-teens. Early death was a reality of their society that is hard to appreciate today with our medical care and standard of living. The timing of this news may have been especially challenging for Jairus: had Jesus not been delayed by this woman and her touching, Jesus could have arrived before his daughter had died. Did he feel some resentment toward her as a result?

5:36 ***Be not afraid, only believe***. Jairus surely had heard Jesus teach many times in the synagogue. He had heard of and perhaps seen other miracles there in Capernaum. Now he had been at Jesus’ side during the entire previous incident, and had seen the woman that he probably was acquainted with immediately healed of a twelve-year affliction. Certainly, these events helped his faith that Jesus could also heal his daughter. Then the news came that she was already dead, and he probably felt it was too late now. But Jesus heard the messenger and buoyed up the now grieving father, counseling him to have ‘confidence’ (an alternate meaning of the Greek word translated ‘believe’) in God’s ability to bless him. He came to Jesus in faith and now he needed to continue believing—just like the woman he has watched be healed in the journey.

5:37 ***Peter, and James, and John***. Luke adds that the parents also went in the house with the four men, as does verse 40 in Mark. Peter, James, and John are singled out in several experiences, and noting that prepares the audience for something important.

5:38 ***the tumult***. At someone’s death, the custom was to wail loudly—the louder, the more sorrow was expressed. So it was common to hire ‘professional mourners’ to come and make a great noise. Music was also often a part of it (see 2 Samuel 1:18-27 for David’s lament over Saul and Jonathon). One rabbi said, “Even the poorest family should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman.” In a family as prominent at Jairus’, they likely would have had many family and other mourners. A family in mourning would change their clothing (sackcloth), diet, interactions with others, religious activities, and more, for a period of at least seven days. The young girl must have been on death’s edge for some time for the mourners to already be in position and active when Jesus arrived, just moments after her death.

5:39 ***the damsel is not dead***. Jesus had just arrived and had not even seen the girl yet. Those at the scene knew she was dead, making his statement more puzzling.

5:40 **they laughed him to scorn.** The Greek (*kategelōn*) indicates laughing and ridiculing. The ridicule could have come from the professional mourners, not the family. As a result of their disbelief, they were put out and not allowed to witness the miracle.

5:41 **Talitha cumi.** Should be *talitha coum*, which is Aramaic for, ‘Young girl, rise up,’ or getting to the root meaning of the phrase, ‘Get up, little lamb.’

5:43 **something should be given her to eat.** How long since she had last eaten? Perhaps several days, if she was very ill. She was no longer sick (or dead!), but still, she nevertheless needed food to regain her strength. Jesus was not distracted by the astonishment of others, but still focused on the girl’s welfare. This comment also served to demonstrate to the doubtful mourners outside that she was really alive and not just a spirit. Their services were no longer needed.

Things to note: These two stories—one within the other—have much in common, with each helping interpret the other. They also have some things that are not in common, because Mark wants us to compare them on several levels.

- The girl had died and the woman had symbolically died, since blood was considered life and its loss related to death.
- Both women (and Jairus’ daughter was considered a woman because she was old enough to be married) in the story were dead—one physically, the other socially.
- Both missed out on family life, the greatest blessing to a woman in their society, one because she could not get married or bear children in her condition, the other because of her death right at the age of marriage.
- Jesus was on the way to heal the synagogue ruler’s daughter, while the woman who touched him was excluded from attending the same synagogue.
- Both women were referred to as daughters—the young girl by Jairus, the healed woman by Jesus.
- The number twelve figures in both stories—the age of the girl and the number of years the woman has been bleeding—tying the two together even more than their proximity in the text. Twelve is symbolic of Israel, leadership, and restoration. Suffering tied to twelve was a symbol for Israel suffering, which Jesus relieved with a touch.
- As mentioned above, the standard phrase prescribed by the rabbis for a bleeding woman was “Cease your discharge.” The Aramaic term they used in this phrase was *coum*, meaning get up, arise. Though Jesus doesn’t use the word with the woman, he uses that exact phrase with the dead girl.
- Both were unclean by Jewish law, yet Jesus touched them both and was not rendered unclean himself, but cleansed them from sickness, death, pain, and sin.
- Both are examples of the power of faith, by Jairus and the bleeding woman, and the need to overcome fear by faith—the woman by confessing what she had done, and Jairus by trusting Jesus. In either case, Jesus dispels fear and replaces it with faith.
- Jairus sought a grand gesture from Jesus, but the woman sought and performed a very small gesture.
- Jairus publicly came to Jesus and announced his problem, expecting Jesus to drop everything and help him, which he did. The woman, on the other hand, did everything she could not to interrupt Jesus or draw any attention to herself.
- Jairus was of a high social status, while the woman was of the lowest, a societal outsider. Yet Jesus treats them fully as equals—in fact, he might be treating her better, because he interrupts his trip to Jairus’ house to see to the woman’s needs. Jairus must debase himself to get Jesus’ help; Jesus exalts the woman, giving her higher status with his pronouncement of “daughter.”
- The woman wants to private encounter and ends up with a very public one; Jairus may have wanted a public encounter but ends up with a very private one, that is not even shared with others in the community.

## Rejected at Nazareth – Mark 6:1-6 (Matthew 13:54-58)

See also Matthew. Having left Nazareth at the beginning of his mission, Jesus returned, only to be faced with a rejection: wasn't this just that boy we all knew growing up? His family is still here—how did he gain such wisdom and do these miracles we hear reported. Jesus healed a few but left being amazed at their lack of faith.

6:1 **came into his own country.** Or, 'went to his hometown,' which was Nazareth.

6:2 **he began to teach in the synagogue.** Jesus' fame had certainly spread to Nazareth. Whether this prompted them to invite him to speak, or whether he requested it is not stated in Mark. But as he likely done many times in Capernaum and other cities, he used the gathering at the synagogue on the sabbath as a chance to convey his message.

6:2 **many hearing him were astonished.** They are not so much astonished at the quality of his doctrine, but apparently that he taught such things even though he was someone they had known since he was a little boy. They asked, "Where did this man get these things?" (NASB, NIV, ESV) and "What is this wisdom that has been given to him?" (NRSV).

6:2 **mighty works are wrought by his hands.** This is what they had heard of him doing in other towns, like Capernaum. But verse 5 makes it clear that he didn't do many mighty works in the town (though he did heal some sick). The reference to his hands ties to the next verse about his vocation.

6:3 **Is not this the carpenter.** Matthew says, "the carpenter's son," but Mark is more direct that carpentry was Jesus' trade. The Greek word is *tektōn*, meaning a builder or craftsman. People in that trade dealt with stone, wood, and other materials in building houses, though they also worked with metals and woods in building farm tools, homes, and home furnishings. This kind of hard work would have made Jesus strong and skilled with tools, but also placed him at the lower end of the social spectrum, and was certainly not work that prepared him to be a religious leader. In short, they were insulting him.

6:3 **James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon . . . [and] his sisters.** From this text, we learn that Jesus had at least four (step) brothers and two (step) sisters. James is the best known because he later became a Church leader and wrote the epistle of James which inspired Joseph Smith to enter a grove of trees and ask God important questions. Juda was the author of the book of Jude in the NT. Their names—Jacob (James), Joseph (Joses), Judah (Juda), and Simon, are the names of famous patriarchs and sons of Israel. The latter were also the names of the Maccabee brothers, who had helped Jews win their independence from Greek rule a few generations before Jesus' birth. These names showed a family rooted deeply in the traditions of their people and perhaps also reflect their messianic hope.

Recent controversy has arisen surrounding an ossuary bearing the inscription, 'James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus' (or more precisely, since it's in Aramaic, "*Ya'akov bar Yosef achui d'Yeshua*"). An ossuary is a bone box, used during the early NT days only. After a person died, their body was wrapped and placed on a shelf, usually in a cave or stone tomb. After a year or two, the body would have decayed leaving nothing but bones. In order to make room for more burials, the family would typically move the bones into a stone or sometimes wood box—an ossuary—just long enough for the largest bone in the body, the femur. (In some cases, the bones were cleared off and deposited in a collective chamber in the tomb, but in NT times, ossuaries were very common.) The ossuary with the above inscription was discovered in the collection of private individual, provenance unknown. Analysis of the box is mixed, with some calling it a genuine find based on the writing, box materials, etc., while others, including the Israeli Antiquities Authority, declaring it a forgery. Whatever you believe about the box, the find has generated much interest in Jesus' family.

It appears that at least some of Jesus' family did not readily accept his claim as Messiah. James was likely the oldest brother after Jesus (since he is always mentioned first). Paul mentions that Jesus

appeared to James after his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). We don't have James' story, but it is at least possible that he didn't believe in Jesus until that appearance, and then, like Paul, he became one of Jesus' strongest supporters, eventually becoming an apostle and the apparent leader of the Jerusalem church.

6:4 ***A prophet is not without honour but in his own country.*** Jesus declared himself a prophet, contrary to their evaluation of him as 'just a local boy.'

6:5 ***he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.*** Jesus was able to minister to a few, but Mark is not explicit about their healing—was it because of their faith in Jesus or because of his own mercy toward them?

6:6 ***he marveled because of their unbelief.*** The people were “astonished” (v. 2) at Jesus when he came to Nazareth, and he “marveled” at their lack of faith as he left, going to other nearby villages to teach where, Mark implies, he was more accepted.

## The Twelve Sent, Teaching and Feeding (6:7 – 8:21)

### Sending the Twelve – Mark 6:7-13 (Matt 10:1-42; Luke 9:1-6)

See Matthew. The Twelve were previously called, now they were sent out, two by two, to preach and heal and cast out devils, as Jesus had been doing. They were to rely on the kindness of others (and by extension, on God) as they went about their work.

6:13 ***JST***

KJV	JST
And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed <i>them</i> .	<b>And they went out, and preached, that men should repent.</b> And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and <b>they were</b> healed.

the JST adds that the first thing the apostles did when they went out was “preached, that men should repent,” then they cast out devils and healed many. Repentance and faith precede the miracles.

### Herod hears of Jesus – Mark 6:14-16 (Matt 14:1-2; Luke 9:7-9)

6:14 ***king Herod.*** When Herod the Great died, he left his kingdom to his four sons. One was Herod Antipas, seventeen years old at the time, and who is the most prominent of Herod's sons in scripture because he ruled in Galilee during Jesus' life and mission. His mother was Malthace, a Samaritan woman. Antipas was raised in Rome and only moved to the Galilee when he received the throne. He made his capital at Tiberias, about eight miles south of Capernaum along the lake. He also had a fortress/palace at Machaerus, on the east side of the Dead Sea, which was originally built by his father. This is where Josephus says John was held and killed.

Herod was never technically a 'king', but a tetrarch ('ruler of a fourth part'). Mark was perhaps mocking him by giving him the title after the fact. The Jews hated Antipas because he was closely aligned with Rome, he had a Samaritan mother, he built towns and named them after Romans, and he put animal figures in his palaces (a violation of the second commandment).

6:16 ***John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.*** Luke has *others* (not Herod) believing that Jesus is really John back from the dead. In that account, Herod is more puzzled or curious about Jesus because he knows he beheaded John (Luke 9:9). But in Mark's version, Herod appears to believe it might be John come back to haunt him.

## Death of John the Baptist – Mark 6:17-29 (Matt 14:3-12; Luke 3:19-20)

**6:17 for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.** Herod had first married Phasaelis, the daughter of Aretas IV, king of Nabataea (who shows up in Acts and Paul's letters), no doubt in a marriage arranged by Augustus to help keep the peace. His half-brother, Philip, had married a woman known by the name of Herodias, who happened to be the daughter of his half-brother, Aristobulus (thus Philip's half-niece). But Philip lived in Rome, and in his absence, Antipas and Herodias fell in love. So Herodias left her husband, Philip, for his younger brother, Antipas, who was both Herodias' brother-in-law and her half-uncle. She then required Antipas to divorce his Nabataean wife of seventeen years, which he did. This so angered Aretas IV that he later attacked and conquered much of Antipas' territory.

**6:21 Herod on his birthday made a supper.** Celebrating birthdays was a pagan custom from Rome; Jews did not practice it. There was much drunkenness prior to Herodias' daughter's certainly sensual dance (she was probably naked or very nearly so).

**6:22 the daughter of the said Herodias.** The daughter's name is unknown from the NT but the Jewish historian Josephus said that her name was Salome (*Antiquities* 17.5.4). She was Herodias' daughter (and Herod's niece) by her previous marriage to Philip (also known outside the New Testament as Herod II). Since she wasn't yet married, she was probably 12-14 years of age at this time. She was later married to Philip the Tetrarch (not her father but sometimes called Philip II), another son of Herod the Great, keeping it all in the family.

**6:24 The head of John the Baptist.** Herodias manipulated Antipas on many occasions. She got him to divorce his wife of nearly two decades. She got him to kill John the Baptist. Later, she got him to go to the emperor, Caligula, to denounce her brother, Agrippa, because she envied his success and title—she wanted Antipas also to be named king. But the plan backfired; Antipas was accused of treachery and stockpiling weapons to fight Rome, and Herodias and Antipas were exiled to Gaul (France) for the rest of their lives.

**6:29 his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.** By now Zacharias and Elizabeth were both dead and John apparently had no brothers or sisters, so his disciples became his family and took care of his body.

## The return of the Twelve – Mark 6:30-33 (Matt 14:13; Luke 9:10-11a; John 6:1-2)

Jesus sent the Twelve out in Mark 6:7-13, and then Mark 6:14-29 is the backstory about John. Now in 6:30-33, the Twelve returned and reported on their labors. Thus the mission of the Twelve is bracketed around John's story, tying the two together, perhaps to show that following Jesus would lead to persecution, just as John experienced.

**6:31 desert place.** The JST changes this to “solitary place,” which is again an excellent translation of the Greek (also in verse 35). The JST includes a number of better translations than the words in the KJV, even though Joseph Smith didn't know any Greek.

**6:32 they departed.** Luke adds that the place was near the city of Bethsaida (Luke 9:10).

**6:33 people saw them departing . . . and ran afoot.** This verse gives some sense of the popularity of Jesus. As people saw him leaving on a ship, they ran around the lake in order to beat him there! How difficult it must have been for Jesus to get even a moment's peace in Galilee at this time.

John clarifies that the reason everyone was trying to see Jesus was because of “his miracles which he did on them that were diseased” (John 6:2).

## Feeding the five thousand – Mark 6:34-44 (Matt 14:14-21; Luke 9:11b-17; John 6:3-14)

See also John. This is such a significant incident that it is the only major event outside of Jesus' last week that is recorded in all four gospels. Here is Jesus, trying to be alone with his disciples to debrief after

their missions, but instead thousands come to him. What happens shows the magnificence of his character, his power over his creation, and the role of leadership in his kingdom.

6:34 **saw much people.** Jesus was seeking to be alone with his apostles after they returned from their missions and after hearing the news of John's death. But when the crowds again gathered around him, he had compassion on them. Mark says he taught them; Matthew says he healed them; and Luke says he did both. Luke also says that "he received them" (Luke 9:11b), which is better translated, 'welcomed' them.

6:37 **Give ye them to eat.** Jesus and his disciples frequently lived off of what others gave them. Now he asked his disciples to return the favor. John makes it clear that Jesus was testing them by this statement.

6:37 **two hundred pennyworth.** "Pennyworth" should be *denarion*; one denarius equals a day's wages for a laborer, so this is speaking of well over a half a year's wages, which would buy about 2400 loaves of bread. This gives some sense of the size of the crowd as one loaf could feed several people.

6:38 **Five, and two fishes.** John tells us that the bread was "barley loaves" (John 6:9); the common type of bread was wheat, but barley bread was only for the poorest of the people. The fish were probably dried or pickled, so they wouldn't spoil.

6:39 **green grass.** This shows it was springtime, as the rest of the year the grass is brown. John concurs, telling us that the Passover "was nigh" (John 6:4).

6:41 **gave them to his disciples to set before them.** Besides meeting their needs, Jesus was teaching a pattern here. By having the apostles and disciples distribute the food, he was showing that he was the source of truth and life, but that he uses others among us to administer those blessings to all. Their distribution of the food typified their role as priesthood leaders, taking the good word from the Lord and making sure everyone gets their fill, reaching out to individuals one on one and caring for their needs.

6:42 **were filled.** Not just to tide them over until they could find food, but a feast.

6:43 **twelve baskets full of the fragments.** The number twelve signifies priesthood authority, power, and the right to govern. It appears frequently in the Bible—for example, 12 apostles; 12 oxen holding up the laver in the temple; 12 tribes of Israel; Jesus saying he could call for 12 legions of angels; the woman with the issue of blood 12 years; 12 as the age of the daughter of Jairus raised from the dead; and multiple uses in Revelation. In this case, it emphasizes by what authority Jesus enacted this miraculous feeding and the authority given to his disciples.

6:44 **five thousand men.** We call this the feeding of the 5,000 because of this (Matthew, Luke, and John all give the same number), but Matthew makes it clear that women and children were also among the crowd, so it should be the feeding of 8,000 or 10,000 or perhaps even 20,000.

[Walking on water – Mark 6:45-52 \(Matt 14:22-33; John 6:15-21\)](#)

See Matthew.

[Healing at Gennesaret – Mark 6:53-56 \(Matt 14:34-36\)](#)

6:56 **touch if it were but the border of his garment.** Evidently the story of the woman at Capernaum who was healed of her issue of blood had reached Gennesaret and increased the faith of those people sufficiently that the same action also led to their being blessed.

[Things that defile – Mark 7:1-23 \(Matt 15:1-20; Luke 11:37-41\)](#)

The apostles had completed their missions and returned and Jesus continued to minister all throughout Galilee, healing and teaching. The opposition to Jesus starts to come from Jerusalem as he has their attention outside of Galilee.

7:1 **from Jerusalem.** The Jewish leaders in the capital city come all the way to Galilee to investigate Jesus.

7:2 **eat bread with defiled . . . unwashen, hands.** The Pharisees developed many rules about purity, usually achieved by washing various parts of the body (or the entire body) and items with which a person may come in contact, such as bowls or cups. Washing hands before eating was a precise practice that first required just the right water (usually stored in stone pots), dipped out with a specific vessel in a certain amount (a quarter log, or about the volume in an egg and a half, showing it ceremonial, not hygienic), then poured on raised hands so that the water would run down to the wrists (or in some cases to the elbow). If it didn't reach the wrists, the hands were not clean. The water must not run from the hands to the fingers as that would make the fingers unclean. The hands would be rubbed together (a closed fist in an open palm) but could also be rubbed against the head or even a wall! There was a required washing before eating, an important washing after eating, and often several washings during a meal that were considered optional but advised. This was taken so seriously shortly after the time of the NT that one rabbi exclaimed, "Whoever eats bread without previously washing the hands is as though he had intercourse with a harlot." All of this came from their interpretation of a single scripture—Leviticus 15:11 – "And whomsoever he toucheth that hath the issue, and hath not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even."

7:2 **defiled.** Meaning 'common,' the opposite of holy.

7:2 **they found fault.** The condemnation of the Pharisees may also reflect upon the miracle enacted just days before. The feeding of the 5,000 was in the wilderness, and the strict washing of hands before the meal could not likely be achieved. But the miracle was enacted just the same, and the crowd was fed. The Pharisees from Jerusalem would have heard the report of this miracle and naturally would have focused on the impurity of it all. Now to make things worse, they saw firsthand the disciples doing the same thing—eating without following the ritual cleansing activities.

7:5 **Why walk not thy disciples.** The behavior of disciples reflected on their teacher. The Pharisees were thus not only asking a question, but attempting to make Jesus look bad by pointing out supposed misbehavior among his followers. Jesus didn't fall into their trap at all, but turned the conversation right back at their own behavior.

7:8 **the washing of pots and cups.** One of the largest sections of the *Mishnah* (the record of the traditions of the Jews made after the time of Christ) is devoted to how all kinds of vessels are susceptible to uncleanness and how to deal with them.

7:9 **keep your own tradition.** The JST makes significant changes after this phrase and into verse 10, adding to Jesus' words:

**Full well is it written of you, by the prophets whom ye have rejected. They testified these things of a truth and their blood shall be upon you. Ye have kept not the ordinances of God; For Moses said, Honour thy father and they mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death of the transgressor, as it is written in your law; but ye keep not the law.**

7:11 **Corban.** The word means 'gift' in Hebrew. The tradition was that sons could declare part of their assets *corban* or gifted to the temple. This allowed them to exclude it from the assets they might otherwise be required to use to support their parents. However, declaring *corban* did not require them to actually give the gift to the temple, since they could change their minds later. They also considered a vow to be extremely important, so if you declared something *corban* and then gave it to your parents anyway in their time of need, the Pharisees considered the violation of the oath a major sin. Jesus taught that their keeping of this tradition causes them to violate a higher commandment—to honor father and mother.



7:15 **nothing from without**. The JST greatly clarifies this verse:

There is nothing from without **that entering into** a man, ~~that entering into him~~ can defile him, **which is food**: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man, **that proceedeth forth out of the heart**.

7:17 **he was entered into the house**. Matthew adds that when they went in the house, the disciples said to him, ‘Don’t you realize how you just offended the Pharisees?’ To which Jesus replied, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:12-14).

7:19 **draught**. The Greek word here is *aphedrōn*, meaning ‘the place where human waste is dumped’. Today we would say sewer. Jesus is using a somewhat graphic illustration that when we eat food, it goes into our stomach and comes out as waste.

7:19 **purging all meats**. This is better translated, ‘making pure (or holy) all food’. To understand this, you have to realize that the rabbis regarded excrement as ritually clean—it doesn’t defile. This was completely practical or people would make themselves unclean every day. So Jesus was taking their own laws and making his argument: ‘If excrement is clean, then how can the food that produces it be unclean?’ It is also interesting to note that only Mark, who is assumed to be writing Peter’s words, makes this point, for it is Peter later who had the vision of being commanded to eat all food, thus opening the way for the gospel to go to the Gentiles—which is where Jesus next goes.

7:21 **the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts**. The heart was considered the origin of thoughts, while the kidneys (“reins” in the OT) were the center of emotions.

Jesus’ final point is that ignoring the traditions would not cause uncleanness, but the acts and thoughts of the person. He lists some of the most important in these verses, most of which are readily understood in the KJV translation with the possible exception of “the evil eye” (envy, jealousy, covetousness) and “foolishness” (thoughtlessness).

### Gentile daughter healed – Mark 7:24-30 (Matt 15:21-28)

In an effort to perhaps get away from a potential threat from Herod Antipas, Jesus and his disciples moved north into the mostly Gentile regions of Tyre and Sidon. Because Jews were living in many cities, they would have had no trouble staying with Jews who lived in those areas (earlier scriptures talked about certain converts who came from there).

7:24 **Tyre and Sidon**. Another helpful JST change is included with this verse that indicates the majesty of Jesus’ character:

And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would ~~that have~~ no man **should come unto him** ~~know it~~: but he could not **deny them, for he had compassion upon all men** ~~be hid~~.

7:26 **Syrophenician**. An interesting indication that Mark was writing to Romans, since only Romans used this title for people from this region.

7:27 **cast it unto the dogs**. Was Jesus being rude? Certainly calling her a dog would be an insult. But subsequent conversation indicates that he was testing her faith and that she passed the test. He was also teaching that the gospel would first go to the covenant house of Israel (“Let the children first be filled”) but his intention was clearly not that Gentiles should be excluded. The Greek form of the word dog that he used also suggests a softening—it means little and domesticated dogs, not the kind of wild dogs that roamed the hills and streets (at night) of Palestine, eating the scraps and garbage left by others.

## Many healed by the sea – Mark 7:31-37 (Matt 15:29-31)

7:31 **the coasts of Decapolis**. This verse shows that Jesus continued to labor in primarily Gentile areas for a time—Tyre and Sidon, then the Decapolis.

7:34 **put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue**. The man could not hear Jesus' words, so there was no way to ask him about his faith. But Jesus knew his faith and assured the man of his ability to heal him using actions the man would understand by his culture. Touching his ears was an obvious indication. The spit of a wise or great man was considered by many in those days to have great healing properties, so using that cultural understanding, he was indicating to the man that he would heal his speech, too.

7:34 **Ephphatha**. This Aramaic word meaning, 'Be opened', as Mark notes. Jesus says this so that the people would know that it wasn't the touching that healed the man, but his word—and the man's faith.

7:36 **tell no man**. As discussed above, Jesus apparently asked people not to discuss miracles for two reasons: 1) To minimize publicity and therefore persecution for him and his disciples; and, 2) To minimize persecution for the person healed. But the miraculous nature of many of his activities was clearly the subject of discussion throughout Galilee and Judea and Mark notes the irony that the more he asked them not to talk about it, the more they did.

## Feeds four thousand – Mark 8:1-10 (Matt 15:32-38)

See Matthew. Repeating the miracle of feeding a large crowd, Jesus now fed 4,000 (probably many more, because again, Matthew notes it was 4,000 men "beside women and children"). He did so out of "compassion on the multitude," and this time with seven loaves and "a few little fishes" and with a resulting seven baskets full. Seven represents completeness, wholeness, or perfection. The number comes up so often in scripture that some scholars think it should always be considered symbolic when used. Taken together, the two instances of feeding large crowds point to Jesus' priesthood power and perfection.

## Sign of the prophet Jonas – Mark 8:11-13 (Matt 16:1-4)

See Matthew.

8:12 **no sign be given unto this generation**. Though discussed with Matthew, Mark's account in the JST gives greater details about the sign of Jonas (Jonah):

There shall no sign be given unto this generation, **save the sign of the prophet Jonah; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so likewise shall the Son of Man be buried in the bowels of the earth**. This was the second time Jesus had given this 'sign' to them (see Matthew 12:38-40).

## Leaven of the Pharisees – Mark 8:14-21 (Matt 16:5-11)

See Matthew.

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