

MARK - A TEACHER'S 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?

From *Daily Study Bible* by William Barclay (electronic version):

The Earliest Gospel

When we examine the matter more closely we see that there is every reason for believing that *Mark* must have been the first of the gospels to be written, and that the other two, *Matthew* and *Luke*, are using *Mark* as a basis.

Mark can be divided into 105 sections. Of these sections 93 occur in *Matthew* and 81 in *Luke*. Of *Mark's* 105 sections there are only 4 which do not occur either in *Matthew* or in *Luke*.

Mark has 661 verses: *Matthew* had [sic] 1068 verses: *Luke* has 1149 verses. *Matthew* reproduces no fewer than 606 of *Mark's* verses; and *Luke* reproduces 320. Of the 55 verses of *Mark* which *Matthew* does not reproduce *Luke* reproduces 31; so there are only 24 verses in the whole of *Mark* which are not reproduced somewhere in *Matthew* or *Luke*.

It is not only the substance of the verses which is reproduced; the very words are reproduced. *Matthew* uses 51 per cent of *Mark's* words; and *Luke* uses 53 per cent.

Both *Matthew* and *Luke* as a general rule follow *Mark's* order of events. Occasionally either *Matthew* or *Luke* differs from *Mark*; but they never *both* differ against him; always at least one of them follows *Mark's* order.

Improvements on Mark

Since *Matthew* and *Luke* are both much longer than *Mark*, it might just possibly be suggested that *Mark* is a summary of *Matthew* and *Luke*; but there is one other set of facts which show [sic] that *Mark* is earlier. It is the custom of *Matthew* and *Luke* to improve and to polish *Mark*, if we may put it so. Let us take some instances.

Sometimes *Mark* seems to limit the power of Jesus; at least an ill-disposed critic might try to prove that he was doing so. Here are three accounts of the same incident:

Mark 1:34: And He healed *many* who were sick with various diseases, and cast out *many* demons: [sic]

Matthew 8:16: And he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed *all* who were sick;

Luke 4:40: And he laid his hands on *every one* of them, and healed them.

Let us take other [*sic*] three similar examples:

Mark 3:10: For He had healed *many*;

Matthew 12:15: And he healed them *all*;

Luke 6:19: and healed them *all*.

Matthew and *Luke* both change *Mark's* *many* into *all* so that there may be no suggestion of any limitation of the power of Jesus Christ.

There is a very similar change in the account of the events of Jesus' visit to Nazareth. Let us compare the account of *Mark* and of *Matthew*.

Mark 6:5,6: And *he could do* no mighty work *there* ...and he marveled because of their unbelief;

Matthew 13:58: And *he did not do* many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

Matthew shrinks from saying that Jesus *could not* do any mighty works; and changes the form of the expression accordingly.

Sometimes *Matthew* and *Luke* leave out little touches in *Mark* in case they could be taken to belittle Jesus. *Matthew* and *Luke* omit three statements in *Mark*:

Mark 3:5: "He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart."

Mark 3:21: And when his friends heard it, they went out to seize him: for they said, *He is beside himself*;

Mark 10:14: He was indignant.

Matthew and *Luke* hesitate to attribute human emotions of anger and grief to Jesus, and shudder to think that anyone should even have suggested that Jesus was mad.

Sometimes *Matthew* and *Luke* slightly alter things in *Mark* to get rid of statements which might seem to show the apostles in a bad light. We take but one instance, from the occasion on which James and John sought to ensure themselves of the highest places in the coming Kingdom. Let us compare the introduction to that story in *Mark* and in *Matthew*:

Mark 10:35: *James and John*, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him ...,

Matthew 20:20: Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him, with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.

Matthew hesitates to ascribe motives of ambition directly to the two apostles, and so he ascribes them to their mother.

All this makes it clear that *Mark* is the earliest of the gospels [*sic*] *Mark* gives a simple, vivid, direct narrative; but *Matthew* and *Luke* have already begun to be affected by doctrinal and theological considerations which make them much more careful of what they say.

The Teaching of Jesus

We have seen that *Matthew* has 1068 verses; and that *Luke* has 1149 verses; and that between them they reproduce 582 of *Mark*'s verses. That means that in *Matthew* and *Luke* there is much more material than *Mark* supplies. When we examine that material we find that more than 200 verses of it are almost identical. For instance such passages as Luke 6:41,42 and Matthew 7:3,5; Luke 10:21,22 and Matthew 11:25-27; Luke 3:7-9 and Matthew 3:7-10 are almost exactly the same.

But here we notice a difference. The material which *Matthew* and *Luke* drew from *Mark* was almost entirely material dealing with the events of Jesus' life; but these 200 additional verses common to *Matthew* and *Luke* tell us, not what Jesus *did* but what Jesus *said*. Clearly in these verses *Matthew* and *Luke* are drawing from a common source-book of the teachings of Jesus.

That book does not now exist; but to it scholars have given the letter Q which stands for *Quelle*, which is the German word for *source*. In its day it must have been an extraordinarily important book, for it was the first handbook of the teaching of Jesus. (*Daily Study Bible* - article *The Synoptic Gospels*)

Conservative Christians scholars all agree that the Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, the son of Mary, (Acts 12:12) and the cousin of Barnabas. (Colossians 4:10) He was a young man who grew up in Jerusalem. His first name was John. (Acts 13:5,13; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13) It is likely that the upper room where Jesus spent His last night with the disciples was in Mark's parent's home. (See Matthew 26:18; Mark 14:51; Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13) For some time after the crucifixion, their home served as headquarters for the early church and the place where the disciples stayed when in Jerusalem. (John 20:19; Acts 1:13,14; 12:12) John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first part of their first missionary journey, but he went home before its end. (Acts 13:5,13) John Mark later worked with Peter and Paul. (1 Peter 5:13; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11) The *SDA Bible Commentary* adds:

Papias, bishop of the city of Hierapolis, about 10 mi. (16 km.) from Colossae and Laodicea in Asia Minor, is the first known writer who speaks of Mark as the author of this Gospel. In his *Interpretations*, written about 140 AD, as quoted in Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* iii. 39. 15; Loeb ed., vol. 1, p. 297), he states:

“And the Presbyter [most probably the presbyter John] used to say this, “Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord’s oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.”” (Nichol, F.D. (1978; 2002). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5 page 561. Review and Herald Publishing Association.)

This statement is in harmony with Peter’s reference to Mark as “my son.” (1 Peter 5:13)

Most scholars agree that Mark was the first Gospel written. It was probably written around A.D. 65, near the time of Peter’s death in Rome.

Evidence that Peter was the main source of the Gospel is found in the book itself. Peter, a fisherman who grew up in Galilee, was the only Gospel writer to mention gathering up the

extra *fish* left over after feeding the five thousand men—besides women and children. (Mark 6:43) He mentioned the seating of the groups in more detail than the other writers. (Mark 6:39,40) The Gospel of Mark describes Peter’s denial at the trial of Jesus in most detail. (See Mark 14:27-31; 66-72; compare Matthew 26:34,69-75; Luke 22:34,54-62; John 13:38; 18:15-18,25-27) Simon Peter and his friends were the ones who first went looking for Jesus after His miraculous day in Capernaum. (Mark 1:36) Peter remembered in detail the healing of the leper, (Mark 1:40) and the lowering of the paralyzed man through Peter’s roof. (Mark 2:1-4; Luke 5:17-26) He remembered the actual appearance of Jesus at the healing of the man with the paralyzed hand on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:5) He remembered the details of dealing with the demoniac of Gergasa. (Mark 5:4-6) Only Mark mentioned the healing of the deaf and dumb man using saliva, mentioning the actual command Jesus gave in Aramaic—“Ephphatha”—Be opened! (Mark 7:32-35) He mentioned that it was the next day when Peter questioned Jesus about the withered fig tree. (Mark 11:20,21)

Mark’s Gospel was widely known among Christians as early as A.D. 150. The fact that Mark is the shortest Gospel and yet has many intimate details of the stories, suggests that Mark wrote first and the others borrowed from him. There are some passages that Matthew and Luke share that are not in Mark, and it has been hypothesized that there was another “source” (*Quelle* in German) from which Matthew and Luke also borrowed. While Matthew focused on who Jesus was, Mark focused on what Jesus did. Luke addressed the question, “To whom did Jesus come?” John seemed to ask, “What did Jesus want us to learn?”

Evidence that Mark was probably focusing on a Roman audience is the fact that a number of words he used for soldiers and officials are the Latin words which he transliterated into Greek rather than using the normal Greek words for those individuals. Mark also explained facts which would be unfamiliar to Romans such as Jewish rituals, coinage, Pharisaical customs, the Passover, and certain Aramaic words. (See Mark 5:41; 7:3,4,34; 12:12; 14:12; 15:34)

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?

As we have learned from the *Daily Study Bible*, only 24 verses of Mark have no parallel in either Matthew or Luke. That is about one percent of what he wrote! Is it right for inspired writers to do so much borrowing? About ninety percent of Mark is nearly verbatim in either Matthew or Luke. On the other hand, if God was the Principal Contributor to the writings of each of these Gospels, didn't He have the right to repeat as much as necessary to emphasize what He wanted to teach? Each of the Gospel authors wrote for a different audience, and they probably had no notion that some day we would be comparing their writings with each other using a magnifying glass. Luke said specifically that he researched the accounts of the life of Jesus to try to determine the truth. That is not plagiarism; it is good scholarship!

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?

There are two main institutions that God has given us, that have been preserved somewhat intact since the times of Adam and Eve. One is marriage, and the other is the Sabbath. To some, the fact that God gave marriage and the Sabbath at creation suggests that these two institutions were intended to have great meaning for us. But, if they are supposed to be very important to us and be of value to us, wouldn't Satan do everything possible to destroy their meaning and thus destroy us? Of course he would!

It should be obvious to anyone aware of the news in our day that Satan has done everything he can to destroy marriage and the family and whatever God intended for us to learn and gain from those institutions. It should also be obvious from a fairly cursory understanding and survey of Scripture that he has done what he could to cause a great deal of controversy and misunderstanding about the Sabbath. The Jews developed at least 1521 rules for Sabbath observance. In Christ's day He found it necessary to go out of His way to constantly "break" their Sabbath "rules" in order to try to point out what He intended by correct observance of the Sabbath! That suggests to us that the Sabbath was still important in Jesus' eyes, or else He probably would have simply ignored the issue. He apparently ignored other major social issues such as slavery!

But Jesus certainly did not ignore the Sabbath; neither did the Jews! The way each side observed the Sabbath was such a clear indication of what kind of God they each believed in and worshiped! Jesus tried to teach us about a God who wants to be our Friend. (See John 15:15) They tried to suggest that God was a terrible taskmaster just waiting to catch any one of His children in the slightest infraction of some Sabbath rule. That turned them into incredible legalists. Since they were constantly piling up rules, they had to constantly develop loopholes to get around their own rules! Anyone looking on would immediately get the impression that their "god" was an arbitrary and nitpicking legalist. By contrast, Jesus wanted His followers to look forward to the Sabbath. He wanted them to enjoy it. That is what God has always really wanted.

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?

In the events told in this passage, the Pharisees knew for sure that the Spirit that was working with Jesus was not Beelzebul (or Beelzebub). But in order to discredit Him, they were accusing Him of being empowered by the Devil. That constituted a deliberate rejection of light. Since the Holy Spirit is the One who works with us to convict and convince us of the truth, if we reject Him and His work, we are cutting off the only source of help available to us. They had rejected Jesus from the time of His birth, and despite mounting evidence their rejection continued to grow. In fact, the stronger the evidence in favor of Jesus, the more violently they opposed Him. So long as one takes that attitude, it is impossible for such a person to be brought back to God.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, sometimes referred to as the "unpardonable sin," consists of progressive resistance to the truth until one becomes totally unresponsive to it. The person usually understands that he is in direct opposition to the truth but for some reason rejects it. There is nothing more that God can do for such a person while maintaining freedom of choice for that individual.

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?

One of the best evidences that Jesus was the kind of Person who will be a delight to live with forever is this kind of detail that suggested that He was constantly thinking about the welfare of others. This unselfishness can be very annoying to people who would rather be selfish, but it is the very essence of heaven. God was showing us that every aspect of our

lives is of concern to Him. He wants to be our Friend and friends are always thinking of their friends' welfare. Note that it is in Peter's Gospel (Mark) that the hunger and age of Jairus' daughter, the little girl raised from the dead, are mentioned because Peter was there, and it made an impression on him. He also mentioned the specific Aramaic expression that Jesus used: *talitha cumi* (or, *koum*). (Mark 5:41)

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)

First of all, it needs to be emphasized that Jesus was not discussing diet, but rather, He was discussing "ritual cleanliness" as defined by the Jews of His day. This "ritual cleanliness" was largely a matter of the commandments of men and not the commandments of God. There is nothing in Mark 7 that discusses health. Mark 7:3,4 should indicate clearly what kind of issues Jesus was discussing. If Jesus had declared in Mark 7 that all foods were safe to eat, then Peter should not have objected to the things he saw in the vision of the sheet let down from heaven in Acts 10.

Jesus made it clear in Mark 7:20-23 what kind of "uncleanness" He had in mind. Jesus was contrasting real spiritual issues with their man-made traditions.

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?

In some cases, Jesus urged those He had healed to rush to the priests without telling anyone in order to get a fair judgment from the priests. If the priests had suspected that the person had been healed by Jesus, they might have given a dishonest judgment just to make it appear that Jesus could not really heal people. In other cases, Jesus probably warned people not to tell other people that He had healed them because He did not want to be known as some kind of wonder-worker since that would create a great stir and make it more difficult for Him to do His more important tasks. It is also likely that some who had been healed knew so little about Jesus that they might have misrepresented Him by their words. In our day, many claim to be witnessing for Jesus who say things about Him that clearly misrepresent Him.

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?

Among Eastern peoples spittle is thought to have both evil and good effects. (See Numbers 12:14; Deuteronomy 25:9; Job 30:10; Mark 7:33; 8:23; John 9:6,7) The ancients believed that saliva contained healing properties. (See, for example, *Talmud, Baba Bathra* 126b, Soncino ed., p. 526) Among certain peoples even today, spittle is thought to be the means of transferring superhuman powers. The ancient Romans believed that spittle could prevent the evil spirits from entering a baby. This may be part of the background for the idea of "holy water."

Jesus apparently went out of His way to break the Rabbinical traditions about Sabbath observance in order to call attention to true Sabbath observance. It was against the law to apply any medication above the neck on the Sabbath. It was against their laws to mix or knead any mixture on the Sabbath. (See *Mishnah Shabbath* 7. 2, Soncino ed. of the *Talmud*, p. 349. See also *Mishnah Shabbath* 24. 3, Soncino ed. of the *Talmud*, p. 794) Jesus also violated their laws by applying an “unusual” anointing on the Sabbath. (*Mishnah Shabbath* 14.4, Soncino ed. of the *Talmud*, p. 539) The fact that Jesus anointed the man’s eyes and asked him to exercise his faith by going and washing in the pool called Siloam (John 9:6,7) was probably a way of strengthening the man’s faith.

The incident in Mark 8:22-26 is the only recorded case in which Jesus apparently healed in two stages. At that time, Jesus was in a somewhat pagan area of the country. It is possible that Jesus only partially healed his eyes to encourage him to believe that He could heal them all the way. Thus, it may have been an aid to faith.

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*)

Isn’t that what Jesus told us to pray for in the Lord’s prayer? (Matthew 6:5-15) There are several places in Scripture that suggest that the Father’s forgiveness is somehow contingent on ours. From other places we know that God forgives people even before they ask Him. (See Luke 23:34) Jesus wants us to understand that getting things straight with our fellow men is a part of worship and our relationship with God. He cannot admit us to heaven if we cannot get along with our neighbors. In fact, we are supposed to love our neighbors as ourselves! (Matthew 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31-33; Luke 10:25-37; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8)

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)

The Jews loved to argue over the details of keeping the commandments. But Paul (Romans 13:8-10) and Moses made it clear that the whole of the Ten Commandments as well as all of the other precepts of God’s law hang on two great principles: Love for God, (Deuteronomy 6:5) and love for our fellow humans. (Leviticus 19:18) When these principles are acted out in actual experience, even the Pharisees could not argue with the conclusions. (See Luke 10:25-39) Jesus was always seeking to get the people to think things through and to act from principle. If we do that, we will keep the whole law.

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)

A mite or a *lepton* was the smallest Jewish or Greek coin. It weighed between one-half and one gram (about 1/30 of an ounce). The size of her gift was measured by the fact that she gave her all and not by the value of the mites or *lepta* themselves. There are several very important lessons that we can learn from that experience. Jesus apparently went near the place of offerings in the temple just so that He could comment on the widow’s gift.

We need to notice first of all that the widow believed that she gave her gift to God and not to the temple authorities. It is quite likely that the temple authorities despised her two mites as they counted the offering. They were much more concerned about the gold and silver coins that had been given. But Jesus commended her for her giving even though the money went to the worst possible place. Certainly, Caiaphas did not need her two mites. Today, we often hear people suggesting that they do not want to give their offerings to the church because, as they see it, the church is “misusing” the money in some way. If that were a valid basis for withholding our offerings, then surely, Jesus would have rushed over to prevent the widow from putting in her two mites! Instead, He commended her for giving her

all to God. When we give to the church, we need to give as if we are giving to the Lord. If we feel that the church is misusing the funds in some way, that is a separate issue that can be handled through internal reforms.

Jesus measured the widow's gift by her motive and the cheerfulness with which she gave. It was exemplary by the proportion of her means that she gave! She showed complete trust in God to provide for her future needs. The gift clearly showed that Jesus did not expect the poor to be excused from giving. Certainly, her example down through the years has led to an enormous wealth being given to the church around the world. (See DA 616)

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)

We usually date the signs in the "sun, moon, and stars" as follows:

- The Lisbon earthquake: November 1, 1755
- The dark day and the moon turning to "blood": May 19, 1780
- The end of the 1260-year period of Daniel and Revelation signaling the mortal wound to the Roman Catholic Church: 1798
- The falling of the stars: November 13, 1833
- The end of the 2300-day prophecy: October 22, 1844

Ellen White connected the prophecies in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 to the end of the 1260-year period occurring in 1798. She went on to say that the end should have come while the generation living in the 1840s was still alive. In 1868 she spoke of a "long delay" in the second coming. In 1883 she stated that we should have been in the kingdom before then. Notice the following statements by Ellen White:

The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! **It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional.**

God had committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel's message was to be given, the minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people. The Sabbath reform was to be carried forward. The breach in the law of God must be made up. The message must be proclaimed with a loud voice, that all the inhabitants of earth might receive the warning. The people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming.

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward. But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment, many of the advent believers yielded their faith.... Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the

whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history!

It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in “because of unbelief.” Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them. For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. **In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.**-- *Manuscript 4*, 1883.

We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.-- *Letter 184*, 1901. *Evangelism* 695,696; compare *Last Day Events* 38; *Maranatha* 61; *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 67

God has always talked of the “day of the Lord” as being very near. (See 1 John 2:18; compare Joel 1:15; 2:1,2; 3:14; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 22:6,12,20; contrast 2 Thessalonians 2:1-6; Revelation 7:1-3) For each one of us individually, that may be true at any moment. God was not lying or being deceitful when He spoke those kinds of words or suggested those kinds of ideas to the prophets. What would people do if God told them that it would be many years or even centuries before He would do anything? The natural tendency would be to sit back and say, “Stop worrying,” “Eat, drink, and be merry,” etc. Many would say, “We can reform our lives just before we die!”

It is hard to know what time Jesus was talking about in Mark 13:12,13, but it seems that the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy must be at the end, just before Jesus returns. No doubt, the Devil will “pull out all the stops” and do everything that he possibly can to destroy and confuse and deceive God's people.

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?

What can we say about a God who looks straight at one of His best “friends” as that person denies Him, and yet, God still shows His love? Peter's heart was broken. He realized what he had done when the cock crowed the second time, and he ran out of the judgment hall, stumbled back to the Garden of Gethsemane, and fell on the ground, weeping, wishing he could die! (*DA* 713) A short time later, Judas cast his ill-gotten thirty pieces of silver on the floor, realizing that he had betrayed innocent blood. Do you think Jesus looked at Judas? What did Judas see in the face of Jesus?

Jesus wept over both of His disciples. He will weep over all the wicked at the end as they perish. (Hosea 11:7,8) **God is not angry with sinners. He weeps over them even as they destroy themselves! Just as Judas realized that there was no more hope for him, the wicked at the end will realize that God has done everything He possibly could for them, but the wicked will continue to reject Him.**

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)

As Peter and Mark wrote this Gospel, they wanted to include all of the details of the story, yet there was nothing to be gained by embarrassing some who were later very prominent workers for God's cause by mentioning their names along with their acts. Mark probably thought that anyone who really wanted to know who the individuals were that were involved in each of these incidents, could discover the truth for himself.

As mentioned above, Mark was probably the young man in Mark 14:51. The upper room was probably in his parent's home, and he apparently followed Jesus and the disciples to Gethsemane. (He might even have been sent there by his parents to check on what was happening!) He almost got into trouble and could have lost his life. Instead, he ran home, apparently naked.

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)

In his younger years, Peter was very outspoken. He wanted to be first at everything. But, after having lived with Jesus for those years and later having realized the truth of what kind of kingdom Jesus was trying to establish, Peter felt very humble about his previous life. In "his" Gospel there is no boasting or anything that would elevate him above any of the other disciples. That is proof that the Gospel actually works in changing people's lives.

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?

Women have often been more responsive to the gospel as presented by evangelists. There are many possible reasons for that. Jesus is often presented not as a powerful man that might appeal to men, but more like a quiet, but loving, Person that might be more attractive to women. It was easier for the women to stay near the cross at the end because the soldiers and the priests would pay little or no attention to them. They had less chance of being accused and arrested as followers of the crucified Jesus. Some of the women had been very faithful followers of Jesus for a long time. (Luke 8:1-3)

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?

God is always much more forgiving than we seem to be. He was anxious to tell the great news to anyone who was ready to listen. Mary was the one who came to the grave. The "brave" disciples were in hiding for fear of the Jews! God wanted Peter to know that he was fully forgiven. The women may have been reluctant to say what they knew because the men were so reticent to believe them.

It does seem incredible to us that God would choose Mary—who was known as a wicked woman in the town, (Luke 7:37,39) out of whom He had cast seven devils, (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2) and who had, perhaps, been caught in the very act of committing adultery (John 8:1-11)—to be the one to carry the “gospel” or “good news” of His resurrection to the first general conference committee! Think what that says to us about God and the real meaning of forgiveness!

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?

Jesus' explanations of Scripture always seemed to make more sense than the conjured up notions of the Pharisees and scribes. However, they were regarded as the experts in Scripture. They were losing their credibility! That was very serious to them. It could even have destroyed their livelihood! But Jesus always seemed to speak “with authority”! (Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32) That was very upsetting to those who thought that, as a result, they were losing everything.

Today, we could have the same thing happen to us. We have so often thought that we are the ones who correctly understand and obey the Scriptures. But, we have not carried the gospel to the whole world correctly or the end would have come! The very delay in the coming of our Lord is an indictment against us! We often even think that we could not learn anything from members of other church groups because we have “the truth”! That puts us in the same category as the scribes and Pharisees!

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