

Getting to know Jesus better by reading the book of Mark

- Part 2

Many people have different opinions about who Jesus really is and what He is like. The only source of information we can really trust is what the Bible teaches us about Him. There are four gospels in the Bible written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and they tell us about the events that took place when Jesus was living on the earth.

In the next few pages I will take you through the book in the Bible that Mark wrote to see what it tells us about Jesus, who He is and why He came to live on the earth. The left column contains Marks words and the right column my comments and thoughts about what we can learn about Jesus.

**Then Jesus asked them,
"But who do you say I am?"**

Mark 8.29

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...the story is continued from Mark 1-9

Mark 10

Then Jesus left Capernaum and went down to the region of Judea and into the area east of the Jordan River. Once again crowds gathered around him, and as usual he was teaching them.

2 Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?" 3 Jesus answered them with a question: "What did Moses say in the law about divorce?"

4 "Well, he permitted it," they replied. "He said a man can give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away." 5 But Jesus responded, "He wrote this commandment only as a concession to your hard hearts.

6 But 'God made them male and female' from the beginning of creation. 7 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, 8 and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, 9 let no one split apart what God has joined together."

10 Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again. 11 He told them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her. 12 And if a woman divorces her husband and marries someone else, she commits adultery."

13 One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. 14 When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." 16 Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Jesus is a popular person to spend time with. He always took the opportunity to help people understand more about God. He didn't just want to show them things and spend time with them - He also wanted them to understand things. This may have been because He knew that very soon they would not be able to gather around Him, because He was going to leave the earth and go back to heaven.

It is interesting that Jesus didn't always directly answer the question people asked, He could always see the reason behind the question! Instead He quite often answered a question with a question of His own for them to answer.

Jesus explanation about why Moses allowed people to divorce, shows us that God really prefers people to try and work things out and stay together rather than get divorced. He then goes on to explain why this is what God wants.

The act of a man and a woman being married was the only relationship within which sex was allowed and encouraged - this combination of marriage and sex meant that the man and the woman were now joined together, "united into one" and "no longer two but one". Jesus explains that in getting married a man and a woman are joined together by God himself - and He says we really should do what we can to not split this relationship in half. Here we also see Jesus teaching that it is a man and a woman that were created to be together right from the beginning, not a man and another man, or a woman and another woman.

Jesus is again showing us how important remaining together is - in other parts of the Bible there are a few instances explained when it is acceptable to divorce but in most situations it isn't what God wants for - being united as one is a much bigger thing than our society understands.

The disciples thought that Jesus would not want to be bothered with those that society didn't see as significant. But Jesus loves the insignificant, the small, the child, the unimportant - He always has time for us and wants us to give Him some of our time today. We are never too old or too young to spend time with Jesus. Jesus also explained that even if we are clever and wise we need the confidence in Him that a child would have - believing something completely without doubt, wavering or scepticism. Do you trust Jesus that much? Jesus was warm and affectionate towards the vulnerable ones that came to Him - He held them and He blessed them. When we spend time with Jesus we walk away blessed for doing it.

17 As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good. 19 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honour your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young." 21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!"

24 This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. 25 In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" 26 The disciples were astounded. "Then who in the world can be saved?" they asked. 27 Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."

28 Then Peter began to speak up. "We've given up everything to follow you," he said. 29 "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, 30 will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property - along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.

31 But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then."

Jesus looks into our heart and knows about the things we think are more important than Him - He knows what we don't want to let go of and trust Him with. With this man it was money that he loved the most and was most precious to him - Jesus wanted to know if following Him was really in the man's heart, or was he only prepared to do it when he felt comfortable and in charge of how he did it!? What is it that you think is more important than Jesus? Jesus wants to be the most important thing in our lives all of the time - if we understand all that He has freely done for us and freely given us even when we had done nothing to deserve it, then we will want to follow Him with everything we are and everything we have.

Jesus knows that we find it hard to put Him in charge of the things we know and trust and find our security in - but Jesus wants to be our security instead. He wants us to put our trust in Him and to trust His love and care for us.

God will work within us to help us and enable us to trust Him more. Jesus doesn't just leave us to get on with it. Instead He works alongside us opening our eyes to spiritual truths so we understand more and can rely on Him more and more. This statement that Jesus makes: "Everything is possible with God", is not just true about the subject of trust, it is a general statement that Jesus wants us to know, which is true in all areas of life - God can make impossible things possible!

Jesus knows and understands that there is a cost to being His follower. For some they will own less as a result of putting Jesus and His ways first instead of putting their careers above everything else. For others they will be rejected by their families, and people that were close to them will want nothing more to do with them. But Jesus explains that He knows and understands what they are going through and says that they will not lose out because they put Him first. He will replace the things they lost - sometimes this will be physically and other times spiritually, but the sense of having been blessed by Jesus and benefited from putting Him first will be just as real whichever way He does it.

His message here is, don't worry if you feel and experience that you are not one of the important people now - our significance and importance in this life is completely irrelevant to how things will be for all eternity. This life is just a brief passing phase compared to how long eternity spent with Jesus will last!

32 They were now on the way up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were filled with awe, and the people following behind were overwhelmed with fear. Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus once more began to describe everything that was about to happen to him. 33 "Listen," he said, "we're going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die and hand him over to the Romans. 34 They will mock him, spit on him, flog him with a whip, and kill him, but after three days he will rise again."

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do us a favour." 36 "What is your request?" he asked. 37 They replied, "When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honour next to you, one on your right and the other on your left." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?" 39 "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!" Then Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from my bitter cup and be baptized with my baptism of suffering. 40 But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. God has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen."

41 When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. 42 So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. 43 But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else."

45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus knew what was going to happen to Him and yet He still carried on. He didn't run away from the future that He knew was fast approaching - He knew that this was the reason He was here, the reason he had come to the earth. The job He had come to do was to die for us and to be punished for us - so we could be forgiven and go free. Jesus knew that He wouldn't stay dead but that He would come back to life on the third day. All of this must have really confused the disciples as they thought he had come to rule and change things now for the better. Sometimes we can be confused about why the Bible says what it does - when we are confused about why, it is better to think God knows best and has His loving reasons, rather than to think God must be wrong!

Jesus wasn't harsh with the disciples that wanted to have the most special place for themselves, He simply corrected their wrong understanding. When we get it wrong Jesus isn't harsh and hard on us - instead He is generous and kind towards us in the way He corrects us.

Jesus didn't want the other disciples to be cross with James and John, so He called them all together to bring peace where there was the beginning of conflict. He told them to be different to how others were behaving all around them. His message was, don't think of power and importance as a way to get what you want and to push others down while pushing yourself upwards. As a leader, serve others - give of yourself for their benefit and their good and not for your own gain. To be first, to be the most important in Jesus' opinion, you need to be someone that serves others, helping them and doing things to make their life better.

Jesus explains that He is showing them through His life and example what He wants them to do. Jesus, the King of the universe, didn't come to this earth to be served by the people of this world, but He came to do things for others, to give them what they needed and to "give His life as a ransom for many" - Jesus knew and understood that we were being held hostage by the bad things we do and we couldn't free ourselves from the punishment we deserved for doing them - so he paid the ransom for us. He served us by taking our punishment when He died on the cross.

46 Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and his disciples left town, a large crowd followed him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road. 47 When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 "Be quiet!" many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

49 When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here."

So they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, he's calling you!" 50 Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked.

"My rabbi," the blind man said, "I want to see!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road.

Mark 11

As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. 2 "Go into that village over there," he told them. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks, 'What are you doing?' just say, 'The Lord needs it and will return it soon.'"

4 The two disciples left and found the colt standing in the street, tied outside the front door. 5 As they were untying it, some bystanders demanded, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They said what Jesus had told them to say, and they were permitted to take it.

People found this man annoying. They wanted him to stop and be quiet, but Bartimaeus knew that he needed Jesus more than anything else. He had decided that he wanted Jesus even if it upset, annoyed and disappointed those around him - is that like you, or are you more bothered about what others will think of you if you want to follow Jesus?

Jesus always has time for us, always wants to help us and be there for us.

Just like the blind man threw aside his coat, sometimes there is something that gets in the way of us coming closer to Jesus, it might not be something evil we are doing, but just something that is slowing our journey towards Jesus, something that is taking too much of our time or attention. Sometimes we just need to put it to one side for a while until we get things in a better perspective. Depending on what it is we can often pick it up again later but in a way that is more balanced and better for us and our relationship with Jesus.

Jesus loved this man and wanted to help him - he wasn't like the people around who were yelling at him, trying to make him stop.

Jesus can open our eyes to see Him more clearly and understand Him much better so that we can follow Him down the road of life!

It's amazing that Jesus knew this donkey would be there and that it had never been ridden? Jesus knows everything about us too! He knows where we are, what we have done and what we haven't done!

The two disciples that went to get the donkey must have been a bit concerned they would be accused of stealing the donkey! But as well as knowing everything about the donkey, Jesus also knew what they should say to make things okay. Jesus knows how to help us in difficult situations too.

7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it, and he sat on it. 8 Many in the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others spread leafy branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Jesus was in the centre of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, "Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessings on the coming Kingdom of our ancestor David! Praise God in highest heaven!"

11 So Jesus came to Jerusalem and went into the Temple. After looking around carefully at everything, he left because it was late in the afternoon. Then he returned to Bethany with the twelve disciples. 12 The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 He noticed a fig tree in full leaf a little way off, so he went over to see if he could find any figs. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit. 14 Then Jesus said to the tree, "May no one ever eat your fruit again!" And the disciples heard him say it.

15 When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, 16 and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace. 17 He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves."

18 When the leading priests and teachers of religious law heard what Jesus had done, they began planning how to kill him. But they were afraid of him because the people were so amazed at his teaching.

19 That evening Jesus and the disciples left the city. 20 The next morning as they passed by the fig tree he had cursed, the disciples noticed it had withered from the roots up. 21 Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree on the previous day and exclaimed, "Look, Rabbi! The fig tree you cursed has withered and died!" 22 Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. 23 I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. 24 I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. 25 But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."

This event has very mixed imagery - the picture is like that of a victorious king riding into his city, but to be simply that He should have been arriving on a horse! Jesus was on a much more humble creature, a donkey. In this image Jesus is showing us that He is a powerful victorious king, but that His power and victory come through humility and the act of serving us.

Jesus wasn't a spiritual being just pretending to be a human. Jesus fully became a human being, with feelings and needs just like we have - we must never think that God doesn't understand what it's really like for us. He always understands everything, and it's easy for us to know that He really does know what it's like, because Jesus actually experienced it.

We mustn't think of Jesus as being weak and mild... He was a strong character who was full of courage as well as compassion and love. Jesus knew what pleased His Father as well as what displeased Him - Jesus was happy to step out of line and say what needed to be said so that people were pointed back to God. These people, making money from those wanting to worship God, wouldn't have liked what Jesus did - but what He did was still for their good. We need to remember that we might not always like what Jesus says, but it will always be for our good!

Just like today! Some people love the things Jesus says and others want to get rid of Him and His teachings.

When Jesus talks about moving a mountain by praying, He is using a mountain as a symbol of something big in your life that seems impossible to change. If you have big, stubborn struggles in your life God can move these for you. Here Jesus says, if you fully believe without any doubt in your heart that He will do the thing you ask then it will happen. To have no doubt in your heart when you pray means that you must have complete faith in God and His ability to do the thing. It's not that your words actually do it, as if they have some magic of their own! What actually happens is that we talk (pray) to God and He does the thing for us. We can't have complete belief that God will do something that will be bad for us, God only does those things that our good for us, because He loves us and wants the best for us!

27 Again they entered Jerusalem. As Jesus was walking through the Temple area, the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders came up to him. 28 They demanded, "By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right to do them?" 29 "I'll tell you by what authority I do these things if you answer one question," Jesus replied. 30 "Did John's authority to baptise come from heaven, or was it merely human? Answer me!" 31 They talked it over among themselves. "If we say it was from heaven, he will ask why we didn't believe John. 32 But do we dare say it was merely human?" For they were afraid of what the people would do, because everyone believed that John was a prophet. 33 So they finally replied, "We don't know." And Jesus responded, "Then I won't tell you by what authority I do these things."

Mark 12

Then Jesus began teaching them with stories: "A man planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. 2 At the time of the grape harvest, he sent one of his servants to collect his share of the crop. 3 But the farmers grabbed the servant, beat him up, and sent him back empty-handed. 4 The owner then sent another servant, but they insulted him and beat him over the head. 5 The next servant he sent was killed. Others he sent were either beaten or killed, 6 until there was only one left - his son whom he loved dearly. The owner finally sent him, thinking, 'Surely they will respect my son.'

7 "But the tenant farmers said to one another, 'Here comes the heir to this estate. Let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!' 8 So they grabbed him and murdered him and threw his body out of the vineyard. 9 "What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do?" Jesus asked. "I'll tell you - he will come and kill those farmers and lease the vineyard to others. 10 Didn't you ever read this in the Scriptures?, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. 11 This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful to see."

12 The religious leaders wanted to arrest Jesus because they realised he was telling the story against them - they were the wicked farmers. But they were afraid of the crowd, so they left him and went away.

Jesus knew that these people weren't really interested in the answer to their question - all they wanted was to make Jesus say something that they could use against Him, so they could arrest Him and kill Him. Jesus simply asks them a question that put them in the same sort of situation they had put Him in and tells them if they will answer His question He will answer theirs. Jesus can see what is the real reason and motivation behind the things we do and say - we might fool others but we can't fool God! It is important for us to decide who we really want to live for and serve - Jesus or ourselves. Jesus can see right through us and knows the truth.

This story that Jesus tells is all about how God the Father sent various prophets to tell the Jewish people how they could know Him - but many of them ignored and rejected those that God sent. Then God the Father sent Jesus (God the Son) to us - the most precious person He could send.

Jesus explained that even though God sent His Son Jesus, they would not listen to Him and they would decide to kill Him... but Jesus explained that God would punish them for killing Him and that God would allow people from other nations to get to know Him. Jesus is talking about us (who aren't Jews) getting to know Him - after Jesus died and came alive again knowing peace with God became possible for people of every country! Before this happened you had to become a Jew, but now that was all going to change and the door to know peace with God was to be thrown open wide to people of all nations.

Often we read that the normal people were on Jesus' side, they liked Him because they felt that He was for them and not against them! It was generally the religious leaders that were so against Jesus because He kept telling them that they had got it wrong!

13 Later the leaders sent some Pharisees and supporters of Herod to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested. 14 "Teacher," they said, "we know how honest you are. You are impartial and don't play favourites. You teach the way of God truthfully. Now tell us - is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay them, or shouldn't we?" Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, "Why are you trying to trap me? Show me a Roman coin, and I'll tell you." 16 When they handed it to him, he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?," "Caesar's," they replied. 17 "Well, then," Jesus said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God." His reply completely amazed them.

18 Then Jesus was approached by some Sadducees - religious leaders who say there is no resurrection from the dead. They posed this question: 19 "Teacher, Moses gave us a law that if a man dies, leaving a wife without children, his brother should marry the widow and have a child who will carry on the brother's name. 20 Well, suppose there were seven brothers. The oldest one married and then died without children. 21 So the second brother married the widow, but he also died without children. Then the third brother married her. 22 This continued with all seven of them, and still there were no children. Last of all, the woman also died. 23 So tell us, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? For all seven were married to her." 24 Jesus replied, "Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God. 25 For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven.

26 "But now, as to whether the dead will be raised—haven't you ever read about this in the writings of Moses, in the story of the burning bush? Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 27 So he is the God of the living, not the dead. You have made a serious error."

28 One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realised that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' 31 The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

Jesus knew the difference between people with genuine questions and those that only had an aim to prove him wrong... when you have questions about faith and God, are you wanting to prove that it is all false and wrong, that God doesn't exist and it is all made up? Or, do you ask questions because you really want to know the truth and find if God is really there and cares about you?

Again the religious leaders were trying to think of questions to show that Jesus was false and not from God. This group focused on trying to prove that we don't live on when we die - that there is no afterlife. But Jesus explained to them that the reason it didn't seem to make sense to them that people lived on after death was because they had misunderstood things - Jesus explained that when we die we will be different to how we are now, things will not just be the same! One thing He made clear was that we do live on after death - dying is not the end of us. Jesus didn't go into all the details and tell us exactly how things would be. He did say that we don't become angels but that in 'some ways' we will be like the angels! In other places in the Bible we are told that Jesus taught that there are two places people go to after they die - a fantastic place and an awful place.

The people Jesus was talking to did not believe anybody lived on after dying - but Jesus said to them that thinking like they do is a serious error! Would Jesus say that you are believing a serious error too? The reason it is a serious error is because, if we don't choose to follow Jesus now, while we are alive, then the consequences of rejecting Him don't just stop when we die - the consequences go on forever.

Jesus didn't tell us a long list of religious rules that He wants us to follow. It's so much simpler than that, it's all about loving God! Jesus explained that there is only one real God and we need to love Him with everything we have and everything we are. Then Jesus added something else, again this is not a religious rule but about the heart attitude - love those you come into contact with. Love God with everything and love those around you, there is nothing more important, says Jesus.

32 The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbour as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law." 34 Realising how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

35 Later, as Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple, he asked, "Why do the teachers of religious law claim that the Messiah is the son of David? 36 For David himself, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, 'The Lord said to my Lord, sit in the place of honour at my right hand until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.' 37 Since David himself called the Messiah 'my Lord,' how can the Messiah be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with great delight.

38 Jesus also taught: "Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they like to parade around in flowing robes and receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces. 39 And how they love the seats of honour in the synagogues and the head table at banquets. 40 Yet they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, they will be more severely punished."

41 Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. 42 Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. 43 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. 44 For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on."

Mark 13

As Jesus was leaving the Temple that day, one of his disciples said, "Teacher, look at these magnificent buildings! Look at the impressive stones in the walls." 2 Jesus replied, "Yes, look at these great buildings. But they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!"

This man wasn't far from the kingdom of God - but that also means he wasn't actually part of it yet. He understood what to do but maybe he didn't do it? Or maybe he hadn't understood that we also need to realise, which is that we fail to do these things well and so we need to ask God to forgive us for when we get it wrong and let Him down.

This sounds a bit confusing but the religious leaders believed a rescuer, a messiah, would come but they thought that he would just be a special human. Jesus was wanting them to see that hundreds of years ago King David understood that the rescuer was going to be more than just another human. Even though he was going to be one of his descendants, David also called Him, "my Lord" - because this rescuer / messiah was also going to be from God. Jesus was the rescuer, the messiah, and yes He is 100% man but at the same time He is much more special than that because He is also 100% God.

We must be careful not to decide what we think about Jesus and Christianity by looking at people who say they follow Jesus. We should look at what Jesus really said and taught to decide if it is the truth and worth following. Just because some people show the outward signs of being religious doesn't mean they follow God - It is possible to be really religious and yet be far from God!

We don't need to compare ourselves to others and think what can I do for Jesus, I'm useless, I have nothing to give compared to someone else. Jesus knows your heart, He knows all about you and He loves it when you follow Him with whatever you have. He knows when it was a sacrifice to do it or give it.

Jesus was know to be a great teacher. If we think He is a good teacher then we need to listen to all that He taught and not just focus on the bits we like the sound of.

3 Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives across the valley from the Temple. Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to him privately and asked him, 4 "Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to be fulfilled?" 5 Jesus replied, "Don't let anyone mislead you, 6 for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many.

7 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. 8 Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in many parts of the world, as well as famines. But this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

9 "When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me.

10 For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. 11 But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

12 "A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. 13 And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

14 "The day is coming when you will see the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing where he should not be." Reader, pay attention! "Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. 15 A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. 16 A person out in the field must not return even to get a coat. 17 How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. 18 And pray that your flight will not be in winter. 19 For there will be greater anguish in those days than at any time since God created the world. And it will never be so great again. 20 In fact, unless the Lord shortens that time of calamity, not a single person will survive. But for the sake of his chosen ones he has shortened those days."

Just because someone says they are a prophet, a spiritual guru, the person who we should listen to and follow, doesn't mean we should just automatically believe them. Many people might be convinced by them but don't follow the crowd - think for yourself and look at what the Bible teaches and only follow those who only follow the teachings of the Bible.

Jesus is a great teacher, but here we see that He is far more than that. In these verses He is telling people about some of the things that will happen in the future.

Jesus never taught that following Him would be easy! In fact He taught the opposite. He explained that people would not like His followers and here He is telling them that those in charge will take them to court and to prison for being a follower of Jesus and will physically hurt them for being a Christian. We shouldn't be surprised if Christians have troubles in this life - Jesus didn't ever say that believing in Him and following Him would make everything easy for us. But He did say that the troubles we go through will give us opportunities to tell people about Jesus!

We don't need to worry that our words of explanation, about why we follow Jesus, are not very clever. The Holy Spirit will guide us about what to say and will use our words to help people understand about Jesus - we just need to focus on saying what He puts into our thoughts to say.

Following Jesus can even make your family and friends not like you and can cause them to say and do horrible things towards you. This is not a sign that God doesn't care for you, or that He is not there... God wants to warn us that these things might happen to us so that we are not surprised when they do and so we don't feel let down by Him.

Jesus is predicting things that will happen in the future. We don't need to worry about all of the details and exactly what they mean but it is good to focus on the fact that Jesus explained that He won't forget about His chosen ones, ie those that follow Him. No matter how bad things get, Jesus' focus will stay on doing what is best for those who love Him.

21 "Then if anyone tells you, 'Look, here is the Messiah,' or 'There he is,' don't believe it. 22 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. 23 Watch out! I have warned you about this ahead of time!"

24 "At that time, after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken." 26 Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send out his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the world - from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

28 "Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. 29 In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that his return is very near, right at the door. 30 I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene before all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

32 "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. 33 And since you don't know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!"

We need to be careful who we follow. Just because someone says this is what Jesus is like, or this is what He did - doesn't mean they are telling the truth. The only way we know that a church or group or person is following the real Jesus is if they are following what the Bible says about Him. Many religions have Jesus in them but only one of these talks about the real Jesus, who we need to worship and follow - the Jesus who died on a cross for us, the Jesus who offers us a free undeserved gift of forgiveness to rescue us and help us.

At the very end of the world Jesus, the Son of Man, will come back to the earth as a King and Ruler. The first time Jesus came to this earth He was here as a servant and rescuer but this next time He will come with great power and glory! He will save and rescue those that have chosen to follow Him. There will be people that have become Christians (Christ followers) from all over the world! When this was written there were only a few believers and they were all in the middle east, but Jesus knew that people would follow Him from all over the world. He knew this would happen and it has happened! Jesus knows about the future, He knows about your future, He knew that you would have an opportunity to follow Him in your country. There will come a time in the future when He will gather everybody in your country who believes in Him - will you be one of them?

Jesus told us that we can rely on His words. We think of the ground beneath our feet as being sure and certain, fixed and unchanging, as something that will always be here but Jesus wants us to know that His words (which we read in His Bible) are more permanent than even the earth beneath our feet. This means that what He has promised He will do. You can trust and rely on everything Jesus says about how much He loves you and cares about you - it is a truth that is fixed and is permanent.

We know that one day the end of the world will happen, it is something that God has promised. But we don't know when the end of the world will be. Jesus wants us all to live alert and on guard - always ready - knowing that the comforts and struggles we have in this world are just a passing thing.

34 “The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. 35 You, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. 36 Don’t let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. 37 I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!”

Mark 14

It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. 2 “But not during the Passover celebration,” they agreed, “or the people may riot.”

3 Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy.

While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head. 4 Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why waste such expensive perfume?” they asked. 5 “It could have been sold for a year’s wages and the money given to the poor!” So they scolded her harshly. 6 But Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why criticise her for doing such a good thing to me? 7 You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. 9 I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be remembered and discussed.”

10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests to arrange to betray Jesus to them. 11 They were delighted when they heard why he had come, and they promised to give him money. So he began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

In this story that Jesus told He is the “man who has gone on a long trip” but who is coming back to the earth one day. We are the “slaves” who have been given instructions in His Bible about how He wants us to live. One of those instructions is that we are to make sure we are living lives that show we are ready for Him to return at any time... Sometimes it is useful to ask ourselves the question, if Jesus came back now and I was doing this, watching this, reading this, thinking this, would I be happy or ashamed? Are you ready? Are you following Him? Are you watching for His return?

The reason that they didn’t want to capture Jesus during the Passover was because He was very popular with the normal people - these people liked what He said, they liked what He did and they liked that He mixed with them and showed them that He cared about them.

People didn’t normally recover from leprosy so it is probably specifically mentioned because he was someone who Jesus had healed at some point

Jesus wasn’t upset or angry that this lady had wasted a lot of money that could have been used to help people in need. Jesus really appreciated what she had done for Him - this was something that was only normally reserved for the very wealthy, it was an extreme luxury to use that amount of perfume on someone. As Jesus is really the ruler of the whole universe it was actually very appropriate to do this to Jesus! Jesus knew that it was nearly time for Him to be killed. We need to remember that this was the big plan that He had - the whole reason that He had come to this earth in the first place was not just to be nice to people, heal people and show them a new way to live - He had come to die in their place so they could go free.

12 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for you?"

13 So Jesus sent two of them into Jerusalem with these instructions: "As you go into the city, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 At the house he enters, say to the owner, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?' 15 He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is where you should prepare our meal." 16 So the two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover meal there.

17 In the evening Jesus arrived with the twelve disciples. 18 As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me." 19 Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one?" 20 He replied, "It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. 21 For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!"

22 As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take it, for this is my body." 23 And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many. 25 I tell you the truth, I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God."

I wonder who the man thought he had prepared a room for - had God told him to do this for Jesus? If not I wonder why he had done it and who he had done it for? Jesus knew what this man had already done and he knows you really well too! He knows what you have done today, even the things that are strange! He knows us completely - the good and the bad.

Even though Jesus is fully aware of who is going to let Him down and sell Him to those who want to kill Him, He still remains calm, loving and caring. Jesus even allowed this person to share His last special meal. Jesus reminds the disciples that He "must die" - it had been written about and predicted in the older parts of the Bible. It is part of the rescue plan that this sad and horrible thing must happen. We needed Him to save us from the punishment we deserve for all the bad things we have done.

As Jesus shared the bread and the wine with His closest friends He explained more about His death to them. Breaking the bread, which He said was like His body, showed them that His body was going to be broken - it was going to be hurt and die. As He shared the cup of wine with them He explained that it was like a picture of His blood which He was about to lose as He became a sacrifice for many people. The Jews would have understood the picture that Jesus was referring to - the Passover lamb. At the first Passover (which is what Jesus was in the middle of celebrating and remembering) a lamb was killed and it's blood used to mark which houses God would pass over and not punish. Jesus explained that His death and blood would enable us to escape being punished for the things we have done wrong. Jesus sacrifice would enable us to be forgiven and go free.

26 Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 On the way, Jesus told them, "All of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, "God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." 28 But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there." 29 Peter said to him, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will." 30 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, Peter - this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me." 31 "No!" Peter declared emphatically. "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" And all the others vowed the same.

32 They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." 33 He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. 34 He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." 35 He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. 36 "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

37 Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? 38 Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak." 39 Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before. 40 When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open. And they didn't know what to say. 41 When he returned to them the third time, he said, "Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But no - the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Up, let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!" 43 And immediately, even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders. 44 The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss. Then you can take him away under guard."

Jesus called himself the shepherd and us His sheep - in those days a shepherd was someone that went in front of the sheep and led them where he wanted them to go. A shepherd was there to care for the sheep and protect them. Jesus also explained that, after dying, He would be raised from the dead, but the disciples were too offended and upset to notice! Maybe they just thought He meant that His spirit would go to Heaven and live on? But Jesus actually said He would come back to life and would meet them in Galilee, a real, physical place in Israel. Jesus wanted them to know that He was going to rise from the dead in a real physical way - as a real person, not a ghost! Jesus was also letting His followers know that even if they ran away from Him when trouble came along, He would not give up on them and would meet up with them later.

This section really shows Jesus struggling with what He is about to go through - death on the cross. He knew how bad it would be physically and also that He was going to be taking the punishment for the bad things we do. Jesus understands what it is to be afraid of what is about to happen! When He needed help, comfort and strength from His Father in heaven He talked to Him - we should also talk to our loving heavenly Father when we need help. Jesus showed the perfect attitude in His prayer - "Loving Father, I know you can do anything, this is what I would like to happen but I believe you know what is best for me so I want you to decide, not me!"

45 As soon as they arrived, Judas walked up to Jesus. "Rabbi!" he exclaimed, and gave him the kiss. 46 Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him. 47 But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear. 48 Jesus asked them, "Am I some dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? 49 Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there among you teaching every day. But these things are happening to fulfil what the Scriptures say about me."

50 Then all his disciples deserted him and ran away. 51 One young man following behind was clothed only in a long linen shirt. When the mob tried to grab him, 52 he slipped out of his shirt and ran away naked. 53 They took Jesus to the high priest's home where the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law had gathered. 54 Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance and went right into the high priest's courtyard. There he sat with the guards, warming himself by the fire.

55 Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find evidence against Jesus, so they could put him to death. But they couldn't find any. 56 Many false witnesses spoke against him, but they contradicted each other. 57 Finally, some men stood up and gave this false testimony: 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, made without human hands.'" 59 But even then they didn't get their stories straight!

60 Then the high priest stood up before the others and asked Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" 61 But Jesus was silent and made no reply. Then the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 Jesus said, "I Am. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven." 63 Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, "Why do we need other witnesses? 64 You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?" "Guilty!" they all cried. "He deserves to die!" 65 Then some of them began to spit at him, and they blindfolded him and beat him with their fists. "Prophecy to us," they jeered. And the guards slapped him as they took him away.

Jesus could have fought back, He could have asked for angels to come and protect Him. Jesus didn't fight to stop this because He knew this was the reason He had come to this earth - to die on the cross to make it possible for people to be friends with God. It had all been predicted in earlier parts of the Bible.

Jesus was innocent, He had never sinned, people had to make things up to try and get Him killed.

The Jewish religious leader was hoping that this question would make Jesus talk - He was effectively asking Jesus if He was the Christ, the one sent by God to rescue His people and if He was claiming to be equal with God (The Son of God). Jesus' answer was very simple and very clear, "I am!" Jesus also then went on to say more - He told those who were accusing and judging Him that there would come a time when He would be the one with the position of power, judging them! Jesus was accused of blasphemy against God - but actually He was simply stating the truth.

66 Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest came by 67 and noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and said, "You were one of those with Jesus of Nazareth." 68 But Peter denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed. 69 When the servant girl saw him standing there, she began telling the others, "This man is definitely one of them!" 70 But Peter denied it again. A little later some of the other bystanders confronted Peter and said, "You must be one of them, because you are a Galilean." 71 Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying - I don't know this man you're talking about!" 72 And immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me." And he broke down and wept.

Mark 15

Very early in the morning the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law - the entire high council - met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. 2 Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "You have said it." 3 Then the leading priests kept accusing him of many crimes, 4 and Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer them? What about all these charges they are bringing against you?" 5 But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate's surprise.

6 Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner - anyone the people requested. 7 One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising. 8 The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual. 9 "Would you like me to release to you this 'King of the Jews'?" Pilate asked. 10 (For he realised by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) 11 But at this point the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus.

12 Pilate asked them, "Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?" 13 They shouted back, "Crucify him!" 14 "Why?" Pilate demanded. "What crime has he committed?" But the mob roared even louder, "Crucify him!" 15 So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

Jesus knew what would happen next in Peter's life and He knows what will happen next in your life too! Peter let Jesus down, he ran away when Jesus was arrested and then lied about never knowing Him - but Jesus had already let Peter know that although Peter had turned his back on Jesus, Jesus hadn't given up on Peter. What a relief it is to know that God doesn't turn His back on us when we let Him down!

Jesus agreed that He was the King - a King in those days was the person with ultimate power who set the rules and judged the law breakers. Pilate knew that the Roman Emperor would want Jesus killed for claiming to be a king.

The fact that Barabbas was released instead of Jesus is like a picture of what Jesus can do for you. Barabbas had done wrong (there wasn't any doubt about that) - and Jesus was innocent. Barabbas was guilty but was set free - Jesus was innocent but sent to die instead of Barabbas. It is Jesus death in your place, taking the punishment you deserve that can set you free too.

16 The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the governor's headquarters (called the Praetorium) and called out the entire regiment. 17 They dressed him in a purple robe, and they wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head. 18 Then they saluted him and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" 19 And they struck him on the head with a reed stick, spit on him, and dropped to their knees in mock worship. 20 When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

21 A passerby named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the countryside just then, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. (Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.) 22 And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means "Place of the Skull"). 23 They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it.

24 Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. 25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26 A sign announced the charge against him. It read, "The King of the Jews." 27 Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

29 The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. 30 Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!" 31 The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

33 At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. 34 Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Even in the middle of all this undeserved pain and suffering Jesus knew that He had come to this point in His life to do a task - to suffer and die for you and me. He knew that He needed to take the pain we deserved so we could be forgiven and free. This is why He refused the pain reducing drink and faced the cross willingly, with courage and out of love for you and me.

Jesus could have just come down from the cross whenever He wanted, He could have called upon thousands of angels to destroy those who had placed Him there. Jesus loved us too much to do that, He wanted to finish the rescue plan so we could be forgiven and become friends with God. Jesus didn't stay there and suffer and die because He had to - He took it all because He wanted to!

Death by crucifixion was designed to be the most awful way to die that the Roman's could think of. Not only did Jesus experience this physical pain but He also suffered something else. The bad things you do mean you deserve to be separated from God forever - Jesus experienced this separation for you, so that you would not have to experience it. He did it so you would never need to know what it is like to be abandoned by God forever.

35 Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. 36 One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait!" he said. "Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!" 37 Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "This man truly was the Son of God!"

40 Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome. 41 They had been followers of Jesus and had cared for him while he was in Galilee. Many other women who had come with him to Jerusalem were also there. 42 This all happened on Friday, the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached, 43 Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (Joseph was an honoured member of the high council, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.) 44 Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if he had died yet. 45 The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body.

46 Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus' body was laid.

Mark 16

Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. 3 On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

Jesus' death caused the curtain in the temple to be torn in two from the top to the bottom - this was a picture of what Jesus had just achieved by dying on the cross. This curtain was meant to separate the most Holy part of God's temple from where most people were allowed to go. It was meant to separate God, who was too pure and Holy, from the people, who were too bad and sinful. The curtain keeping them apart wasn't needed any more, undeserved forgiveness was now possible and it had been earned by something God had done for us rather than by what we had managed to do to try and please Him. The rip in the curtain began at the top to show that it was God who had done it!

The Romans were used to killing people in battles and as punishment for various things, they knew when a person was dead and when they weren't. Jesus had achieved what He had come to this earth to do - He had died on the cross to rescue men and women, rich and poor, people from all nations and when He had finished the task He died.

5 When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, 6 but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. 7 Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

8 The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened. 9 After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10 She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. 11 But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn't believe her.

12 Afterward he appeared in a different form to two of his followers who were walking from Jerusalem into the country. 13 They rushed back to tell the others, but no one believed them. 14 Still later he appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating together. He rebuked them for their stubborn unbelief because they refused to believe those who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead.

15 And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. 16 Anyone who believes and is baptised will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. 17 These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. 18 They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed."

19 When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honour at God's right hand. 20 And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.

Jesus had said He would come back to life after dying - and it happened! The three women hadn't really expected it, but the angel told them that Jesus was no longer there because He had come alive again. Jesus had shown just who He was by coming back from the dead! Death could not hold Him, He was the innocent Son of God and He had completed what He came to do. Jesus wanted His followers to know that everything was okay still - even though they had run away and left him to be arrested and killed. Jesus particularly wanted Peter to know that He still loved and cared for Him because He knew how awful Peter would be feeling for letting Jesus down. It doesn't matter how bad you have been Jesus still loves you and His forgiveness is still there for you - whatever regrets you have his forgiveness is bigger.

They all thought that Jesus coming alive again was too good to be true, even though He had told them it would happen! There are many promises that God makes to us in the Bible, where He gives us so much more than we deserve. When we realise how sinful we are and how little we deserve, then all His promises seem too good to be true! He doesn't ask you to earn His love by doing religious acts or good works - His promise of forgiveness and His love, care and friendship are a completely free gift which you can have.

What about you? Do you believe that Jesus died and then came alive again?

We have just seen how Jesus died on a cross, to take the punishment people deserved for the bad things they did, so that forgiveness and a new close friendship with God would be possible, but how do we actually make this promise of a fresh start ours? - how can I be saved? What do I have to do? Jesus told them, "anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned"... the answer is that simple, it's not about what you do, it's about what you believe! If you believe in who Jesus is and what you have just read He has done, it will impact your life and change you forever and you will be forgiven, saved and adopted into God's family.

Jesus died on a cross, came back to life, spent time with His followers and then went back to heaven - the place where He had been, before He visited the earth as a baby. He is there now and He is waiting, until one day when He has promised to come again as ruler, judge and king - will you be ready for Him!?