

The Gospel of Mark: Part 2

# DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



AMAZED  
BY JESUS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Amazed by Jesus Intro</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A Theology of the Gospels</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Background on the Gospel of Mark</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Stand Alone Week - “Son of Man” Study</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Week 36 - Mark 11:1-11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Week 37 - Mark 11:15-19</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Week 38 - Mark 11:12-14, 20-25</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Week 39 - Mark 11:27-33</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Week 40 - Mark 12:1-12</b>	<b>29</b>

## Amazed by Jesus Intro

In his Gospel, Mark often arranges events from the life and ministry of Jesus to clarify theological concepts. For example, the miracles of giving hearing to a deaf man (7:31-36) and sight to a blind man (8:22-26) are meant to not only show the power of Jesus but also to communicate the necessity of divine revelation for *spiritual* sight and hearing. Without the direct intervention of God, we cannot truly know the person of Jesus. After seven chapters of confusion and unbelief on the part of the disciples, Peter announces that Jesus is the Messiah. *This* is the person of Jesus: He is the anointed King of the universe.

After He is finally declared to be the Messiah by His disciples, Jesus immediately connects His identity as anointed King with suffering, rejection, death, and victorious resurrection. Jesus is the one who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus, in the very essence of His character, is One who sacrifices Himself, One who gives Himself over to judgment and death, in order to give mercy and life to those whom the Father has given Him. The question before us is this: can we surrender to this kind of love, even if it costs us all of our so-called control? Will we give up our resistance to the love God has for us, and ask Him to give us hearts receptive to His love?

# A Theology of the Gospels

What's the difference between the *gospel* and the *Gospels*?

The gospel is the good news of what God has done in Jesus's life, death, resurrection, and ascension to redeem His people for His own glory.<sup>1</sup>

The Gospels are the four books that begin the New Testament - Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John. These four books are "historical narrative motivated by theological concerns"<sup>2</sup> and "stories of God's eschatological, redemptive, covenant-fulfilling activity through the person of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>3</sup>

What does this mean? ***The four Gospels are historically-true, authoritative, and infallible narratives about Jesus the Messiah and how He is the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.*** The Gospels are what G.K. Beale calls redemptive history, which he defines as "God's salvific dealings with his people throughout the entire history, from the fall of Adam until the final consummation."<sup>4</sup> We may not be told about Jesus's eye color or His childhood interactions with friends, but we are told and shown how He fulfills and even continues the story of the Old Testament, and how He will bring history to completion at His return.


---

<sup>1</sup> D.A. Carson, The Gospel Coalition ([www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org))

<sup>2</sup> Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*

<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Kruger, *Covenant Theology: Covenant in the Gospels*

<sup>4</sup> G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*



The four documents we now call Gospels weren't designated as such until after the Second Century. But the earliest disciples of Jesus were anticipating written documents because the Jewish community already had a precedent for such documents: the entire Old Testament. Since the disciples were intimately familiar with covenantal documents, they were expecting new documents to come with the New Covenant. Not only this, but Jesus Himself tells of this reality in John 17:

*"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."*

From the beginning, Christianity was going to continue in the tradition of Judaism as it advanced through "the word" of Jesus' disciples. We have that "word" recorded in the Gospels.

## Background on the Gospel of Mark

Biblical scholar Michael Kruger writes this about the Gospels:

*"The covenantal nature of these books means they are not so much human testimony about God as they are God's testimony to humans about the terms of his covenant through Jesus. God is the maker of divine covenants and therefore rightly understood to be the author of covenant documents. [...] The Gospels are authoritative [...] because the Gospels are, from their very inception, a legal and divine witness."*<sup>5</sup>

The Gospel of Mark, then, is about one thing: Jesus. This is not a narrative about social revolution, moral instruction, or religious experiences; this is a proclamation about Jesus the Son of God, written to provoke faith in Him. With this in mind, below is some basic information about the Gospel of Mark.

- This is the only Gospel that explicitly refers to itself as a proclamation of *good news* or *glad tidings*
- The first verse of Mark would have been immediately recognized by anyone familiar with Roman government as a direct rebuttal to the claim that the Caesar was divine. One inscription about Caesar Augustus says this: "Caesar, by his appearance excelled our expectations and surpassed all previous benefactors [...] the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning for the world of the good news that came by reason of him."

---

<sup>5</sup> Kruger, *Covenant Theology*

- When Mark writes that his document is the good news about Jesus **Christ** (Messiah), he is immediately connecting the identity and actions of Jesus with the entire Old Testament story.
- When Mark writes that his document is the good news about Jesus Christ, the **Son of God**, he is not only communicating truth, he is refuting the dominant cultural and political narrative of his day.
  - This makes the ending of Mark even more astounding because a centurion, who would have been required to have total devotion to Rome, announces the actual truth at the death of Jesus: "*Truly this man was the Son of God!*"
- Mark is the earliest written Gospel, having been written some time in the late 50's to early 60's AD (roughly 20-30 years after Jesus ascended)
- The Roman emperor Nero began his rule around the same time as the Mark was written; Nero would (in AD 64) begin heavily persecuting Christians - clothing them in animal skins so they'd be devoured, crucifying them, and lighting them on fire in his royal gardens
- Most likely written from Rome by the man called John Mark in Acts 12:25 and "my son" in 1 Peter 5:13
- Mark orders events by topic, not chronologically

- Numerous scholars believe that the Apostle Peter's experiences with Jesus form the background of the Gospel of Mark
  - This makes the Gospel's appear even more historically accurate since the Apostle Peter would hardly want to make himself and his fellow disciples seem so ignorant about Jesus and His true mission, unless that is actually what happened

Four key verses:

- Mark 1:1 - "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."
  - Mark 1:11 - "And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."
  - Mark 8:29 - "And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ.'"
  - Mark 15:39 - "And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'"
- 
- Mark begins his Gospel identifying Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. Throughout the Gospel, Mark shows how these two titles of Jesus are intimately linked to His death and resurrection.



# Stand Alone Week - “Son of Man” Study

## RESOURCES

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/jesus-son-man>

## SUMMARY

As we travel through the Gospel of Mark, we’ll inevitably notice that Jesus’ favorite reference to Himself is the title “Son of Man”. This brief guide will walk your group through this title and its biblical origins, significance, and beauty.

## GROUP INTRO

Take a few minutes to write down the New Testament’s various titles used to refer to Jesus. Which title for Jesus do you most often use? Why?

## TEXT

1. Read aloud the following Old Testament passages. Based on these passages, ***what is the meaning of “son of man” in the Old Testament?***

Numbers 23:19

Psalms 146:3

Isaiah 51:11-13

Ezekiel 2:1-3

2. The book of Daniel shows what it looks like to trust the sovereign God in the midst of suffering, exile, and rebellion. It is broken into two parts: historical narrative (chapters 1-6) and apocalyptic visions (chapters 7-12). In chapter 7 Daniel describes a vision he receives of God (the "Ancient of Days") and a figure referred to as "one like a son of man".

***With the above background information, read Daniel 7:13-14.***

What details make it apparent that this "son of man" is different than other Old Testament references to any "son of man"?

Why is it significant that "one like a son of man" is given "dominion and glory and a kingdom" and that "all peoples, nations, and languages" serve this son of man?

3. How does Jesus bring together both Old Testament meanings of "son of man" in Mark 8:27-38 and in Mark 14:53-65?
4. Another significant Old Testament passage that mentions a "son of man" is Psalm 8. Read Psalm 8 and then read Hebrews 2:6-10. How does Jesus, as the Son of Man, become "crowned with glory" and regain dominion over creation?

## APPLICATION

1. What is encouraging, comforting, and reassuring about the fact that Jesus is truly human?
2. What is humbling and emboldening about the fact that Jesus is truly God?
3. Since Jesus is the Son of Man, and He lived perfectly on behalf of all those who trust in Him and died to atone for our sin, how can we now address sin in our lives or in the lives of others?

## PRAYER

Praise Jesus for humbling Himself to become a man on our behalf.

Ask God for help to truly believe the gospel announcement that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are enough to cover all sin past, present, and future.

Ask God for opportunities to proclaim this gospel to those who do not know Him.

## **Week 36 - Mark 11:1-11**

### **THE KING COMES FOR HIS CROWN**

#### **RESOURCES**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/the-triumphal-entry/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-messianic-hope/>

#### **PASSAGE SUMMARY**

In last week's passage, Jesus was called "Son of David" by Bartimaeus as He made His way to Jerusalem, setting the stage for the climax of Mark's Gospel. The King Jerusalem needs now arrives, but He is not the king Jerusalem wants. The opening of the blind man's eyes on the way to the Holy City is a big contrast to the spiritual blindness of those who represent Jerusalem, the scribes, chief priests, and Pharisees. From this point in Mark's Gospel on, Jesus' ministry takes place in the very city where He should have been not only welcomed with praise, but followed and obeyed with joy.

Instead, like in previous passages, a crowd receives Jesus with excitement and commitment that is short-lived. In a week's time, the crowds would be calling for Jesus to be killed like a common criminal. So Jesus, rather than sitting to soak in their praise, looks toward the temple "as the sovereign Lord examining the institution to see whether it was fulfilling its divinely appointed mission" (Walter Wessel, Expositor's Bible Commentary). The prophesied Messiah has come, but His warm welcome will quickly become hostility as Jerusalem rejects its God.

## GROUP INTRO

Jesus represents a completely different way of ruling, the way of sacrificial love, and submission to God, and His entrance into Jerusalem, knowing what will happen to Him there, is a clear picture of His intentional love and submission. He entered into rejection, suffering, and death on purpose.

When in your life has someone demonstrated sacrificial love for you? How did their actions impact your relationship with them?

## TEXT

1. What locations and names are used in this passage? Where else in Scripture have these appeared?

*Leader help:*

*Locations: Jerusalem, Bethphage, Bethany, Mount of Olives, temple.*

*Names: Jesus, David*

*Two key passages: **2 Samuel 7:8-13**, where God says He'll live in a temple in Jerusalem and the eternal King will come from David's lineage. And **Ezekiel 10**, where Ezekiel has a vision of God's presence leaving the temple. Now in Jesus, the presence of God is returning to Jerusalem, but He'll be rejected.*

2. Read Zechariah 9:9. How does this prophecy help us understand the significance of what's happening in verses 2-7?

*Leader help: Prophecies have both an "immediate" fulfillment and a "future" fulfillment. Here, Zechariah is stating that Israel will have victory of its enemies and the king of Israel will enter Jerusalem. But he's also prophetically speaking about the greater King, Jesus, who is perfectly righteous, perfectly humble, and brings eternal salvation instead of mere political or military salvation. This is why Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey: He is intentionally showing that He is the long-awaited King. He hasn't come to have victory by military might, but through His suffering, death, and resurrection.*

3. The word "hosanna" means "Save!" or "Please save!" What might the crowds have believed the Messiah would save them from? How does this differ from Jesus' own statements about His mission?

*Leader help: Most scholars assert that the people thought the Messiah would be a military and political victor who would overthrow the Roman Empire and establish Israel as a national power once more. Jesus, however, has come not to save from the temporal suffering of political oppression, but to save His people from satanic power, the power of sin, and death itself by dying and resurrecting.*

4. Take a moment to discuss how this scene fits into the Bible's bigger picture of the temple and its purposes. What was supposed to be happening in the temple? What should Jesus find as He looks around?

*Leader help: the temple was where Jewish religious leaders should have been leading the people into true worship of God. In the temple there should have been a diversity of people groups praying, offering sacrifices for sin, receiving God's forgiveness, and thanking God.*

## **APPLICATION**

1. What does an ordinary day look like for someone who knows and follows Jesus as King? Where in your life are you not surrendering to Jesus as King?
2. Based on Mark's Gospel so far, what kind of King is Jesus? How does Jesus rule in His kingdom? How does this impact upcoming events or experiences that you're stressed or anxious about?
3. Jesus entering Jerusalem as He did shows that God really is faithful to every promise He makes. What promises of God do you find most empowering and encouraging? How is this promise fulfilled in Jesus?

## PRAYER

Because Jesus intentionally entered into suffering and death, anyone who trusts Him is made new.

With this in mind, think of something you wouldn't want people to know about you, then write it down.

What truths about Jesus or your new identity in Him aren't you believing as you consider this fact about yourself?

Surrender yourself to Him in prayer, asking Him to help you believe.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 1 Peter 1:3-5***



## Week 37 - Mark 11:15-19

### CLEANING HOUSE

#### RESOURCES

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/judgment-temple>

**Leader note:** Mark 11:12-14 will be taught together with Mark 11:20-25. This week's passage is the story that is placed in the middle of the larger story of the cursed fig tree, Jesus' cleansing of the temple.

#### PASSAGE SUMMARY

Mark organizes his Gospel so that Jesus' cleansing of the temple is set between Jesus' cursing a fig tree and His disciples finding the fig tree withered. The poetic point is made clear by Jesus' actions in the temple: the sovereign Lord, passionate about true worship, hasn't found the spiritual fruit in the one place it should be most prominent. Instead of true worship of God, Jesus finds that the purpose of the temple - to be a house of prayer for all nations - has been set aside in favor of the religious leaders' greed. In response, Jesus cleans house. The religious elite again show they aren't interested in being purified, but would rather kill the One inviting them to purification.

## GROUP INTRO

This week's passage is about Jesus restoring the temple court to its intended purpose: being a place where all people can seek and praise God.

What are some ways you have helped or could help Living Stones be a place where those who aren't familiar with Christianity are welcomed and loved? What skills has God given you in order to help the church function like He wants it to?

## TEXT

1. Describe the tone or emotion of this passage. What words support your description?

*Leader help: this is a serious, dramatic, tense, shocking passage. At this time, there would have been thousands and thousands of visitors in Jerusalem, and this would have been a spectacle that many people discussed.*

2. Summarize Jesus' reason for entering the temple, driving out the sellers and buyers, and overturning tables.

*Leader help: Jesus had examined the temple the day before and saw that Gentile access to God was being hindered by moneychangers and those selling animals to be used in sacrifices, so out of a passion for true worship of God He acted to restore the temple to its proper function.*

3. What do Jesus' actions tell us about His priorities? In other words, how can we tell what's important to Jesus by what He does in the temple court?

*Leader help: Jesus prioritizes access to God as well as true, reverential worship of God. He desires that people of all ethnicities be able to gather to honor God. Jesus also prioritizes doctrine and theology - He capitalizes on the attention of the people and uses the opportunity to teach them doctrine. We also see that Jesus prioritizes worship and truth above even His own popularity and safety.*

4. Why do the chief priests and scribes oppose Jesus and seek His death? What does this reveal to us about the ministry of Jesus?

*Leader help: Mark tells us here that their motivation had to do with fear - Jesus was a threat to their status quo, their way of doing things, and their position in the eyes of others. This shows us that Jesus' ministry was public, powerful, and provocative enough to get the attention of Jewish leadership and eventually Roman leadership.*

## APPLICATION

1. Are there actions, attitudes, or “ways of doing things” in our Community Group that might make it hard for someone to truly seek and worship God? What steps can we take to ensure Community Group remains a place where God can be truly sought and worshiped?
2. What is beautiful about Jesus’ actions and words in this passage?
3. If you were given this passage as an evangelism tool, how would you help someone understand who Jesus is and what He came to do?
4. This passage provides a metaphorical picture of what Jesus does in the lives of His people: enters, cleanses, teaches. What are some of the idols that Jesus has taken out of your life? How did He teach you more about Himself and His mission through that process?

## PRAYER

Praise God for His willingness to reveal Himself and invite us to worship Him

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 1 Peter 2:4-5***

Confess ways you have hindered true worship of God or made it hard for others to seek God through your own pride, selfishness, or fear of man

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Galatians 1:10***

Ask God to shape your group into a place where God is worshiped in Spirit and in truth

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: John 4:23-24***

## Week 38 - Mark 11:12-14, 20-25

### THE WITHERED FIG TREE

#### RESOURCES

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/tale-trees-arboreal-theology/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/jesus-the-fig-tree-and-the-temple/>

**Leader note:** Mark 11:26 is likely not a verse that Mark himself wrote. Although many later manuscripts (copies of Mark's Gospel) include this verse, which was probably added later by a scribe who was copying the Gospel for distribution, there is good evidence to believe Mark didn't originally include it, so we have decided to omit the verse from this study.

For more info, [click here](#).

#### PASSAGE SUMMARY

It's spring, and Jesus gets hungry as He travels with His disciples. Seeing a fig tree bearing leaves, He approaches it, expecting at least the small, budding figs that provided food for the poor. Instead, Jesus finds no fruit at all. Only by looking to the next event in Mark's Gospel - the cleansing of the Temple - can we grasp the depth of Jesus' curse of this fruitless fig tree: where fruit was expected to be found, there was only disappointment. So now judgment comes.

This is Mark using his "sandwiching" technique, placing Jesus' temple cleansing in-between His interactions with a fig tree. As one commentator states it, "Just as the leaves of the fig tree concealed the fact that there was no fruit to enjoy, so the

magnificence of the Temple and its ceremony conceals the fact that Israel has not brought forth the fruit of righteousness demanded by God” (Lane, The Gospel of Mark, pg. 400).

Jesus then uses the disciples’ discovery of the withered fig tree to teach about faith in God, which is demonstrated through trusting, persistent prayer. The point? Trusting God is the only way to a fruitful spiritual life. Empty religion and outward rituals will bring only judgment.

## GROUP INTRO

Read Galatians 5:22-23. What is it like to be friends with someone who displays the fruit of the Spirit?

## TEXT

1. Figs are found throughout the Old Testament symbolically representing something else. Who or what is the “fig tree” in these passages and why is it significant to know this biblical background about fig trees?

Jeremiah 8:13

Hosea 9:10

Joel 1:5-7

Micah 7:1-6

*Leader help: the fig tree is God’s people, who were supposed to bear the fruit of righteous, loving, holy living since they belonged to and represented God. Without this background, we won’t understand Jesus’ actions of cursing the fig tree and cleansing the temple, and therefore won’t be able to take the warning seriously for ourselves. God doesn’t demand ritual and religion, but true trust in Him that results in true spiritual fruit.*

2. Why does Jesus curse the fig tree? How can reading the larger context of Mark and the story of Scripture help us understand the meaning of this act?

*Leader help: Jesus saw leaves from afar, which meant that even if it wasn't "fig season" He was right to expect at least a small batch of budding fruit.*

*Jesus fulfills the role of prophet, and prophets throughout Scripture used not only their words but actions - they communicated with object lessons. Here, Jesus finds an object that demonstrates Israel's hypocrisy - a tree appearing as if it will bear ripe fruit, but instead is barren. Jesus would have known all the various passages listed in Question 1. Based on His previous interactions with the Jewish leaders who represented God's people, He knew what He would find at the Temple: a large, bustling hub of religious activity, but no true trust in God. So Jesus curses the fig tree as both a foreshadowing of judgment upon faithless Israel (the temple would be completely destroyed roughly 40 years later), and as a warning to all who have the appearance of trusting God without actually trusting Him. The solution is to repent and believe.*

3. What is Jesus' point in verses 22-24 and how does it relate to what Peter says in verses 20-21?

*Leader help: The key to understanding the big promises Jesus gives in verses 23-24 is what He starts with: "Have faith in God". The word translated "faith" means trust. To trust God means to know His character, and know what He loves and what He hates. If we come to trust God because of what He has done in Jesus, we'll begin to pray in line with His will, and when we pray in line with God's will, we can expect miraculous things to happen (see John 15:7 and 1 John 5:14-15).*

4. Verse 25 contains an all-encompassing command from Jesus, for He says, “forgive, if you have anything against anyone...” Is Jesus teaching us that God’s forgiveness is conditional (i.e. God will not forgive us if we do not forgive others)? Why or why not?

*Leader help: No. Titus 3:5 states that God saved us (i.e. forgave us) “not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.” Jesus is talking here about the attitude of a person who is praying. If someone is unwilling to extend forgiveness to others after having been forgiven for their sin against the holy God there will undoubtedly be some relational distance between them and God for that kind of hypocrisy, which would lead to prayers not being answered in the way Jesus describes in the previous verses.*

## **APPLICATION**

1. One of the New Testament’s assumptions is that Christians will bear fruit. In other words, God tells us in the Bible that genuine Christians can expect to grow and mature in their faith, obedience, and character. According to the Bible, what does spiritual fruit or maturity look like? Where do you see spiritual fruit in your life? Where do you see spiritual barrenness?
2. What are some ways God has given us to grow in holiness and bear fruit together as His children?
3. How does Jesus’ perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection impact our ability to be honest with God and one another about our wounds, sin, and shortcomings?



4. R.C. Sproul once commented that in the church, “we create a level of expectation for Christians. We assume that they are going to behave at a certain level, which in many cases is completely unrealistic [...] Let’s not pressure each other to become play actors and pretend we’re more pious than we are.” What actions or words make it easier to have a church where people pretend to be holier than they actually are? What actions can we take to help our Community Group be a place where we are free to both confess sin and pursue holiness together?

## **PRAYER**

Praise God for His promise to help you grow in holiness

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Philippians 2:12-14***

Confess areas of hypocrisy in your own heart, as well as spiritual barrenness, or ways you have failed to obey God by action or inaction

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 1 John 1:7-10***

Ask God for help to trust Him even when He does not answer prayers as you desired Him to answer them.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Psalm 20***

## **Week 39 - Mark 11:27-33**

### **JESUS & SOCRATES**

#### **RESOURCES**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-teachings-of-jesus-2/>

#### **PASSAGE SUMMARY**

After His actions in the temple, Jesus is once again challenged by those responsible for overseeing temple worship, the three groups who collectively made up the Sanhedrin, which was the high court of the Jewish people. This time, their question pertains to the authority of Jesus. Normally, Jesus would have been arrested due to His actions, but because of His popularity, the group instead interrogates. Rather than providing an answer, Jesus challenges them with a question of His own, to which they provide no answer because they feared not God, but man.

Standing in a long line of people who rejected the prophets God has sent their way, the Sanhedrin now rejects the One who is God in the flesh.

#### **GROUP INTRO**

This week's passage shows us once again what can happen to the human heart when fear of man, love of power, and self-righteousness replace humility and love for God. Have someone read Galatians 1:10 and then take turns praying, asking God to drive out from your heart your desire for the approval of others.

## TEXT

1. Describe in your own words the interactions between Jesus and the scribes, chief priests, and elders throughout Mark's Gospel.

*Leader help: these various groups are often critiquing, challenging, opposing, and accusing Jesus throughout Mark's Gospel. It's important to remember that they stand in a long line of Jewish leaders who consistently rejected prophets sent from God, and that their rejection really does represent a hatred for Jesus that results in them seeking His death.*

2. What are the "things" to which the Jewish leaders refer in verse 28? Why would Jesus' actions require that He have authority?

*Leader help: they are referring to Jesus' cleansing of the temple. Anyone who would do what Jesus did would essentially be claiming to have a say in what happens in the temple, and since Jesus was not a part of the scribes, chief priests, and elders - a group that together made up the authoritative Sanhedrin who oversaw Jewish life - they saw Jesus as an outsider with no say in the happenings of the temple.*

3. Jesus summarizes John's ministry with the word "baptism". What are the two options Jesus gives as the source of John's ministry? How are these two options in tension?

*Leader help: God or humanity. If John was operating on his own authority with his own agenda, then no one would be obligated to believe or obey. But John was operating as one who was sent and empowered by God, so there was an obligation to believe what he taught about Jesus. Only God has the authority and power to forgive sins - no human can offer this.*

4. What do we learn here about the relationship between a person's desire for the approval of crowds/popularity and a person's desire to follow Jesus?

*Leader help: We see that at some point Jesus brings a crises into every person's life, a moment where we must choose between submission to Him and submission to the approval of others. Since Jesus is truly human and truly God, and throughout His ministry He demonstrates the beautiful grace, mercy, power, and forgiveness of God, it is utterly foolish for these religious leaders to choose popularity among people over allegiance and submission to Him.*

## APPLICATION

1. In your own life, what has made allegiance and submission to Jesus socially difficult?
2. If someone were to ask you for proof of Jesus' authority over the entire world, what passages from the Bible could you offer?
3. How does the gospel impact your willingness to step toward rejection or ridicule for the sake of allegiance to Jesus?
4. What biblical truths, ethics, or teachings do you struggle to hold to publicly? Why is this?

## PRAYER

Praise Jesus for His wisdom and grace

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 1 Corinthians 1:30***

Confess the ways you have chosen popularity over allegiance to Jesus, and ask Him for help to overcome this temptation.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Galatians 1:3-5***

## **Week 40 - Mark 12:1-12**

### **CORNERSTONE**

#### **RESOURCES**

<https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/mark12.htm>

#### **PASSAGE SUMMARY**

The Lord takes advantage of a captive audience that no doubt watched the exchange between Him and the Sanhedrin by telling a parable that summarizes Israelite leadership's long history of abusing and rejecting God's prophets, the results of that rejection, and the power of God to use this evil for redemption.

Faithless leadership (the tenants) will lose the responsibility and privilege of caring for Israel (the vineyard), and God (the owner), having sent His servants (the prophets) and son/heir (Jesus), will execute horrific judgment upon this generation of leaders for their rejection His prophets and ultimately, the rejection of Jesus the beloved Son. This judgment came to pass in 70 A.D., when the temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed by Roman soldiers, and the entire Israelite religious system crumbled.

Yet we also see in this passage that God is relentless in His covenant faithfulness, for He will turn the evil and twisted execution of Jesus into the very fulfillment of His promise to save His people. The very One who is rejected by this faithless leadership and sent to the cross is the Cornerstone upon which God will establish His kingdom.

#### **GROUP INTRO**

God is the very standard of mercy, and one of the ways God extends mercy is by giving warnings to His people. Describe a time in your life when someone lovingly warned you about sin or destructive behavior - how did you feel in the moment? How did you feel later on?

## TEXT

1. In this parable, who are the tenants? Who are the servants? Who is the vineyard owner? Who is the beloved son? How have these individuals related to one another throughout history?

*Leader help:*

*tenants = Israel's leadership, including kings and priests*

*Servants = the prophets*

*Owner = God*

*Beloved son = Jesus*

*Throughout history, God has graciously sent prophets to call His people back from disobedience, and also to promise judgment/restoration. Israel's leadership has repeatedly rejected, harmed, or killed the prophets, which is rejecting God Himself. Ultimately, the leadership reject Jesus, and God uses their rejection as a way to fulfill His covenant and establish the church, which includes both Jews and Gentiles.*

2. There are numerous Old Testament passages that describe Israel as a vineyard, and Jesus undoubtedly has one from Isaiah 5:1-7 in mind as He tells this parable. Read Isaiah 5:1-7. How is the warning in Isaiah similar to the warning in Mark 12:9?

*Leader help: In Isaiah 5, God promises to remove His protection from Israel, stating that, because of their disobedience and refusal to do justice, armies will invade and destroy. Similarly, Jesus is warning the Jewish leadership that judgment will come upon them*

3. What is God's bigger goal in the death of His Son? What does Jesus mean when He states that He will "become the cornerstone"?

*Leader help: Read Acts 4:5-12. Through the death of Jesus, God has brought salvation not just to Israel, but to all who trust in Christ across the globe. Jesus is the cornerstone of salvation, He is the central figure of all of God's promises. The gospel is God's gift of His Son, and that gift came through the horrific evil of Jesus being rejected and killed. Through Israel's rejection of the Messiah, Gentiles are now being "grafted in" to the covenant promises by faith alone.*

4. How does the Bible explain the unbelief and defiance of God's people despite all of His warnings, promises, miracles, and mercies? How is Jesus the solution to this problem?

*Leader help: Scripture makes it clear that we are born enemies of God (see Eph. 2:1-3) and that our human nature causes us to want to suppress the truth we know about God and exchange that truth for lies (see Rom. 1:18-23).*

*Jesus, being truly human and truly God, lives without the brokenness of a sin nature, lives in perfect obedience to God's law, dies in our place, resurrects from the dead to seal our standing before God, and then sends the Holy Spirit who gives us new life. We still battle our sinful nature, but our desires, thoughts, goals, and affections are changed over time by God.*

## APPLICATION

1. Some Christians believe that a person will trust Jesus if they are offered enough evidence of the Bible's truthfulness. How does this passage negate this belief? How can this fact actually fuel evangelism?

*Leader help: if salvation isn't dependent upon our ability to argue or give facts, then we can confidently tell people about Jesus even if we don't have all of the answers.*

2. What does this show us about God's character and His love for His people?
3. God turned the evil of Israel's leadership into the greatest display of grace and holiness. How can this encourage us when we're experiencing evil and suffering?
4. In what ways do we reject Jesus? How does the Bible instruct us to respond when we realize we have rejected Jesus?

## PRAYER

Pray prayers of thanksgiving to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for the salvation that came through the rejection of Jesus.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Acts 4:11-12***

Ask God to help you trust Him and be a bold evangelizer even when you witness or experience horrible evil in this world.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Acts 4:23-31***

Confess the ways you have rejected Jesus in your daily life.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Isaiah 43:25***