

August 23, 2009 by Steve Brandon



# Twelve Stages in the Bible - Gospel

## Mark

1. Jesus, the Servant
2. Jesus, the Savior

Have you ever looked at a zoomed-in picture? You are so close, that you cannot tell exactly what the object is that you are looking at. But, if you scan back, you are able to see what the picture is? When you see the whole, the parts become clear. There are times when you can be so focused on the parts that you miss the whole.

For the past few months at Rock Valley Bible Church have been spent our Sunday mornings surveying the history of the Bible. We have plotted out twelve weeks through then entire Bible. At times, this has meant that we have worked through several books of the Bible in one message. But, this is OK. My aim has been to catch the whole, that the parts might come into clearer focus. In the fall, we will look once again at the parts as we study the book of Hebrews, verse by verse, digging deep. But, for the next three weeks, we will be flying high.

We have looked at the history of the Bible in 12 stages, or historical eras. We began in Genesis with the Creation stage of the Bible. We proceeded on to the Patriarchs--Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then we looked at the Exodus, when God redeemed Israel from Egypt. Next came Joshua and the conquest. Then, the dark ages of the Bible--the time of the judges. We then looked at the kingdom stage of the Bible. This was followed by the Exile and Return. Last week, we looked at the Silence, ... the period of time between the testaments. And now, this morning, we come to the stage that has been identified as "gospel." This stage covers the story of Jesus. [\[1\]](#)

In the Bible, there are four books that tell the story of Jesus. We call these "gospels." There is the gospel according to Matthew. There is the gospel according to Mark. There is the gospel according to Luke. And, there is the gospel according to John. Each of these books tell of the life of Jesus. They tell of the ministry of Jesus. They tell of the miracles He performed. They tell of His teaching. They tell of His disciples. They all culminate in death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Now, it would be a mistake for you to think of these gospel accounts as biographies, which we ought to spend our time working to harmonize to get the full picture of Jesus. On the contrary, each of these gospels are complete in and of themselves. Each of these gospels have a bit different nuance to communicate in the life of Jesus. Each of them writes from a different perspective, with a different goal in mind.

For instance, the gospel of John is decidedly evangelistic. He says at the end of his gospel, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). In other words, there are many things that John might have said, but he decided to include the things that he did so that you might believe in Jesus.

The gospel of Luke, on the other hand, is decidedly factual and historic. He says at the beginning of his gospel, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4). In other words, lots of people have seen and witnessed many things about Jesus. I wanted to put together to a concise, accurate version of the truth of the life of Jesus.

The gospel of Matthew is decidedly Jewish. As you read through his gospel, you are amazed at how many times he appeals to the Scriptures to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. The events surrounding His birth took place just as was prophesied. His ministry was in accordance with what was prophesied. His teaching was so much better than the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. He must be the Messiah!

The gospel of Mark is written for the Gentile. There are some quotations of Scripture in the gospel of Mark, but they are fewer than any other gospel. The miracles in Mark are many, often showing the compassion of Jesus. And above all, the gospel of Mark is concerned to show that Jesus is a servant, who has come to save.

In our time together this morning, I thought that it would be best to pick one gospel and walk through it together. This morning, I have chosen the gospel of Mark. It's the shortest of all gospel accounts. It will allow us to tell the whole story of Jesus in one message.

Let's begin by looking at the key verse in the gospel of Mark. It's found in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus here is talking about Himself, using the term, "Son of Man," which He used so often. In the gospel of Mark, Jesus used this term more a dozen times (13X) to refer to Himself.

In this single verse, we see a good summary of the life of Jesus. He came to serve. He came to ransom His people. Jesus had every right to be served. Kings have every right to be served. It is right that our president has is own private airline jet for travel. It is right that our president has his own cooks and maids and secretaries. He is the ruler of our country. We want to free him up to rule. And so likewise, Jesus, God

incarnate, the king of Kings and Lord of lords, had every right to be served. In fact, there will be a day when He will be served. He sits now at the right hand of the Father, waiting for His enemies to be made a footstool for his feet. In that day, Jesus will be served as a king! But, during His days upon the earth, it was different. Jesus came to show His true greatness. He did so by serving us. He served us in many ways. He taught us. He fed us. He healed our sicknesses. He came to serve.

The ultimate way in which Jesus served us is by giving His life for us. Jesus said that He came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (10:45). Of course, we know what that means. It means that Jesus gave Himself up to His enemies. He laid down His life, so as to die upon the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins! Because He died, we live. This is the greatest life of service that you can give. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

As we walk through the gospel of Mark, this is where we are headed--the death of Jesus. We will finish by looking at the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is appropriate for us to finish our service by celebrating the Lord's Supper. It's an opportunity, once again, to reflect upon the death of Christ for our sins. It's something that we have done many times before. And it's so easy for us to merely go through the motions. We have thought upon the death of Christ many times. But, it is something that we need to work on to keep fresh in our minds. Jesus commanded us to "do this in remembrance of Me." May the Lord grant us strength to celebrate the supper with a freshness this morning, having reflected upon the life of Jesus, from beginning until the end.

In addition to this, we are familiar with the life of Christ as well. And as you read this message, you may be familiar with everything that I say. But, I want to urge you this morning to hear it fresh. Marvel at Jesus. See His power and authority. See His compassion. See His willingness to die, and rejoice! Rejoice that He served us! Rejoice that He saved us!

By way of outline this morning, we will take the main points from Mark 10:45. We will look first at Jesus, the servant, who came to serve. Then, we will look at Jesus, the Savior, who gave His life as a ransom. Indeed, that's how the book of Mark breaks down. In the first half of the gospel, we see Jesus serving. In the second half of the gospel, we see Jesus saving. He served the people by healing them, by training them, by teaching them, by caring for them, by feeding them, and in many other ways too numerous to list. He saved His people by living perfectly, by offering Himself as a sacrifice, and by raising from the dead.

So, let's turn back to the beginning of Mark's gospel. We'll begin with my first point, ...

## 1. Jesus, the Servant

Mark begins with these words,

Mark 1:1  
The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How appropriate is it for us to look at Mark under this stage entitled, "gospel" because, here it is in the first verse. Mark starts off saying, "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." The gospel means "good news." And indeed, my message this morning will be good news! Because, we are looking at the life of Christ.

Jesus is the fulfillment of every stage that we looked at so far in our study of the 12 stages of the Bible. He was the promised seed of Genesis 3:15, bringing in a new creation, which is better than the old. He was the fulfillment of the covenant made with the patriarchs. Jesus was the true redemption, which the exodus merely figured. Jesus didn't merely conquer an earthly kingdom, He defeated Satan all of his foes, conquering death for us! Jesus was the Savior far better than any of the judges could have been. Jesus is the true king, that none of the earthly kings were able to fulfill. The exile pictures those who go astray in their sin, but Jesus is the one who to whom we return. The period of silence was all looking to the coming of the Messiah! Jesus is the Messiah and this is good news.

In fact, this is the first message that Jesus preached.

Mark 1:14-15  
Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

This is the first public message that Jesus brought to the people. John the Baptist had been imprisoned. It was now time for Jesus to arise. And arise he did with the good news. He preached liberty to captives, freedom to prisoners, and comfort to those who mourn. Here in Mark, the message of Jesus begins with these words, "The time is fulfilled." In other words, "The time has come. You have been awaiting your Messiah. I am He! I have brought the kingdom of God into your midst, because, I, your true King, have come to be among you. So, repent! This is the message that John was proclaiming to you (Mark 1:4). . I say the same thing! Repent! Turn from your sins! Believe in the gospel. Believe the good news that I have come! Believe in Me!"

From that point on, Jesus calls His disciples, to be trained to carry out the ministry, telling them ...

Mark 1:17  
Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

We read of the following amazing response, ...

Mark 1:18

Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

I'm sure that one of the things that the disciples were noticed was the authority of Jesus. You don't just leave your nets and follow a Man, unless you have some compelling reason to follow Him. Surely, Jesus had an authority in the way He spoke and in the way that He carried Himself.

One of the first things that they observed in Jesus was His authority. It showed up in the way that He taught. It showed up in the way that He could cast out demons. It showed up in the way that He could heal. In chapter 1, verse 21, we read of how they entered a synagogue in Capernaum. There, Jesus began to teach. In verse 22, we read that those who heard him "were amazed at his teaching for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (verse 22). The clear implication of this verse is that the scribes didn't teach with authority. The scribes were accustomed to standing upon the authority of others. They quoted the fathers. They taught what they had been taught. But, Jesus was different. He wasn't standing upon the authority of what others said about the Scriptures. Rather, He had a different authority. There was no court of appeals with Him. He didn't need to have someone affirm what He was saying. He was the Son of God! But, further than that, I believe that Jesus derived His authority from the Scriptures. Throughout His ministry, you always get the sense that Jesus was a powerful teacher, because He was able to take and apply the Scriptures, thereby teaching what God had already said, with no need to appeal to the authorities.

The authority of Jesus went beyond His teaching. It also extended into the demonic world. When Jesus was teaching in this synagogue in Capernaum, "there was a man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit. Let's pick up the story in verse 24, ...

Mark 1:24-27

"What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God."

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"

Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

Jesus had authority over the demonic world. And people took notice. News spread like wildfire.

Mark 1:28

Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

This is the way that it is when something marvelous happens. People start talking amongst themselves.

"Did you hear what took place in the synagogue this morning?"

"No."

"Jesus of Nazareth cast a demon out of a man in the synagogue this morning."

"Really?"

"Yep, I saw it with my own eyes."

Then one who heard the report then goes out saying, ...

"Hey, did you hear what happened this morning?"

"No."

"Jesus cast a demon out this morning."

"Really?"

"Yeah"

"Where?"

"In the synagogue in Capernaum."

And the news about Jesus spread quickly. This is the report that we have in the near context

Mark 1:32-34

When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

And it's right here that you see how Jesus was using his authority. Jesus prevented the demons from speaking, so that He might be able to conduct His service for the people (1:45). See, Jesus wasn't using His authority to promote Himself. He wasn't using it to gain power for Himself. Rather, **Jesus was using His authority to serve the people**. This is true greatness. His taught with authority to help the people.

He cast out demons, so as to help those who were oppressed. He healed those who were sick, so as to help them live better lives. He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

In verse 35, we see the priority of Jesus.

Mark 1:35-39

In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. Simon and his companions searched for Him; they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

Again, you see the heart of Jesus. He had opportunity to build a large ministry for Himself. Simon told him, "Everyone is looking for You." He could have been the local hero in town. Instead, Jesus left to preach in other places. Because, "... that is what I came for" (verse 38). As wonderful as the healing ministry of Jesus was, it was secondary at best. His primary calling was as a preacher. The message of the gospel had to get out. And so, Jesus went to other places to "preach" (verse 38). Now, that doesn't mean that Jesus didn't heal people in these other cities. He did. But, the healing ministry of Jesus was secondary to His preaching ministry.

What moved Jesus to heal was His compassion. At the end of chapter 1, we see a leper coming to Jesus. We read in verse 41, "Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him [and healed him]." This makes Jesus even greater. He was not forced into slavery. Rather, Jesus willingly submitted himself for the sake of others.

The compassion of Jesus upon the sick and distressed was great. That's why He healed so many people. But, there is something greater than Jesus' compassion for the sick of body. It's His compassion for the sick of soul. At one point in the ministry of Jesus, He was having dinner in Levi's house with many other tax collectors and sinners (2:15). The scribes and Pharisees didn't like this one bit. So, they called His disciples together and asked, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" (2:16). I love what Jesus said to them,

Mark 2:17

"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The ministry of Jesus was a ministry of compassion to sinners. This is what makes Christ so lovely. He forgives sin (2:10). He gives hope (1:45). And the people loved Him! It's why we love Him! But, not everyone appreciated the ministry of Jesus. There was this group of people, called the Pharisees, who hated the ministry of Jesus.

Mark 3:1-2

He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

Here's the situation. The healing power of Jesus is undeniable. There have been many accounts of Him healing many people. The Pharisees knew this. But, here it was, on the Sabbath. To heal is to do work on the Sabbath (in the minds of the Pharisees). And so, the question is, "Will Jesus heal this man?" Will Jesus work on the Sabbath? And they were eagerly watching Him, because they wanted to accuse Him. The story continues in verse 3, ...

Mark 3:3-4

He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And He said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent.

Jesus put the question to their hearts. If you have an opportunity to do good on the Sabbath, is it lawful to do so? Is it OK to save a life on the Sabbath? The Pharisees were silent. It's not because they didn't know the answer. They knew that God desires compassion and not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6). They knew that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath. But, they kept silent, because they wanted to accuse Jesus, because they hated Jesus.

Mark 3:5-6

After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

This is a key verse in the gospel of Mark. Because, it sets up the conflict of the story. It's Jesus against the religious establishment all the way through the story. The Pharisees conspired with the Herodians (that is, the political party of the day) as to how to destroy Him.

After this moment, whenever you see the Pharisees or Sadducees or the scribes of the day, they are always seeking to destroy Jesus. He was upsetting the status quo! He was exposing their sin! So, they are always seeking some sort of ground of accusation against Him. For instance, when the scribes came down from Jerusalem. (The scribes were the Pharisaical scholars of the day). They said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul" (3:22). They said, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons" (3:22). At one point, they noticed that the disciples of Jesus were picking grain on the Sabbath (2:23-27). On another occasion, they noticed that the disciples of Jesus didn't ceremonially wash

their hands before they ate, which was such a wicked thing to do! (chapter 7). On another point, they tried to pin him on a technicality of the Mosaic rules for divorce (chapter 10). They tried to trap Him regarding the paying of taxes (chapter 12). They tried to trap Him with many difficult questions.

All of this didn't deter Jesus. He went about His business, teaching and healing. What a great application this is for us. When there are people opposing you in the work of God, you ought to continue right on in your work, unfazed.

Chapter 4 contains a great chapter in which Jesus taught some parables to the multitudes, illustrating the truth of the kingdom of God. In chapter 5, Jesus heals a mad man. He heals a woman who had been sick for 12 years. He heals a 12 year old little girl, who had died. But, it's not like Jesus performed His miracles everywhere. There were places where Jesus didn't do any miracles. At the beginning of chapter 6, we see Jesus in Nazareth, his hometown. The people there were doubting. They had seen Jesus grow up. They had known Him as a child. "How could this little boy be a great prophet?"

Mark 6:4-6

Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief.

It is an amazing thing that when Jesus walked on the earth, there were so many who did not believe. Jesus was amazed at the lack of faith. But, even His disciples lacked faith at times. In the middle of chapter 6, we see Jesus feeding 5,000 people who had been with Him listening to His teaching. He took five simple loaves of bread and two fish. He blessed them and they multiplied enough to feed 5,000 men. All were satisfied (Mark 6:42). A short time later, Jesus sent the disciples away on a boat. They were straining at the oars because of the wind. And Jesus came up to them, walking on the water.

Mark 6:51-52

Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

Mark's commentary here is that they should have learned a thing or two from the miraculous power of Jesus. If He could feed 5,000 men with some bread and fish, then they should not be too astonished that He can walk on water, but they were. Such is the nature of faith. It's often allusive. Even those who saw the miracles had a difficulty believing. Later, in chapter 8, we see Jesus feeding 4,000 people. Jesus says in verse 2, ...

Mark 8:2-3

"I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance."

And so, this time they gathered up seven loaves of bread. And after Jesus blessed the bread, 4,000 people had eaten and were satisfied (8:8). Following this, Jesus and His disciples found themselves in a boat with only one loaf of bread.

Mark 8:15-21

And He was giving orders to them, saying, ""Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?"

They said to Him, "Twelve."

"When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?"

And they said to Him, "Seven."

And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

It's an amazing thing. These disciples had seen Jesus feed the multitudes on two occasions, but they were anxious, having brought only one loaf of bread in the boat, which was not enough for the 12 disciples. All they needed to do was talk with Jesus. I'm sure he could have fed all 12 of them!

Their lack of faith is mind-boggling. But, it's also encouraging. If God used men like this, then certainly, He can use us. When you experience seasons of doubt, remember the disciples. But, one of the things that the disciples really failed to understand was the future of Jesus' life.

It's right here that we make a transition to my second point. We have seen (1) Jesus, the Servant. Now, we look at ...

## **2. Jesus, the Savior**

Consider the following verse, ...

Mark 8:31

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Jesus began to teach them these things, because Peter had identified Jesus as the Messiah (8:29). And so, He wanted to make clear to them what it meant that He was the Messiah. He said that He was going to be killed and then rise again. I love how verse 32 says that "He was stating the matter plainly." The problem with the disciples wasn't that they didn't understand what Jesus was saying. Rather, their problem was that they didn't believe. And in their unbelief, they didn't understand. The disciples were looking for a political deliverer. But, Jesus said that He would be a Savior, who would die for sins.

Peter did not like this at all. According to verse 32, we see that "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him." We don't know that Peter said, but it must have been something like this: "Jesus, no.

You have a bad plan. You can't die. If you die, all of our hopes will be shattered. You can't let this happen. We have grand plans for you!"

In verse 33, we read that Jesus rebuked Peter. We have these words. Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests but man's." In other words, "Peter, your plan is of the devil. My plan is of God. Set your heart on God's plan, not Satan's plan."

And God's plan was for Jesus (1) to suffer, (2) to be rejected, (3) to be killed, and (4) to rise again. Jesus didn't say this only once. Rather, He said the same thing on a number of occasions. The next time is in Mark 9:31. It is practically the same as Mark 8:31. We read, ...

Mark 9:31

For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later."

We see basically the same thing. Jesus was (1) to be delivered into the hands of men, (2) to be killed, (3) to rise three days later. We read in verse 32 how the disciples "did not understand this statement." Again, it wasn't because the message was so difficult to comprehend. Rather, it was because they didn't believe that they didn't understand.

Recently in the Brandon household, we have been into Sesame Street videos. One of my children's favorites (and mine two) is when Grover teaches the video audience of "near" and "far." He begins by standing before the camera declaring, "This is near." Then, Grover runs away from the video until he is far away. Then, he yells out at the top of his lungs, "This is far." Then, he runs back toward the camera and says, "This is near." At this point, he has a one-way conversation with the video audience saying, "Do you understand?" But, then returns the response, "You don't understand???" At which point, Grover is more than happy to repeat the process, explaining near and far by running back and forth. When he returns, he is a bit more winded than before asking if the video audience understands. Exasperated, he says, "You don't understand???" Then, he repeats the process. This continues again and again until Grover finally falls over in exhaustion. In some measure, this is what Jesus must have felt, as they disciples failed to understand. [\[2\]](#)

To help them understand, Jesus said it again.

Mark 10:32-34

They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

Again, we see the same things. Jesus said that they are going to Jerusalem. When arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus (1) would be delivered to the religious leaders, (2) would be condemned to death, (3) would be mocked and spit upon, (4) would be scourged and killed, and (5) would rise again three days later. Jesus here knows the future. He knows what he will face. And He's going up to Jerusalem. And He's leading the way. According to verse 32, "Jesus was walking on ahead of them." His disciples were lagging behind, but Jesus had a skip in His step. He knew the importance of what was to take place in Jerusalem. And He was ready to face it. Perhaps this is because Jesus fully understood what was going to take place in His death.

We come now to verse 45, where we began, "For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus knew that His death would be a payment. He knew that His death was the ransom price demanded to free sinners from their sin. And for that reason, Jesus was ready and willing to die, because He was the ultimate servant!

It's at this point where we are so different than the disciples. We can look at them and marvel at their unbelief. But, we must realize that they couldn't quite see the whole picture. They say that hindsight is 20/20. In other words, when looking back, it's easy to know what went well and what didn't go well. When looking back upon the life of a business, you know the things that went well and the mistakes that were made. When looking back upon a difficult conversation, you know the things you should have said and the things that you shouldn't have said. Likewise, our insight into the life of Jesus is easy. We can look back and say, "Of course, He's going to rise again." But, for the disciples, it wasn't quite that easy. Surely, Jesus said it. But, it was very difficult to believe. It's not normal for people to be killed and raise from the dead

after three days.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Jesus begin in chapter 11. It's in chapter 11 that Jesus enters Jerusalem to a welcoming crowd. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the people were singing, ...

Mark 11:9-10

Hosanna!

Blessed is He who come in the name of the Lord;  
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;  
Hosanna in the highest!

The people of Israel were expecting a king to deliver them from the Romans. And for several days, Jesus and His disciples spent their days in Jerusalem, but they spent their nights in Bethany (10:19). Perhaps the parable that Jesus told (as recorded in chapter 12) gives insight into what took place in Jerusalem better than any explanation that I could ever give. Jesus said, ...

Mark 12:1-12

A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others. He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But those vine-growers said to one another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!" They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture:

"The stone which the builders rejected,  
This became the chief corner stone;  
This came about from the Lord,  
And it is marvelous in our eyes"? (Psalm 118:22-23).

And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them And so they left Him and went away.

This is the reality of what they did with the Christ! Jesus was God's precious Son. And the vine-growers killed the Son. But, this was not out of the plan of God. Psalm 118:22 had prophesied it years before. "the stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone." That's the reality of what took place in the death of Jesus. Yes, He was rejected. But, He also became the very cornerstone!

The story of Mark continues in chapter 12 with an account of how the religious leaders sought to trap Jesus. In chapter 13, we find Jesus away with His disciples giving them some final teaching of the things in the future. In chapter 14 is when we see how God was in control of the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. Since Mark 3:6, we have seen the Pharisees seeking to seize Jesus and kill him. And yet, we read in verses 1 and 2, ...

Mark 14:1-2

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him; for they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people."

Now, as the story unfolds, Jesus was killed during the Passover and Unleavened Bread. How like God is this? When the religious leaders had wanted to seize Jesus and kill Him, God prevented it from happening. But, when the religious leaders had said, "Not now," God delivered Jesus into their hands. Jesus was betrayed at the hands of Judas Iscariot.

Mark 14:10-11

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. They were glad when they heard this, and promised to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

After Judas had agreed with the religious leaders about these things, Jesus celebrated the Lord's Supper with His disciples (Mark 14:12-26). Jesus was prophetically anticipating His death. He said, "Take it; this is My body" (Mark 14:22). This was an anticipation of the time Jesus would die. Jesus knew that He would die. He wanted us to remember His death. And so, He established this new practice by which we would remember His death.

It is an interesting thing to note that Jesus took great efforts to see that we would remember His death. Since His death nearly 2,000 years ago, the Lord's Supper has been celebrated by His followers, eating the bread and drinking the wine. I love how the Heidelberg Catechism instructs us to look at this celebration.

Question #75. How does the Lord's Supper remind you and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his gifts?

Answer. In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup. With this command he gave this promise:

First, as surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup given to me, so surely his body was offered and broken for me and his blood poured out for me on the cross.

Second, as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

In other words, the physical reality of the elements we use in our communion celebration are a reminder of the spiritual reality of what took place at Calvary. The seeing and touching and tasting are good for our souls, as they remind us again of the death of Christ. Oh, may this be our experience each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Later in chapter 14, we see Jesus in Gethsemane anticipating His death. Jesus said, ...

Mark 14:34

"My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

The extent of the grief of Jesus is seen in this passage. He fell to the ground in His praying (Mark 14:35). He was praying passionately to His heavenly father, ...

Mark 14:36

"Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

In Hebrews 5:7 we read that Jesus "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death." This was passion! He was pleading that God would allow Him to escape death. With His actions, you might almost be able to accuse Jesus of being cowardly at this point. Down through the history of the world, there have been many who have faced their death with composure right until the point of their dying breath. Many of the French aristocrats were beheaded. Many of them went to the guillotine in full composure. Socrates, the ancient philosopher, drank the hemlock, while teaching his disciple as he drank. Stephen, the early church martyr, faced death with great courage (Acts 8:1).

But, Jesus was different. Here was the man who feared nobody. He stood up against the entire religious community. He held firm when attacked by the strongest men of His time without backing down one iota. He stood firm against those who had the power to kill Him. So, why was Jesus so weak in His death? It was because He feared the wrath of God upon His soul. Anyone who dies in this life merely dies. But, Jesus died a million deaths, dying for all who believe. This gives you a hint of how terrible His death was.

Jesus could have run. He knew that Judas was coming with his arsenal to arrest Jesus. But, instead of running, he prayed several times. Finally, the hour had come. Jesus said to His disciples, ...

Mark 14:41-42

"Behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ... Behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand."

They had been sleeping, but Jesus woke them up so that they might see His arrest. Jesus knew that this was an important moment of His life and that it was necessary for His disciples to see how willingly He gave up His life for us. The ultimate betrayal comes in Mark 14:45, when Judas kissed Jesus. A kiss is a sign of affection. In this case, it was a sign that Jesus was the one to arrest.

Mark continues to tell of the fulfillment of the words of Jesus. He was delivered to the chief priests and scribes (10:33). He was rejected by the elders and chief priests (8:31). He was condemned to death (10:33). He was handed over to the Gentiles (10:33). He was mocked, spit upon, and killed! (10:34). Then, we read, ...

Mark 15:20

They led Him out to crucify Him.

Mark gives no details of His death, because all knew what a crucifixion was. People were publicly crucified with regularity. There was no need to go into the gruesome details of the physical suffocating death that Jesus would experience. However, Mark does delve into the details of what took place on the cross from a spiritual perspective.

Mark 15:34

At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

This is what Jesus feared in the garden. He feared the moment when God would abandon God! At this moment, Jesus took our sin upon Himself! It was the greatest moment in history.

Mark continues his gospel with an account of His death (15:37). He gives us an insight into the way that Jesus died. It made an impression upon those who witnessed it. The centurion, who had seen many deaths before, took note of how Jesus died and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39). His testimony should be your testimony. Look at Jesus and declare the truth of who He is.

The circumstances surrounding the burial of Jesus are given next (Mark 15:42-47). This is quickly followed by the good news. Jesus rose from the dead! When Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, they didn't see his body. Instead, they encountered a young man in white (probably an angel), who said, ...

Mark 16:6-7

"Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

Jesus conquered death! This is the good news -- We who believe will conquer death as well! Do you believe? Have you trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins? May you repent of your sins today and believe (Mark 1:14-15).

I want to close with an allegory that illustrates the meaning of the life of Jesus.

Once before time, there was a great, honorable, wise, and benevolent king who had a son he loved immeasurably.

"My son," the king said, "I know that you are happy in my presence and that together we share more joy than has ever been or will every be known by any other. We are perfectly content in our companionship with each other and with our servants but I would like you to know the joy of being a husband to a bride. I have chosen a bride for you and will present her to you as my gift of love for you. Will you have the bride I have chosen?"

"Yes, father," the son replied, "I would delight to share our joy and love with a bride. If it pleases you, I am willing to go and get this bride and bring her back here to our majestic palace, to celebrate our marriage. I am delighted to think how your honor and greatness will be displayed to her! I'm joyously contemplating the sound of your great name being praised in our marriage celebration!"

"My dear son, I will indeed send you to get her. But, "the father proceeded gravely, "the bride I have chosen for you is our enemy. Right now she is a rebel against us, son, and she hates us. She has transgressed our holy laws and is awaiting execution. She is not beautiful or loving yet, but we will cleanse and purify her and dress her in garments that befit a queen. Because of my great power and love, she will be gloriously transformed when I am finished with her. She will be the delight of our eyes and will bear our resemblance in her heart. But she is presently a slave in the kingdom of the hateful One and she loves it there. She is a traitor and despises us. Also, if you go and get her, you will have to pay the penalty for her offenses. You know that I cannot make her ours unless my righteous laws and judgments have been carried out. Would you bear the judgment she deserves? Would you uphold our reputation and love this one I have chosen for you? Would you love her so much that you would be willing to be emptied and become a slave like her and then even be humbled to the point of a shameful death in her place? Will you carry out all my decrees and laws perfectly and still be punished as an evildoer?"

"How wonderful are all your ways, dear father! Yes it will be my joy to know that I am pleasing you in this way. When the time is right, I will delight in this your will."

"Then I will engrave upon your palms the name of your beloved queen for all time. And although your sacrifice will be great, the joy that we'll have, when your bride joins us here in our home, will make this, your ultimate sacrifice, worthwhile." [3]

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 23, 2009 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] These stages come from a book written by Max Anders entitled, *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*.

[2] You can see this humorous video on YouTube here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf-HBMq9ggg>.

[3] This allegory is found in Elyse Fitzpatrick's book, "Helper By Design," in chapter 6, which is entitled, "The Two Shall Become One."