

MARK - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Who was Mark, and why did he write a “Gospel”? Where did he get his information? What picture of God would you have if you had only Mark? Did Mark know Jesus? Peter? Paul? One of the early church fathers, Papias, suggested that Mark wrote “Peter’s Gospel.” Do we have any evidence from the New Testament to support the idea that the Gospel of Mark is “Peter’s Gospel”? 2 Peter 1:12-15 says, “So I will always remind you of these things, . . . I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.” (NIV) How do you think Peter did that? (1 Peter 5:13) Who was the youth in Mark 14:51,52? Could it have been Mark?
2. How do you feel about the fact that taken together, Matthew and Luke borrowed more than 90 percent of Mark? Is that plagiarism? Even if there were no laws against plagiarism in those days, didn’t God know what was right?
3. Was the Sabbath really made for man? (Mark 2:27,28) Would you be happier if God would just eliminate the Sabbath commandment? What does your attitude about the Sabbath commandment imply? Is the Sabbath commandment at least a little bit arbitrary? Is the seven-day cycle arbitrary? What about choosing just one day out of the seven? What does *arbitrary* suggest? Does arbitrary mean we really do not have any reason for doing it? If someone who knows you very well gives you a gift and says, “This is just what you need!” would you consider such a gift arbitrary? Have people down through the years generally kept the Sabbath for arbitrary reasons? If we just keep it because we believe God has commanded it, doesn’t that make us legalists?
4. Why did Jesus say, “Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin”? (Mark 3:29; compare Matthew 12:31) What is an “eternal sin,” and why can’t it be forgiven?
5. Why did Jesus seem to be quite concerned about people being hungry? (Mark 5:43; 6:31,37; 8:2,3) Shouldn’t He have left such the small details to others?
6. What did Jesus mean by saying, “There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him”? (Mark 7:15)
7. Why did Jesus so often tell those He had healed not to tell anyone? (Matthew 9:30; 12:16; Mark 5:43; 7:36; 8:26; 9:9; but compare 5:19) Is it true that no matter how well we have prepared, God expects us to go and witness if we are willing?
8. When healing blind people, why do you suppose Jesus sometimes just spoke, sometimes used saliva (spittle), and sometimes used saliva mixed with clay? Did these “medications” have anything to do with the healing itself? Did they act somehow as a “placebo”? Why do we use oil today when we do an anointing? (James 5:14-17) What does the oil represent? Why were the eyes of the man in Mark 8:22-26 only partially healed at first, and then Jesus healed him the rest of the way? Did the blind man lack faith? Did Jesus make a mistake at first? Did Jesus do this miracle step-by-step, slowly, so everyone at the scene would be able to fully comprehend what was going on? What do you think the blind man believed about what Jesus was doing? Would the use of saliva (spittle) tend to enhance the man’s faith? Why were the religious leaders so upset when Jesus performed these miracles, especially when He performed these miracles on the Sabbath?
9. Why did Jesus say, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins”? (Mark 11:25, NIV)

10. How could Jesus suggest that the most important commandments are found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 rather than in Exodus 20 or even Deuteronomy 5? (Mark 12:28-31)
11. In what sense did the widow when she gave her two “mites” or copper coins “put more into the treasury than all the others”? (Mark 12:42-44, *NIV*; Luke 21:1-4)
12. When did or when will the time come when people will turn against their family members and persecute them and betray them? (Mark 13:12,13) How could Jesus give all the prophecies listed in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, and then say, “All these things will happen before the people now living will pass away”? (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32)
13. What do we learn about God from the story of Peter’s denial? (Mark 14:30,66-72; compare Matthew 26:34,35,69-75; Luke 22:34,54-62; John 13:38; 18:15-18,25-27; *DA* 713) How do you think Peter felt when he looked up at Christ? What do you think Peter expected to see in the face of Christ? Wrath? Anger? Sorrow? Offended justice? How do you think Jesus looked at Judas as he threw the coins down on the floor? How did Judas react? Why? How does God feel about each one of His erring children?
14. Why did Mark write, “Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.” Why did he omit Peter’s name? (Mark 14:47, *NIV*) What about verse 51, “A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.” Was that Mark? Why did Mark call Mary Magdalene “a woman” who came to the feast with a flask of ointment? (Mark 14:3) Why did Peter fail to identify Judas as the betrayer? (Mark 14:18-21)
15. If this is Peter’s Gospel, why do you think Peter did not mention walking on the water? (See Matthew 14:22-32) Why was that final discussion between Jesus and Peter on the beach at Galilee not mentioned by Peter in this Gospel account? (See John 21:15-24; but see 2 Peter 1:14)
16. Mark 15:40 suggests that a group of women remained loyal to Jesus right to the end and did not run away even though the disciples did. Why were they “more brave” than even the disciples? Why have Adventists and evangelists generally had more success with women than men? Why are women apparently more attracted to the gospel than men?
17. Why did the women say “nothing to anyone, because they were afraid” after receiving the news of the resurrection? (Mark 16:8) How do you reconcile Mark 16:1-3 and 16:9? Why do you think the angel said, “Go, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he is going before you to Galilee”? (Mark 16:7) Why did God choose Mary Magdalene out of whom He had cast seven devils (Mark 16:10) and who had been known as “a wicked woman in the town” (Luke 7:37) to carry the best “good news” of all time to the members of the first “general conference committee”? Would you have chosen her? Why do you think God chose her?
18. Repeatedly throughout His ministry, Jesus taught and did things that were directly opposed to the strict requirements of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Why do you think that made them so upset? Who were recognized as the real experts in Scripture? What were Jesus’ interpretations of Scripture doing to their reputation? What would SDAs say if Jesus came today and said, “Excuse Me, but you’re wrong about the Sabbath” or some other doctrine? What if Jesus announced that SDAs have been keeping the Sabbath too strictly? Wouldn’t we begin talking about warnings by Jesus of false prophets to come? Might we say, “To the law and to the testimony—if He doesn’t agree with our interpretation of these He is wrong”? (See Isaiah 8:20) Wasn’t Jesus destroying what they considered to be their guarantee of salvation? Didn’t they regard their genealogy and their riches as positive proofs that they were going to heaven? Could we Adventists develop similar attitudes? What about 1888?

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Last Modified: June 28, 2014 (from TG June 16, 2010)

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