**Survey of New Testament**

**Mark 15**

Six times in this chapter, Jesus is called “the king” (vv. 2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32). The Jewish leaders knew that a religious charge would not make Pilate indict Jesus, so they produced a political charge: Jesus claimed to be a king and was therefore a threat to the peace of the land and the authority of Rome.

1. **The King on Trial (15:1–15)** Early in the morning, the Sanhedrin met a second time and pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy and therefore worthy of death (Lev. 24:16). But only Rome could put a criminal to death, so the council needed the cooperation of the governor, Pontius Pilate. The chief priests repeatedly accused Jesus before Pilate, but Jesus was silent. Pilate should have examined the facts and made a decision based on truth. But he was more interested in peace than truth, so he offered the crowd an attractive compromise: Jesus or Barabbas?
2. **The King Mocked (15:16–20)** Jesus had told His disciples that the Gentiles would mock Him (10:34), and His words came true.  Roman soldiers could not help but be entertained by the thought of a Jewish king! Once again, prophecy was fulfilled (Isa. 50:6; 52:14; 53:5; Ps. 69:7).
3. **The King Crucified (15:21–41)** Jesus started out for Golgotha carrying His own cross (John 19:17), but along the way, the Roman soldiers took it from Him and drafted Simon to carry it. The word “compel” in v. 21 means “to impress into public service,” and the soldiers had the legal right to do this (Matt. 5:41). When Mark wrote his Gospel, his readers would know Simon as “the father of Alexander and Rufus” (v. 21), well-known men in the church (Rom. 16:13). Simon’s humiliating experience led to his own conversion and that of his family. He came to Jerusalem for Passover and met the Lamb of God! The narcotic drink that was provided would have deadened the pain, but Jesus refused it. He bore to the fullest the sufferings for our sins. They crucified Jesus about 9 o’clock in the morning. When the soldiers cast lots for His garments, they unknowingly fulfilled Ps. 22:18. When man was doing his worst, God was still in control and accomplishing His purposes. Mark records the miracles of the darkness (v. 33) and the rent veil (v. 38). The darkness reminds us of God’s judgment on Egypt (Ex. 10:22), and the rent veil announces that the way into God’s presence has been opened by the death of Christ (Heb. 10:1–25). Jesus was not murdered; He voluntarily gave up His spirit (John 10:11, 15). His cry (v. 34) echoes Ps. 22:1; in fact, Ps. 22:1–21 is a prophetic picture of our Lord’s death on the cross. Jesus was forsaken of the Father that we might never be forsaken.
4. **The King Buried (15:42–47)** Faithful women were the last to be found at the cross and the first to be found at the tomb (16:1). Our Lord’s mother was at the cross until John took her away (John 19:25–27). But it was Joseph and Nicodemus (John 19:38–42) that God had prepared to protect the body of Jesus and bury it (Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57). Nicodemus had come to Jesus by night (John 3), but now he stepped out into the light and took his stand for Christ. Had these two brave men not buried the body of Jesus, it might have been disposed of in some humiliating manner.

**MARK 16**

1. **An Unexpected Miracle (16:1–8)** The women came to give Jesus’ body proper preparation for permanent burial, and while we admire their devotion, we wonder why they forgot His many resurrection promises. What they found in the garden was entirely unexpected: the stone rolled back, the body gone, and a messenger waiting to give them the good news of His resurrection! Note that the angel had a special word of encouragement for Peter and a word of direction for all the disciples (v. 7). They did tell the disciples, who doubted what they heard, but Peter and John investigated the open tomb (John 20:1–10; Luke 24:12).
2. **An Unbelievable Message (16:9–14)** The emphasis in this section is on the unbelief of Christ’s own disciples when confronted with the fact of His resurrection. The disciples “mourned and wept” when they should have been rejoicing and praising God. It was a weeping church instead of a witnessing church because they did not really believe that their Master was alive. The miracle of His bodily resurrection is important to the message of the Gospel and the motivation of God’s people for witness and service (Acts 1:21–22; 2:32; 4:10, 33).
3. **An Unlimited Mandate (16:15–18)** Each of the four Gospels ends with a commission from Christ to His church to carry the Gospel message to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:46–49; John 20:21–23; and see Acts 1:8). The emphasis in v. 16 is not on baptism but on believing. In the early church, believing on Jesus Christ led to a public declaration of faith in the ordinance of water baptism (Acts 8:36–38; 10:47–48), and being baptized sometimes cost people their family, friends, and job. If water baptism is essential to salvation, then nobody in the OT was saved; Heb. 11 tells us that OT saints were saved by faith.
4. **An Unchanging Ministry (16:19–20)** Having completed His work on earth, Jesus returned to the Father in heaven; and there He represents us as our High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16) and Advocate (1 John 2:1–2). But He does more than represent us; He also works in us and through us to accomplish the mandate He left with His church. Since the Gospel of Mark emphasizes Christ the Servant, it is only right that the book close with this reminder that God’s Servant is still at work! He works in us (Heb. 13:20–21; Phil. 2:12–13), with us (v. 20), and for us (Rom. 8:28) if we will allow Him to work through us by the power of His Holy Spirit.
5. **Special Note on Mark 16:9–20.** Good and godly evangelical Bible scholars do not agree on the authenticity of the closing verses of Mark’s Gospel. Some believe they are a part of the original text while others think they were added by another author as a “summary” because the original text was lost. (It is difficult to believe that a part of inspired Scripture could be lost.) It must be admitted that the vocabulary and style are not Mark’s and that the passage is lacking in the two oldest manuscripts. Some of the early church fathers quoted from this passage, showing that they knew it existed and that they trusted it. If these verses do not constitute the ending of Mark’s Gospel, then we must accept the abrupt ending of v. 8 and with it, an incomplete record. Since there is nothing in these verses that is contrary to anything else in Scripture, it seems reasonable to accept them as historically authentic and live with the “mysteries” that surround them.

**LUKE 1**

Luke wrote his Gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit after he had carefully researched the life of Jesus Christ (1:1–4). His purpose was to give us an accurate account of the birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Theophilus (“one who loves God”) may have been a Roman official (“most excellent”) who, as a new believer, needed to have his faith firmly established. Luke opens his Gospel by recording four important visits.

1. **Gabriel Visits Zacharias (1:1–25)** “The days of Herod the king” (v. 5) (Herod the Great) were not the best of days for the Jewish people, but this priest and his wife faithfully prayed and served God in spite of the discouragements. God has His faithful remnant even in the darkest days, people like Zacharias (“Jehovah has remembered”), Elizabeth (“My God is an oath”), Simeon (“hearing”—2:25–35), and Anna (“grace”—2:36–38). It was the providence of God that Zacharias was chosen to burn the incense, for this ministry came to a man but once in a lifetime. He had prayed all his married life for a son; and now, while he was praying, God announced the answer to his prayers. Angels are mentioned twenty-three times in Luke, but only two are named in Scripture: Gabriel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26) and Michael (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7). How gracious that the first words from heaven are, “Fear not!” This is a phrase found often in Luke (1:13, 30; 2:10; 5:10; 8:50; 12:7, 32). “Joy” and “rejoice” are used nineteen times in Luke. Zacharias had given up on having a child, when he said, “How shall I know this?” (See 1 Cor. 1:22.) He was dumb until the promised son was eight days old! Faith opens our lips in praise to God, while unbelief silences us (2 Cor. 4:13). What an honor for this elderly couple to be the parents of the last and greatest of the prophets (7:25–28; Matt. 11:7–13), the man who would introduce the Messiah to the nation! But what a tragedy that Zacharias could not tell the good news.
2. **Gabriel Visits Mary (1:26–38)** Six months later (v. 26), Gabriel visited Mary in Nazareth and told her that she would be the mother of the Messiah. Mary was probably a teenager, for Jewish girls married young. She was engaged to a carpenter named Joseph (Matt. 13:55); she came from the line of David (Luke 3:31) and was a virgin (v. 27; Isa. 7:14). In those days, engagement was almost like marriage, and to break the engagement was like a divorce. This explains why Joseph was called her “husband” before they actually were wed (Matt. 1:19). The phrase “highly favored” is used of all God’s people in Eph. 1:6 (“which He freely bestowed on us” [NASB]). Mary is blessed among women but not above women. Unlike Zacharias, Mary had faith that God would do what He promised. She asked, “How shall this be?” and not “How can this be?” Since Jesus existed before His mother, He could not be conceived in the womb in the normal way. The virgin birth is a miracle of God that brought the eternal Son of God into the world without any sin in His nature (v. 35; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; Heb. 4:15). Mary yielded herself to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:1) knowing full well that she would experience shame and misunderstanding.
3. **Mary Visits Elizabeth (1:39–56)** Zacharias and Elizabeth lived in one of the priestly cities (Joshua 21), so Mary had to make a journey to get there. When she arrived and greeted Elizabeth, wonderful things began to happen. Elizabeth gave praise to God for what He had done for Mary, and the unborn John the Baptist leaped for joy in his mother’s womb (see John 3:29–30). Note that Elizabeth called Mary “the mother of my Lord,” which is a proper title. Mary’s song of praise is called “The Magnificat” (from the Latin word for “magnify”). Mary knew the Scriptures, for there are at least fifteen OT quotations in her song. (See 1 Sam. 2:1–10.) She praises God and eight times tells us what God has done (“He has …,” NKJV). Note that Mary acknowledged God as her Savior (v. 47), which indicates that she had trusted the Lord for her own salvation. She praised God for what He did for her (vv. 46–49), for all who fear Him (vv. 50–53), and for His people Israel (vv. 54–55).
4. **God Visits His People (1:57–80)** “He has visited and redeemed His people” (v. 68) is the major theme of this hymn of praise. The little boy being named (John means “grace of God”) was the forerunner of the Messiah who would bring salvation to lost sinners and one day deliver Israel from all her enemies. God was visiting His people, but they did not know “the time of their visitation” (19:44). Zacharias took literally God’s covenants and promises with Israel and expected God to fulfill them (vv. 72–73). In this beautiful song, Zacharias gave several pictures symbolizing the salvation we have in Jesus Christ: purchase from slavery (v. 68), deliverance from danger (v. 74), forgiveness of a debt (v. 77), and the dawning of a new day (vv. 78–79; Isa. 9:2). Note the emphasis on salvation (vv. 69, 71, 77).