

treated in this way. What right had any man to do that to Jesus? You may feel anger welling up inside you. Allow yourself to respond to God in a way that seems appropriate.

2. As in his life, so in his death, the person of Jesus provoked a reaction. How would you describe the reactions of the following?
 - anyone in the temple at the time when the curtain split
 - the centurion
 - the woman
 - Joseph
 - Pilate

No-one can be indifferent to Jesus when they meet him.

Interest point, verse 38

The curtain separated the Holy of Holies, where God was believed to be present in a special way, from the rest of the temple. The high priest went in there only once every year. Now, by the death of Jesus, access to God was available to everyone.

Structure

The statement about Jesus, with which Mark begins his Gospel, is now to be found upon the lips of a non-Jew, at the end of the Gospel. 'Surely this man was the Son of God' (verse 39, NIV).

Weekend - The Resurrection of Jesus

Mark 16:1-20

1. 1 Read 16:1-8 (many authorities believe verses 9-20 are a later addition to the Gospel). The tragedy gave way to triumph, as Jesus had predicted (e.g. 10:34; 14:28). If he had not been resurrected he would, among other things, have been a liar. From your own knowledge and looking at these verses and 1 Corinthians 15:12-34, why is it important that the cross was not the end for Jesus?
2. Spend some time over the weekend reviewing your studies in this Gospel. But above all, ask yourself how much have you discovered about Jesus and in what ways has he met you and spoken to you over these last three weeks?
3. The resurrection of Jesus provides a solid historical basis for Christianity's claim to be true. It is examined thoroughly in ***Jesus Christ: The Witness of History***, by J.N.D. Anderson (IVP) and ***Who Moved the Stone?***, by Frank Morison (STL).



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 53: Mark's gospel, 3 (A detailed study)

Day 1. Journey to Jerusalem, 2

Mark 10:1-52

Read verses 1-12.

Jesus' purpose in explaining the Mosaic law on divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1) in verse 5 was to restate that divorce was not acceptable but may be necessary to limit sinfulness and control its consequences, a direct response to the question of verse 2. God's pattern was, and has always been, that of a lasting partnership between a man and a woman. In the subsequent discussion with the disciples he put man and woman on the same level in marriage — which was truly shocking for his time.

1. What does this indicate about God's intentions for human beings which are so often higher and better than our way of doing things?
2. Can you think of other examples?
3. Pray that you will always strive to let God mould your ideas.
4. God does not always give to people what they ask of him. Blind Bartimaeus got what he asked for, but the rich young ruler went away sad. Read verses 17-23 and 46-52. What do we see here about the way that Jesus granted requests which people made of him? In what attitude of mind do you ask God for things?

To complete the observations you made in the last study about the statement of Jesus' death and the call to discipleship, look at verses 24-45. Jot down what these add to your understanding.

Day 2. Ministry in Jerusalem, 1

Mark 11:1 - 12:44

Structure

This section is divided into two: 11:1 - 25 consists of the symbolic actions accomplished during the three days in Jerusalem, and 11:27 - 12:44 the five conflicts with priestly and scribal authorities (possibly paralleled with the Galilean ones, 2:1 - 3:6).

Interest point

In fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9 Jesus was coming as Messiah into Jerusalem, coming as Lord to his temple, although the disciples did not understand the significance until afterwards (John 12:16). It was unlikely that Jesus wanted his action to be understood as a claim to political messiahship. The cursing of the fig tree could be seen as another Messianic act, since the fig tree often symbolized Israel's status before God (e.g. Jeremiah 8:13) and its destruction was associated with judgment (e.g. Hosea 2:12). In cleansing the temple forecourt Jesus was symbolically enabling the Gentiles to worship God — a fulfilment of Zechariah 14:16.

1. As you read 11:1-25, make a note of all the indications that Jesus was always in control of events and not vice versa. What grounds for praise does that give you?
2. Briefly summarize the criticisms levelled at Jesus in 11:27 - 12:44. How did he handle such criticism? What hints can you get from him on how you can confront those who criticize you for your faith? When, if ever, are you entitled to attack such critics in the devastating way that Jesus did?

Praise God that even in the face of such opposition Jesus remained firm, refusing to act in any way other than might be expected of God-become-man.

Day 3. Ministry in Jerusalem, 2

Mark 13:1-37

Structure

This is the longest uninterrupted discourse of Jesus in Mark's Gospel. It provides a bridge between Jesus' public ministry and the account of his death, showing a link between the judgment of Jerusalem and the death of Jesus (see 14:58; 15:29).

Interest point

The primary function of chapter 13 is not to predict details of future events but to promote faith and obedience in a time of distress and upheaval. This would be particularly relevant to the original readers undergoing persecution. As you can imagine, much scholarly debate has been focused upon the chapter. Was Jesus referring to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, or to his second coming, or what? In this study we shall not attempt to answer such questions!

1. What were the motives of Jesus in instructing the disciples on how they were to view the future? Consider each of the following statements to see which of them gives a clue as to his motives. Note down which verse(s), if any, applies to which statement.

Jesus taught his disciples about the future because...

- he wanted them to be prepared for whatever happened.
- he did not want them to be deceived.

- he wanted them to be confident in the face of persecution.
- he wanted to motivate them to preach.
- he wanted them to take a long holiday every winter.
- he wanted to increase their trust in the sovereignty of God.
- he wanted them to spend all their lives analysing the signs of the times.

2. Take each of the above **relevant** statements and prayerfully consider how you yourself are taking the teaching of Jesus to heart.

Day 4. The road to death, 1

Mark 14:1-52

Structure

So many of Mark's themes are down together in what is obviously the climax of his Gospel: for example, the conflict with the authorities, the plans to kill Jesus, the awareness that Jesus has had all along of his mission and impending death and the ways in which he prepared his disciples for it. Mark was preparing his readers for this moment, for the passion of Jesus.

*'He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not'
(Isaiah 53:3, NIV)*

As you read these verses, bear this prophecy about the Messiah in mind. Make a note of all the different ways in which Jesus was rejected. His loneliness and isolation were finally tragically expressed in his cry from the cross in 15:34. What does such utter desolation mean? Then pause to realize that he went to such depths for you. In humility praise God that Jesus was obedient, even to the point of death on the cross.

Even at this late stage, what was Jesus saying to his disciples about the purpose of his suffering? How would you answer someone who said to you that the death of Jesus was a tragedy because it was a pointless death of the best man who ever lived? Use this passage to help you in your answer.

Day 5. The road to death, 2

Mark 14:53 - 15:47

*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth'
(Isaiah 53:7, NIV)*

1. Familiarity can blunt our senses. As you read this moving and well-known narrative, bear this prophecy of Isaiah in mind. Notice the indignity of the

Son of God, who had left all the glories of heaven to come to this earth, yet being