



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

MARK

Week 4

Mark 12:1-27

Have you ever been trapped? (a) in a traffic jam, (b) in a lie, (c) in a lo-o-long meeting, (d) in an argument, (e) other.

1. Outline the parable of the vineyard (vs. 1-11). Identify who these characters might represent: the owner, the tenants, the vineyard, the servants, the son, the stone.
2. Notice how quickly the religious leaders figured it out (v. 12)! Why were they so angry, and then so afraid (v. 12)?
3. On to the trap (vs. 13-15)! Why would Jesus have been trapped if he had favored one answer while omitting the other (vs. 16-17)? Note the flattery of the Pharisees (v. 14).
4. How did the Sadducees get caught in their own trap (vs. 18-27)? Why were they so intense about what they did not believe? Did they even listen to Jesus' answer?
5. What do you learn about the resurrection from this story (vs. 25-27)?

1. Consider the vineyard story. Using your job or hobby, create a parable that speaks of responsibility and rejection.

*This chapter relates the **growing concern of the religious leaders** about the teaching of Jesus. These episodes seem to take place in the courtyard of the Temple (11:27; 12:35). His audience could look across the Kidron Valley at the vineyards of Israel. They could look to the north side of the courtyard at the Roman fortress, only a few hundred feet from the Temple where they gave their tithes and offerings. The Temple was the seat of authority for these leaders and teachers—yet they were being upstaged by Jesus!*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Priorities: Law and Finances

Mark 12:28-44

OPENING
up to the Word

What are the symbols of religion in your culture? (a) priests, programs and prescriptions, (b) robes and vestments, (c) wooden pews, (d) congregational responses, (e) collection plates, (f) a cross.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why did Jesus reach back into the Law to answer the teacher's question? Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. How is law connected to love?

2. Why is monotheism—the belief that there is only one God—so important for Christ-followers (Mk 12:29, 32)? How do you feel the love practiced in Christianity differs from that practiced in polytheism (the worship of many gods)?

3. Jesus gave a riddle about his divine nature (vs. 35-37). Can you unravel the riddle (see Psalm 110:1)?

4. How did Jesus' warning to watch out for the teachers of the law relate to the episodes in this passage (11:27–12:40)?

5. Contrast the actions of the teachers (vs. 38-40) and the rich people (v. 41) with the poor widow (v. 42). Who expressed real love (v. 43)?

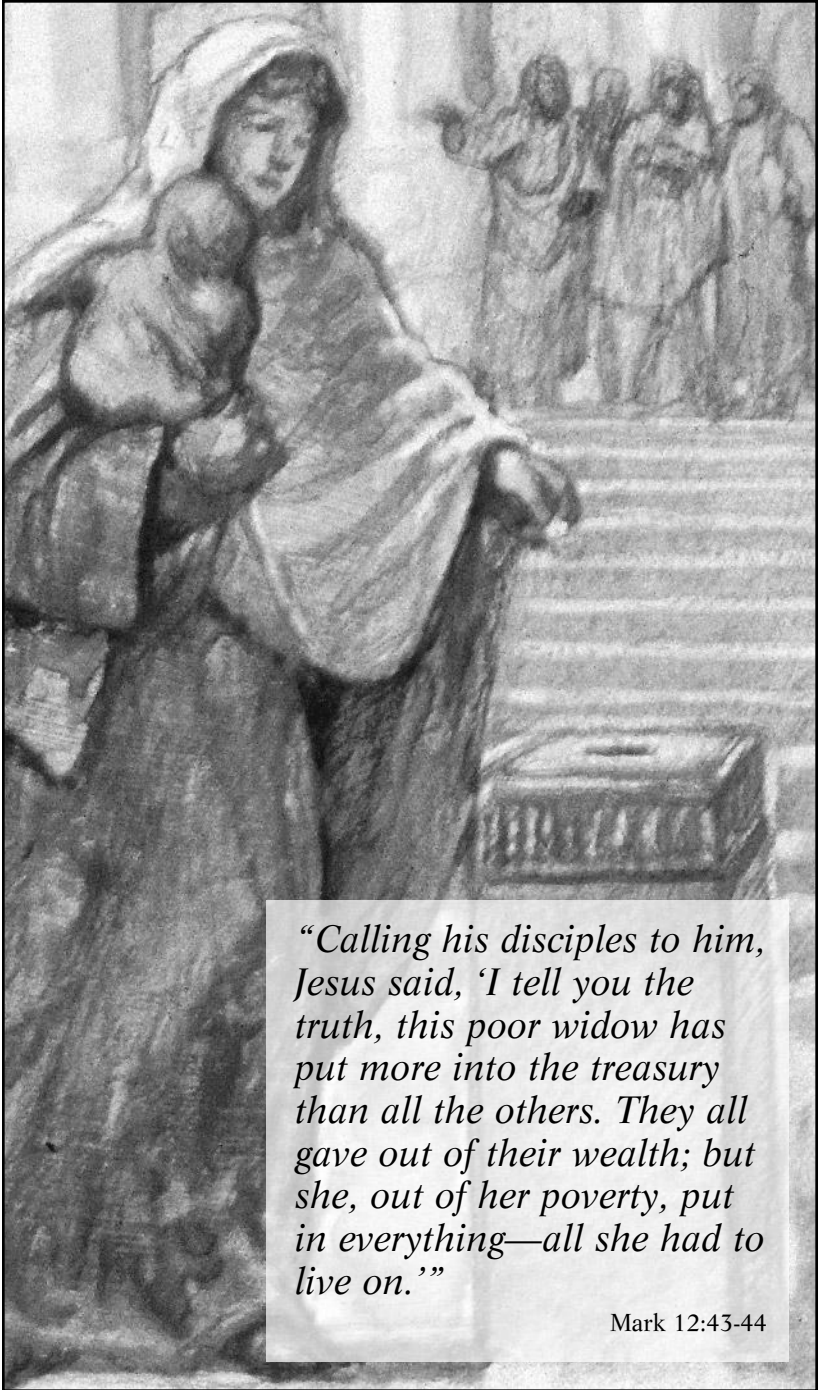
LIVING
out the Word

1. How do you love God? Are you more like the wise Teacher (v. 34) or the proud teachers (v. 38)? Like the rich or the poor (vs. 41-43)?

2. How do you love your neighbor as yourself? Is this possible apart from God? Is love more important than legalism and ritual (v. 33)?

WINDOW
on the Word

Shema means "hear," the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4. The *Shema* states, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Jesus quoted this well-known scripture in Mark 12:29, affirming that there is one God. This affirmation became more important as Christians would later have to deal with the question of the divinity of Jesus. The *Shema* includes the greatest commandment of all: Love God with all your being (Mk. 12:30).



“Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’”

Mark 12:43-44

Doomsday?

Mark 13 (and the parallel passages in Matthew 24 and Luke 21) are often referred to as Jesus' Olivet Prophecy. Many Christians interpret these passages to refer solely to events in the future. However, while some of the events prophesied here await a future fulfillment, Jesus' primary focus is the first century.

The disciples have commented on the beauty and permanence of the Temple buildings (v. 1). Jesus answers that they will all be destroyed (v. 2). Later, on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Temple, the disciples ask him when this destruction will occur (v. 4). Jesus then reviews the events that would lead up to the destruction of the Temple. He tells his disciples "...this generation certainly will not pass away until all these things have happened" (Mk 21:32). In the decades immediately following Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples would experience:

- deception, wars, earthquakes and famines (13:5-8),
- arrests and witnessing before councils, governors and kings (vs. 9-11),
- the preaching of the gospel to the civilized world (vs. 10),
- families turning against each other, persecution and martyrdom because of the Christian faith (vs. 12-13),
- the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 14-19).

It was indeed a dark day of tribulation when the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. Christians in Jerusalem had earlier fled for their lives. This event truly marked "the end of the age" of the old covenant. The Jewish nation would cease to exist as a political entity for almost two millennia.

If you are reading this, it is obvious that Christ has not yet returned. But his instructions to the disciples for that time still apply to us: *Don't be deceived* (v. 5); *don't be alarmed* (v. 6); *be on your guard* (v. 9, 23); *don't worry* (v. 11) and *stand firm to the end* (v. 13).

Mark 13:1-37

What emotions do you have when you hear the term *the end times*? (a) fear, (b) apprehension, (c) expectation, (d) joy.

1. What was the context of Jesus' remarks about the future (vs. 1-4)? What events were anticipated?
2. Jesus was concerned that people not be deceived by false teachers (v. 5). What were the signs he considered to be the beginning of birth pains in the fulfillment of prophecy (vs. 6-8)?
3. What should the early Christians have expected after hearing what Jesus said (vs. 9-13)?
4. What can we learn from the fig tree (vs. 28-31)?
5. What was the concluding warning from Jesus (vs. 32-36)?

1. How do you stay on guard (vs. 5, 24, 33)? Does God the Holy Spirit give you inspiration and power to stand firm (vs. 11-13)?

*This passage is known as the **Little Apocalypse**. An apocalypse, such as the book of Revelation, is a revealing. The Apocalypse is often understood as synonymous with the revealing of the return of Christ. The next cataclysm to strike Jerusalem would be at the death of Jesus (Mk 15:38 with Mt 27:51-54). A greater destruction would strike the city some 40 years later when the Roman general Titus, in response to a Jewish revolt, would besiege Jerusalem and destroy the Temple in A.D. 70. Historian Flavius Josephus recounts the horrors of the 3-month siege of Jerusalem, during which nearly a million Jews died by the sword, disease and starvation. Starving women roasted and ate their own children. The stench of death became so unbearable in the city that corpses were tossed over the wall and lay in putrefying heaps. The Romans finally breached the walls, burned the Temple and razed the city to the ground. Jews who were not executed were taken into slavery. The return of Jesus is yet future. Although most of this chapter points toward A.D. 70, Jesus also points to his future return. The Nicene Creed declares the orthodox position: "He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead."*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

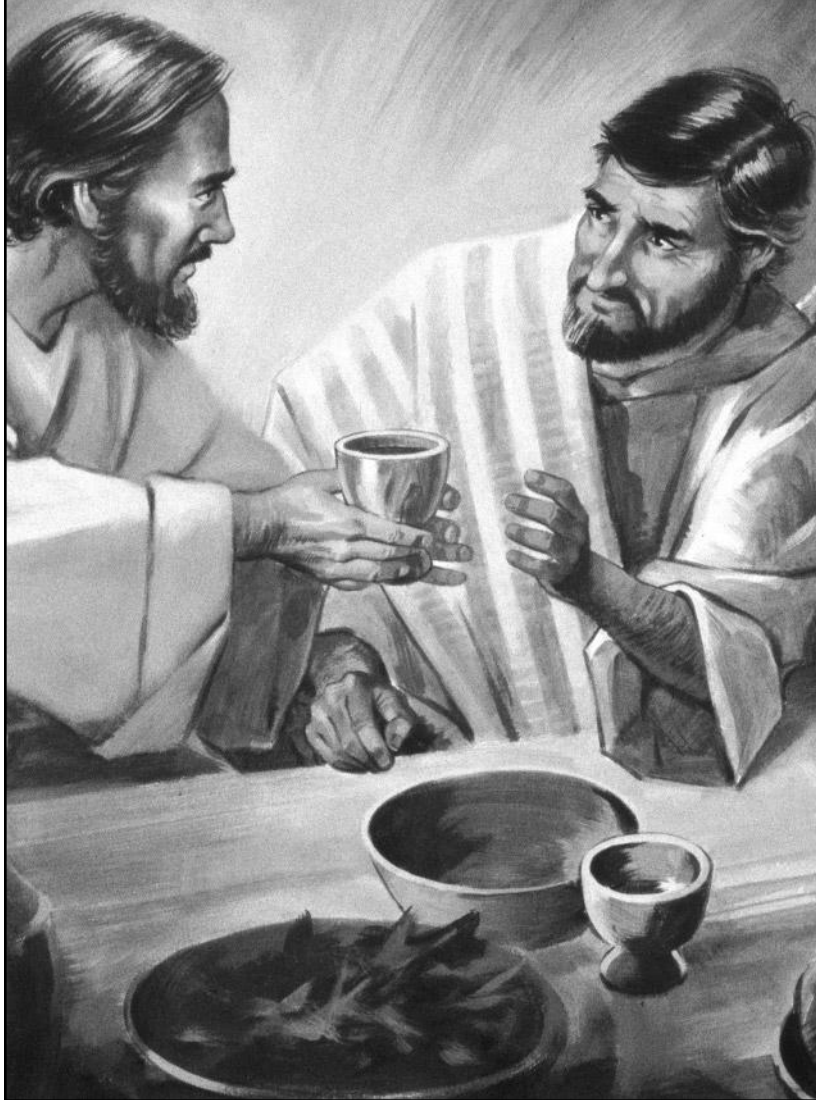
LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is my body.’ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.” Mark 14:22-23



The Lord's Supper

DAY 25

Mark 14:1-25

Many of our most cherished memories involve sharing a meal with loved ones? Which of those occasions do you recall most intensely? (a) sharing fast food with friends, (b) grabbing a quick lunch with coworkers, (c) a reception dinner following a wedding, (d) a family thanksgiving when all family members were able to be in attendance.

1. Contrast the hatred of the religious leaders with the love one woman displayed for Jesus (vs. 1-10). How much value did each place in Jesus? And what about Judas (vs. 10-11, 17-19)?

2. How did the instructions for preparation to eat the Passover point out the divine attributes of Christ (vs. 12-16)?

3. How does this chapter demonstrate love and fellowship? How did hatred, conspiracy and betrayal attack these close relationships?

4. What are the spiritual symbols of the new covenant (vs. 22-25)? Do you think James and John reflected at that point on Jesus' prior prediction (10:35-40)?

1. What "beautiful thing" have you done for Jesus (14:6)? How valuable is he to you?

2. Could Jesus stay in your guest room (v. 14)?

3. Consider the sacraments of the Lord's Supper. What do the bread and the cup mean to you?

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were observed by the Israelites annually in the spring. For the Jews, these days commemorated the nation of Israel's redemption from slavery and deliverance from Egypt. Each spring, the population of Jerusalem tripled due to pilgrims coming to worship at the Temple during the week-long festival.

OPENING

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on the Word

DAY 26

In the Garden: Betrayal and Arrest

Mark 14:26-52

OPENING
up to the Word

Where is your favorite place for prayer? (a) bedroom, (b) closet, (c) park, (d) beach, (e) mountain top, (f) walking.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. After eating the evening meal and moving on to the garden of Gethsemane, what warning did Jesus give all the disciples (vs. 26-28)? What struggles would Jesus face? What struggles would the disciples face?

2. Why did Peter argue with Jesus (vs. 29-31)? Why couldn't the disciples imagine they would disown Jesus?

3. Follow the disciples in Gethsemane (vs. 32-42). How intent were the disciples to keep watch? How intense were Jesus' prayers?

4. Note the drama in the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane (vs. 43-52). Had he broken any laws? Why did the religious leaders come at night? Who cut off the servant's ear? See John 18:10 and Luke 22:47-51.

5. Who do you think the unnamed young man was (Mk 14:51-52)? Does he represent the fear of the disciples?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What Christian hymn best fits this last Passover of Jesus? (a) *Amazing Grace*, (b) *How Great Thou Art*, (c) *Onward, Christian Soldiers*, (d) *Blessed Assurance*, (e) *I'll Walk with God*.

2. Take time to go to a favorite place for prayer. Consider talking about your commitment to watch with Jesus.

WINDOW
on the Word

The **Garden of Gethsemane** seemed to be a favorite retreat for Jesus. This grove of olive trees lay at the bottom of the Kidron Valley immediately east of the Temple Mount. **Olive oil** was an important product of Israel. In the Temple it fueled the candelabra to provide light for the priests.

Trial and Denial

DAY 27

Mark 14:53-72

What would be the most painful accusation you can imagine? (a) abuse, (b) greed, (c) racism, (d) treason, (e) blasphemy.

1. Follow Jesus to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest (vs. 53-65). Why did the prosecution have difficulty with their witnesses against Jesus? See Deuteronomy 19:15.
2. What was the significance of Jesus' response to the high priest's question (Mk 14:62)? How did it corroborate the accusations of the religious leaders? What was Jesus really referring to (v. 58)?
3. Consider Peter that early morning, warming himself by the fire (vs. 66-72). How did being identified with Jesus disturb him? Why did his third reply become so angry?

1. Remember a time when you denied Jesus, either in word or action. Can you analyze why you acted as you did?

Jesus, in response to the question of his identity as the Christ, stated, "I am" (Mk 14:62). Earlier, when Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee, coming toward the disciples like a ghost through the wind, he identified himself as "I am," or, "It is I" (6:50). The apostle John tells us that Jesus often said this (John 4:26; 8:24; 9:35-37; 13:19). This may be a reference to the divine name, Yahweh, which can be translated "I am" (Ex 3:14). This name identifies God as self-existent.

OPENING

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DIGGING

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on the Word

Pilate and His Soldiers Crown the King

Mark 15:1-20

OPENING
up to the Word

Who is your favorite king? (a) Burger King, (b) king crab, (c) King Kong, (d) King David, (e) King James, (f) the Lion King, (g) King of the Jews.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was the main accusation aimed at Jesus (vs. 2-4)? Why hadn't the Sanhedrin dealt with Jesus? See John 18:28-37.

2. What kind of a king did Pilate seem to think best represented Jesus?

3. Consider the frenzied state of the crowd (Mk 15:9-15). How did the people view Barabbas? What was his crime? And their view of Jesus? What were his crimes?

4. Mark condenses the rest of the trial (vs. 16-20). Note the flogging and abuse from the soldiers. Who gave him a purple robe (see Lk 23:6-12)? What were Pilate's final words (Lk 23:13-25)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have false accusations ever been leveled at you? How did you react? How do you know when to be silent and when to defend yourself?

2. How do you show respect for Jesus, the king of the universe? (a) in prayer, (b) in life itself, (c) in forgiving others, (d) by never denying him.

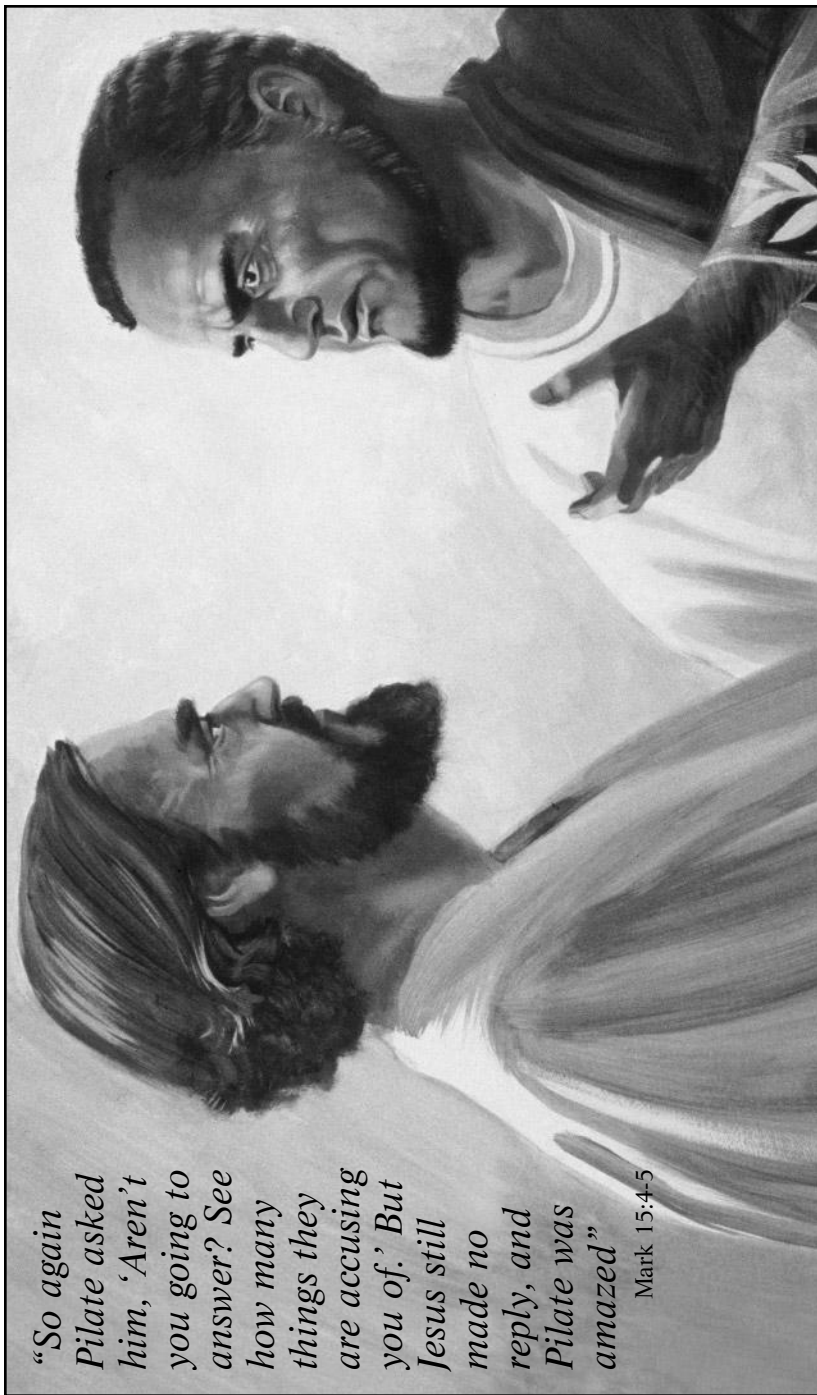
3. The purple robe was placed on Jesus to mock him. Do you ever hear people mock Jesus? How do you react?

WINDOW
on the Word

From the house of Caiaphas, the scene moved to the seat of the Sanhedrin (Mk 15:1; Lk 22:66-71). Jesus was taken to Pilate, senior representative of the Roman government. Although the council may have occasionally given the death penalty to Jewish criminals, as was done in the case of Stephen (Ac 7), they feared the reaction of the people in this case (Mk 14:2).

*“So again
Pilate asked
him, ‘Aren’t
you going to
answer? See
how many
things they
are accusing
you of.’ But
Jesus still
made no
reply, and
Pilate was
amazed”*

Mark 15:4-5





“A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.”

Mark 15:21

Crucified and Entombed

DAY 29

Mark 15:21-47

What do you think would be the most painful death? (a) drowning, (b) burning, (c) hanging, (d) electrocution, (e) poisoning, (f) crucifixion.

1. What sedative did they offer Jesus (vs. 21-24)? What did they do with his clothes?
2. Note the sign on the cross (v. 26). What do you think the religious leaders who were at the cross thought while staring at this ironically mocking statement (vs. 27-32)?
3. How do the words of Jesus on the cross, spoken at the end of the eerie mid-day darkness, reflect the love of God he was pouring out on all humanity?
4. At the death of Jesus, what was the reaction (a) at the Temple (v. 38), (b) of the centurion (v. 39), (c) of the women at the cross (vs. 40-41), (d) of Joseph of Arimathea (vs. 42-46), (e) of Pilate (vs. 44-45).

1. When you read of Jesus on the cross, what emotions do you feel? (a) sadness, (b) pain, (c) forgiveness, (d) awe, (e) thankfulness.
2. Do you need to see a miracle in order to believe Jesus is the Christ, the Savior (vs. 31-32)? How do you show your faith to others?
3. Have your sins or trials ever led you to feel that God has forsaken you? How did you come to feel his unfailing love?

On the cross, Jesus quoted from Psalm 22:1, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” His anguish came from the human experience of suffering, both physically and emotionally, as he bore the weight of the sin of all humanity—murder, theft, dishonesty, adultery, rape, hate, abuse, negligence, pride, lust, greed—all the sin and evil in the world. Some interpreters conjecture that the thoughts of Jesus on the cross may have continued to the end of Psalm 22, with its statements of confidence and praise, or even to the next Psalm with the comforting words, “The Lord is my shepherd...”

OPENING

up to the Word

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Jesus' Appearances After His Resurrection

At the tomb.

Early on Sunday morning, Jesus appeared to Mary the mother of James, Salome and Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:1-11; Jn 20:1-18)

The road to Emmaus.

About midday Sunday, Jesus appeared to two men (Luke 24:13-32).

At Jerusalem. On Sunday Jesus appeared to Peter (Lk 24:34; 1Co 15:5).

The Upper Room. Jesus appeared to ten disciples on a Sunday evening (Mk 16:14), and again when Thomas was present (Jn 20:26-29; 1Co 15:5).

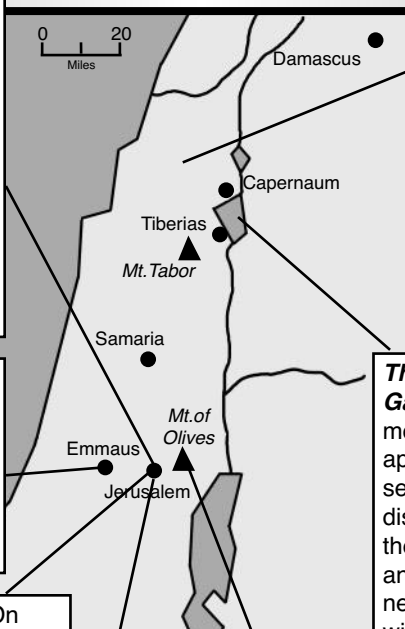
The Mount of Olives. Forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus met with the disciples, women, his brothers, and others, whom he told to spread his message all over the world. Then he ascended to heaven (Lk 24:36-53; Ac 1:3-11).

Location unknown. Jesus appeared to the apostle James (1Co 15:7).

Galilee. In Galilee, Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples (Mk 16:15-18). He was then seen by 500 followers, probably also in Galilee (1Co 15:6).

The Sea of Galilee.

One morning, Jesus appeared to seven of his disciples while they were fishing, and caused their nets to overflow with fish (Jn 21:1-23).



At the Empty Tomb: Fear or Faith

DAY 30

Mark 16:1-8

How would you end a story? (a) happily ever after, (b) death of the hero, (c) anticipation of the next generation, (d) naming the guilty parties.

1. When did the women go to the tomb (vs. 1-2)? What was their concern (v. 3)?

2. Who was the young man they saw in a white robe (vs. 4-5)? See Matthew 28:2-5. What was his message to the women (Mk 16:6-7)?

3. Why did they flee (v. 8)? What does that say about human fears, even for those people close to Jesus?

4. Although the earliest manuscripts end Mark's Gospel with verse eight, why might later editors have added verses 9-20? How does the longer version parallel the accounts in Matthew and Luke?

1. What is more important for you—to anoint Jesus' body or have him anoint your body?

2. How does Jesus' resurrection shape your life?

3. How do your fears influence your life? Can you let go of them and live a life of faith in Jesus?

*Two of the earliest manuscripts, the primary texts Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, end Mark's text with verse eight. If he wrote anything beyond the account of the women at the empty tomb, the ending has been lost. The longer ending (written in a different style) may have been added later to include the resurrection story. The shorter ending leaves us with the empty tomb. The **fear of the women** anticipates the faith of all who choose the resurrected Jesus as Savior. One does not have to see the resurrected body to believe in him and be assured of salvation.*

OPENING

up to the Word

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