

Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

Lecture 6: The Gospel of Mark

Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rfst-152/lecture-6>

Overview

The Gospels of the New Testament are not biographies, and, in this class, they are read through a historical critical lens. This means that the events they narrate are not taken at face value as historical. The Gospel of Mark illustrates how the gospel writer skillfully crafts a narrative in order to deliver a message. It is a message that emphasizes a suffering messiah, and the necessity of suffering before glory. The gospel's apocalyptic passages predict troubles for the Jewish temple and incorporate this prediction with its understanding of the future coming of the Son of Man.

The Gospels Not As Biographies

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* What is a Gospel and how should we read it? Popular opinion may think that the Gospels are biographies of Jesus, but they're not biographies, at least not anything like the modern sense. We don't get much of a personal portrait of Jesus from the Gospels. We don't know anything about how he developed, how he went from being an obnoxious teenager to being an apocalyptic prophet. We don't know about his relationship to his parents, his brothers and sisters, we don't know all kinds of things that a modern biography would automatically be expected to tell you.

[2] The Gospels aren't biographies. Somebody once said, a scholar once called Mark, a passion narrative with an extended introduction. What's a passion narrative? Passion comes from the Latin *passio* which doesn't mean just desire, it could mean that in the ancient world, but it also means "suffering." "Suffering" is what *passio* means and so it's the suffering of Jesus that happens at his arrest, his trial, his crucifixion, and then the resurrection. All of that's part of what scholars call the passion narrative. If you notice, that occupies a huge part of the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark is our shortest Gospel that's in the canon. It's only sixteen chapters, of course the chapters and verse numbers weren't there in the original

manuscripts, it was just written. In fact, they didn't even divide up words, and they have very little punctuation. It was just one capital letter after another, which is one of the reasons that ancient tended to read text out loud. They didn't read silently to themselves. One of the reasons is because it's easier to read a text that had no word divisions, it was all capital letters, no punctuation, it wasn't divided up into sentences, it was much easier to read that if you read it out loud to yourself, so that's the way ancient people read. We don't have chapter numbers and verse divisions, those are all later creations that came about in the Middle Ages in Christianity.

[3] By modern reckoning, therefore, there are sixteen chapters in Mark, that's the shortest Gospel, and of that, one-third of Mark is just the last week of Jesus' life, the passion narrative part of it. As this scholar said, Mark is really a passion narrative with an extended introduction. Notice what you get if you have an outline of Mark. Chapter 1, verse 1 is the title, "the euangelion," or "the gospel according to Jesus Christ," and it doesn't say "according to Mark" in the title because that name was added later. That's the title of the book. Then for the next few verses from 1:2, that is Chapter 1, verse 2 to verse 13, you get an initial introduction to Jesus, just a little bit about him. Then from 1:14 to 9:50, so nine chapters is Jesus' Galilean ministry, his healings, his teachings, his traveling around,

his miracles that all take place in Galilee which is where he is from. That's of course the northern part of Palestine, whereas, Judea is down in the southern part of Palestine. Then Chapters 11 through 15 are all just the last week in Jerusalem, again, five chapters just on his last week. Then Chapter 16:1-8 is rumors of the resurrection.

[4] Why do I say rumors of the resurrection? Because if you'll notice in the Gospel of Mark, if Mark ends at Chapter 16:8, and there has been some controversy about whether it really is supposed to end there, but in most of your modern editions it ends at 16:8. If that's true, you don't actually see the resurrected Jesus. You just get—he doesn't appear on the stage so to speak. You only get reports that he has been raised, or one report that he's raised. Then the women are told by this young man, who's sitting at the tomb, probably supposed to represent an angel, to go and tell the other disciples that he's raised and he'll go before them to Galilee. Notice the women don't tell them, it says that the women were afraid and they ran away. You don't even get many reports about Jesus' resurrection in Mark; you just get the one young man at the tomb telling the women that he's been raised. A huge bulk of the book tells us about the last week of Jesus' life, and even in the previous ten chapters of the book, you have Jesus talking about his upcoming crucifixion. These passion predictions, we call them, that occur in the Gospel, you have several of those in the Gospel of Mark. There are several references to Jesus' upcoming death. That focuses our attention even more on the last part of the book. Is that important? Does that tell us anything about what sort of thing Mark's Gospel is if it's not a biography? Let's look at the ending also. Mark 16, now remember, I want you to bring your Bibles to class. Why do I want you to bring your Bibles to class? Yes?

[5] *Student:* Because you're going to lie.

[6] *Professor Dale Martin:* Because I will lie to you. I may say something that's not true and you need to check me out, *de omnibus dubitandum*.

[7] When the sabbath was over [Mark 16] Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they

went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they say that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.

[8] Now you'll notice there's—and maybe some of your Bibles there will be a paragraph under that titled, "A Shorter Ending of Mark."

[9] All that had been commanded of them they briefly told to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

[10] Then you'll notice there's maybe a few paragraphs, called by your editors, "The Longer Ending of Mark," and it has several verses. I'm not going to bother to read that to you, but if you look at that, the little incidents—several of the incidents in that longer ending of Mark could sound familiar to you if you know the other Gospels, how they end. What scholars now believe is that probably the Gospel of Mark really did end at Chapter 16:8. Some people said, well that's no way end a book, the women don't tell anything, it just says they were afraid and they ran away, that's it. Even the Greek that it ends in is a very short little sentence that's an odd way to end a book in Greek. Some people—scholars have said well maybe that wasn't originally the ending, maybe Mark was writing along and he got to 16 and he fell over and died of a heart attack. Or maybe he left the manuscript out and some mice ate the end of it, because you roll up the scroll and you just have the leftover parts at the back. Or maybe it got in a fire and burnt, maybe the last few verses—the last part of the Gospel burnt.

- [11] Obviously ancient people had the same sense of uneasiness with the way—with Mark ending at 16:8 and what you've got in that shorter ending and the longer ending were later compositions of scribes, Christian scribes, who thought you can't end Mark's Gospel that way, so they made up those other verses and they put them at the end of the manuscript they were copying. Because you remember before printing presses all manuscripts had to be made one by one, by somebody sitting down with a quill, and ink, and a papyrus and just copying it word by word, so other scribes when copying this over must have added that on. In fact that looks very much like the longer ending, it was scribes who knew some events from the Gospels, and they took some events from Matthew, Luke, and John, and they stuck them into a little paragraph and they said, well that must be the way Mark really intended to end his Gospel.
- [12] In the twentieth century, basically, modern scholars have come to pretty much reject most of those theories. At least we take the Gospel of Mark as ending at 16:8, even intentionally. But if you do that then you still have to explain why end a Gospel this way, it's not a normal way to end a book, and it's not the way the other Gospels end at all. The very ending of Mark is one of the problems of the text that scholars feel like we have to deal with.
- [13] This all demonstrates though that scholars don't read the Gospels as biographies or as even straightforward accounts of events. Last time I tried to show you how you can't take the Book of Acts and Paul's letters as simply being a historical description of what happened, because each of these documents had agendas, these authors had things—points they wanted to get across. We learn to read these Gospels in twentieth century by using the method of historical criticism. The criticism part of that doesn't mean necessarily being critical of it, that is criticizing the text, it just means reading it with critical eyes, with questioning eyes, with, if you were, doubting eyes in some cases. What we do is we read these texts not for what they tell us about the events in the past, although you can read this, but we actually read the text as if they were intentional documents written by authors who had points they wanted to make and they tell the story the way they tell the story because they have a message.
- [14] The important thing is not what really happened or what lies behind the text for modern scholars most of the time, unless you're doing historical Jesus research, and I'll lecture about that at one period later. But most of the time we're saying, what did Mark as an author want to do? Therefore we say, why would end the Gospel this way if he did that? Now that's—notice this historical critical method, which is what I'm teaching in this class, is somewhat different from several other ways of reading text. I'm not implying by this that historical critical method is the correct method or will give you the correct meaning of the text. I believe that it's perfectly legitimate for Christians, for example, to read these texts to get something religious out of the text for their lives. For personal guidance, for doctrine, for images of Jesus, to help their relationship to God, whatever. That's a perfectly legitimate way, in my view, to read a text, to read it theologically. But a theological reading of the text is not the same thing as a historical critical reading of the text. The historian is what I'm playing my role here in this class.
- [15] I don't care whether these texts have anything theological to say to you or to me personally. What I care about is what kind of theological message was this original writer intending to give, and to whom was he intending to give it? The theological way to reading is one way, perfectly fine way, but it's not the historical critical reading necessarily. There are also literary ways of reading these texts and this has been a very common thing in English departments for people to write an account of the Gospel of Mark, it's been a particularly significant Gospel for modern literary people to retell or talk about the Gospel of Mark, do a literary reading of it. There they're looking for things like the plot of it, the way it accomplishes its story. Are there figures and characters, and what kind of thing does this character represent, or what kind of thing does this event represent symbolically or literarily. Just as you know how to do a literary reading of a novel, some modern scholars will do a literary reading of the Gospels. It's a perfectly legitimate way to read the Gospels; it's just not the one that I'm going to concentrate on in this class. There are many others, you could say, I'm going to do a deconstructionist post-structuralist reading of Mark and they have been done. You can go buy books that have

done it. You can do a structuralist reading of Mark, and those are the dullest ones of all.

2. A Historical Critical Reading of Mark

[16] Lots of different ways to read these texts and I'm going to teach you this historical critical reading, which means certain things. It means we're not going to read the Gospel of Mark through the lens of Matthew, Luke or John. We're going to take Mark's own Gospel as standing on its own. So we're not going to rush off to another Gospel, or to Acts, or the letters of Paul to provide an interpretative clue for how to read Mark. We're going to read Mark as Mark by itself, and that's one of the fundamental rules of historical criticism is don't harmonize different texts in the Bible. Take them each individually. Another one is you have to avoid anachronism that is you can't attribute a meaning to the text of Mark that doesn't make sense in the first century in his own context.

[17] For example, if you're a Christian, you're going to read some of the Psalms in the Hebrew Bible as being about Jesus, probably, most Christians do. When the Psalmist says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand and I will make your enemies your footstool." Christians have traditionally said the first "Lord" there is God, and the second "Lord" is Jesus, and this is an Old Testament reference to God the Father and God the Son. This is a christological Psalm, that's a theological way of reading the Psalm. It doesn't pass the test of historical criticism because historians will point out, look the original Psalmist didn't know anything about Jesus. He wasn't prophesying about Jesus personally, he was talking probably to the David the King, the Psalms meant to talk to David, or to David's descendants who sit on the throne of Judah. Anachronism has to be avoided in historical critical readings.

[18] There are several other kinds of clues that you're doing a historical reading rather than a theological reading, or a literary reading, and you'll pick up on those as we go through the class. In fact, in your sections not this time but next time, you will actually talk about how to write an exegeses paper, because you'll all be writing one, and your section leaders will lead you through this method and try to get you to see how it's done.

[19] If we're going to do that, though, let's imagine what kind of community this ancient guy we're going to call Mark, we're going to continue to call him Mark even though we don't believe that it was the historical John Mark who wrote the Gospel, but for convenience sake we'll just call them the Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John for convenience sake. What did Mark want to do with this text? Who did he want to do it with? What kind of historical context do we imagine?

[20] First we see—immediately we see a bunch of problems with this text. There's first the problem—one of the most famous problems of the Messianic secret. This is when over and over again in Mark, and it happens sometimes in the other Gospels, but it's—it happens more in Mark than a lot of other places. You get Jesus doing something, and then he tells somebody to be quiet about what he's just done. Look in 1:25, Mark 1:25, he's just cast—he's confronted an unclean spirit. The unclean spirit cried out, "What have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth, have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." In other words, the unclean spirit has just made a correct christological confession according to the Gospel of Mark. "But Jesus rebuked him saying, 'Be silent and come out of him.' And the unclean spirit convulsing and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him." Look at 1:34, chapter 34 right below that, "He cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons, but he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him." Wait a minute, if Jesus is going around and we're supposed to think that he's announcing that he is the Messiah, the Christ, when people recognize this, why doesn't he let them speak? Why does he tell them not to speak? He does with demons a lot, but it's not just demons that he commands to silence, he also does it to people. Look at 1:43, "Immediately the leprosy left him," this man at verse 42,

[21] And he was made clean. After sternly warning him, he sent him away at once saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest, offer your cleansing what Moses commanded as a testimony to them."

- [22] It's a testimony to the fact that he's now no longer a leper, but he tells the man, don't tell anybody about the miracle. Now 5:53, also notice what happens right below that in verse 45,
- [23] But he went out [the man did] and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the word so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly but stayed out in the country and people came to Him from every quarter.
- [24] So Jesus does some great act, he tells the person—the demon or the person, don't tell anybody, the person goes out and tells people anyway. It's a pattern. This is what we call—one of the old theories about the Messianic secret was a modern scholar in the early twentieth century said, well here's what happened, the disciples of Jesus, they say the writer of the Gospel of Mark, knew that Jesus wasn't proclaimed openly and widely as the Messiah during Jesus' own lifetime. He was proclaimed as the Messiah by Jesus' disciples after his death. Why didn't all these people recognize Jesus was the Messiah during his lifetime? This scholar said, well the writer of the Gospel of Mark decided it must have been because Jesus kept it a secret. Jesus wanted to keep it a secret. Now the problem with that theory is? Can you pick out the problem with that theory? The reason we have the Messianic secret in Mark is because people knew that Jesus was not openly proclaimed as the Messiah during his lifetime, so this was a literary device to explain why Jesus wasn't known in his lifetime is because Jesus kept it a secret. What's wrong with this theory? Yes, ma'am.
- [25] *Student:* [Inaudible]
- [26] *Professor Dale Martin:* There's one place where he does say, go tell. The binding of the strong man. Other problems with the theory?
- [27] *Student:* [Inaudible]
- [28] *Professor Dale Martin:* The people tell anyway. It doesn't explain that Jesus wasn't proclaimed the Messiah because all the people that he tells to be quiet go and proclaim him anyway, and he just says his fame spread. There have been a lot of other theories about this Messianic secret. What does it mean? Why does he tell people to be quiet? What is it that he wants them to keep quiet? Why do they go tell about him anyway? What does that mean for the story? That's the first problem.
- [29] The second problem, the problem of misunderstanding. Look at Mark 2:16:
- [30] When the Scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard this he said to them, "Those who are well ..."
- [31] Is that what I want to read? Well okay, look at 15:34, I think I can make this point better with a couple of other texts. The point I'm making is that people tend to misunderstand Jesus, his sayings, and often events. "At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice [this is when he's crucified], 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani? which means—it's Aramaic—it means, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" "When some of the bystanders heard it they said, 'Listen, he's calling for Elijah.'" Well he's not calling for Elijah; it's just that the word—the Aramaic word eloi, eloi sounds like the name Elijah, so people standing around misunderstand things that are happening.
- [32] It's not just people standing around, the disciples—in Mark, the disciples themselves, the people who are closest to Jesus, are the ones who get it wrong the most. I hope you noticed this when you were reading this text before class, is that, repeatedly, Jesus has to explain things to Peter, and James, and John, his closest disciples. 4:41, "He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?'" In other words, they've already seen him do all kinds of miracles by this point in Mark. "And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this? That even the wind and the sea obey Him?'" Well we're the readers; we're going, you learned that in the first verse, Son of God. All the way through here Jesus has been telling people what He is, or at least demons have and other people and people have been confessing, and yet the disciples don't understand.
- [33] 6:52—now notice my point about this is not to say that historically Jesus' disciples actually didn't understand. We're not looking for what happened, what we're looking for is the narrative structure. What kind of story the author tells and why does he tell it this way.

6:52, start reading at 51, “Then He got out of the boat,” this is when Jesus is doing another kind of sea miracle. “He got out—into the boat with them and the wind ceased, and they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves but their hearts were hardened.” In other words, Jesus had multiplied loaves and fishes in a previous scene. They should have picked up on that that he’s somehow special. Somehow they didn’t understand what’s special about Jesus. It goes all the way—7:18–8:17-21. Over and over again, when you’re studying Mark, go through and mark the different times when somebody gets it wrong even when they should not have gotten it wrong. There are people who recognize him. The first person who recognizes Jesus in the Gospel of Mark is you, because the very first verse announces, “The beginning of the good news,” euangelion in Greek, meaning “good announcement, good news” of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Now some manuscripts don’t have that verse quite like that, but if that’s the original wording of that verse, you have been told from the very first verse that Jesus is the Son of God.

[34] It’s not a mystery to you the reader, that’s part of the fun of the Gospel—Mark and John both play with this. They let you, the reader in on certain kinds of jokes and puzzles that the people in this story don’t get. That’s one of the things that Mark is doing is letting you in on some things, but still it’s very difficult for us to figure out this whole Messianic secret thing and this lack of understanding, even though we’ve known the secret. The last person to know who Jesus is, and to recognize him and not to misunderstand is the centurion at the cross. In 15:39, the Roman centurion, when Jesus dies says this and I’ll do it the way “The Greatest Story Ever Told,” the movie—this scene is played by John Wayne, he’s the Roman centurion. You don’t really see John Wayne clearly, you just see his shadow with the sun coming in, and Jesus has just died on the cross, and then you hear this over-voice, “Surely this was the Son of God.” My John Wayne imitation for you. The centurion, though, recognizes that Jesus is the Son of God, at least according—if that’s the way we read that. The other people who recognize Jesus and understand are demons, at least they recognize him.

3. *Mark’s Messiah*

[35] Now let’s look at the turning point in the Gospel, and what I’m going to do is show you how I, as a brilliant modern scholar, have posed these problems, the Messianic secret problem, the problem of misunderstanding and all this sort of thing, and the problem of the ending which I’ll get to in a minute, and I’m going to make it all makes sense for you. There are other scholars who might not think I’m so brilliant and might have other explanations, but this one’s mine and I’m sticking to it. 8:27—follow along with me, in your hymnals, 8:27 “Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that I am?’” Nice little introduction, you’re smart readers, as soon as you get to this part you go, okay we’re getting to the climax of this book, because all the way through the book up to this point we’ve had this issue of who is he, who do people say he is, how do they understand him, so your antennae should be picking up that this story is going to be an important story for you.

[36] And they answered him, “John the Baptist, and others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets. He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” He sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

[37] There it is again. Peter confesses correctly, “You are the Messiah,” and Jesus says, okay don’t tell anybody. Jesus is not a very good evangelist, apparently. He’s not Joel Olsteen or whoever that guy is in Houston. He’s not the kind who’s proclaiming it all out, at least according to the Gospel of Mark. Then he began to teach them. Now wait a minute that might be important. He just did this command to silence, what does the next verse say? “Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering.” Then he began to teach them, then he began to teach them—not before—”

[38] Then He began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, be rejected by the elders, the chief priest, the Scribes, and be killed and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly.

- [39] Mark is a clever writer. He puts little short sentences like this in his gospel at interesting places, and you the reader are supposed to go, okay he's talking right to me. "He said this openly," it's not closed anymore, this part's opened, this part's not closed. It's not going to be the end of the problem. "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples he rebuked Peter." Peter is of course saying something like, "No, no, no, no, Jesus, you didn't get it. We just said you're the Messiah. The Messiah doesn't suffer and die on a cross; the Messiah comes with angels and rules the world. The Messiah overthrows the Romans. The Messiah sets up the new reconstituted Israel, and all the nations will flock to Jerusalem now. You're the Messiah, that's what you do. No, you don't suffer and die, that's not what Messiah's do."
- [40] There's no Jewish expectation in the ancient world that the Messiah would suffer and die. Modern Christians think, well that's—of course it's all the way through the Old Testament, but those prophecies and things, those statements and poems in the Old Testament, they weren't taken to be about the Messiah they were taken to be about other prophets, or holy men of God who might have to suffer, who might be persecuted. The Messiah passages don't have suffering and death in them; they just refer to this coming King, the descendent of David. No Jews in the first century this time expected that the Messiah would be crucified. It just was absolutely against common sense. Messiahs don't suffer, Messiahs aren't crucified, Messiahs aren't beaten.
- [41] Peter actually quite understandably thinks that Jesus has got it wrong. Peter says, You're the Messiah, you're not going to be killed and suffer, and that's when Jesus turns around and rebukes Peter looking at His disciples—is that an interesting clue? that Jesus is looking at his disciples and he rebukes Peter? "Get behind me, Satan, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." That's a very interesting story in itself. What is Jesus rebuking Peter for and calling him Satan?
- [42] He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulteress and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his angels—of his Father with the holy angels." [That's what Messiah's were expected to do, is come in glory with holy angels.] And he said to them, "Truly I tell you there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.
- [43] What's going on here? You have the correct identification of Jesus, even according to Mark as the Messiah. You have the charge to secrecy in 8:30; you have the passion prediction—one of the passion predictions and the first of several that we'll see in Mark. Jesus saying, this is going to happen, and then you have this word, "And he said this plainly and clearly to them," a nice little clue. Then you have Peter's misunderstanding, but what does Peter misunderstand? That's what we'll ask. What was Peter expecting different? Well he was expecting the Messiah to come with angels and triumphant. Then you have an emphasis on suffering that everybody has to suffer, not just the Son of Man, but everybody has to suffer and you have a prediction of future eschatological glory. Eschatology is just a fancy theological word meaning the end times, the study of the end times. Eschaton is just a Greek word meaning "the end." You'll see this if you read much about the Bible or ancient religion, the eschaton will come up apocalyptic contexts, and eschatology means any study or doctrine about the end of the world as we know it. In fact I used to direct a little singing group in the Divinity School when I was a grad student here, and we called ourselves "The Eschatones." A joke that only divinity students would get. The prediction of the eschatological glory that comes after the suffering and then right after that, 6:2:
- [44] Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, led them up to a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi

it's good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings [three tabernacles, three tents], one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore but only Jesus. [The next verse:] "As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one what they had seen [–again that secrecy motif–] until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

[45] And again an emphasis on death. What's going on with all this? What's going on is that Mark is trying to make an important point, maybe even to his fellow believers at the time. Apparently, what Peter doesn't understand about Jesus is that Jesus has to suffer and has to die, and if that causes a redefinition of Peter's notion of what a Messiah is, so be it. Peter needs to work with a redefined notion of the Christ, the Messiah, if he doesn't include the necessity of suffering in that notion.

4. *The Apocalyptic in Mark*

[46] Let's imagine the context for this kind of message. The rapid fire style of Mark is one of the—if you notice—did you notice how many times "immediately" is used, the word "immediately"? The writer of the Gospel of Mark needed a good Yale college editor or a writing tutor, because there's kind of a rapid fire, it's not reading very good Greek style either. It's rapid fire, he says, immediately this happened, then immediately this happened, and then immediately this happened. You get the idea reading the Gospel of Mark that the narrative is pulling you along, it's shoving you along, is rushing you along. That's actually part of, I think, this apocalyptic style of Mark, because the Gospel of Mark is also apocalyptic in its message. It talks about angels coming at the end; it talks about a big war that's going to happen, so you have demons and a battle of Jesus with the strong man, another apocalyptic story. You have the emphasis on suffering and persecution, and that's a common theme of Jewish apocalyptic. Not that the Messiah would suffer but that the Jews themselves might have to suffer before the fabulous kingdom of the end time. Remember you saw it in Daniel, when we read Daniel two classes

ago, Daniel predicts suffering for the righteous, and only after the suffering would you have the goodies, heaven, the Kingdom of God.

[47] Now we'll look at Mark 13 and we're going to analyze it pretty carefully. Again some of these things will come into play. The basic message I'm saying is that people misunderstand about Jesus is that they misunderstand the necessity of suffering that must be there before you—must precede glory. Yes, God promises them glory, they're going to be glorified in the end, they're going to win in the end, but they have to go through a period of suffering. Jesus is the first one who does this, he accepts suffering and death before he himself is glorified but the glory will come, it has to be preceded by suffering. But Jesus also in Mark tells the disciples over and over again, you also will have to suffer first, but if you endure you will experience glory also. Now look at Mark 13.

[48] As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to Him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." [He's predicting the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.] When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are to be accomplished?" Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray.

[49] False prophets, Jesus predicts there will be false prophets, maybe even false Messiahs, although he doesn't use that term here in Mark. It will occur in other places.

[50] When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come.

[51] So just when people have—when times are bad and there are wars that's not necessarily the end yet, you've got to have a few of those.

[52] For nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is

but the beginning of the birth pangs. As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to counsels; and you will be beaten in synagogues.

[53] Again this theme of suffering. You have all these terrible cosmic events, terrible wars and disasters, earthquakes and all that sort of thing, but also he says, you're going to have to suffer; they're going to hand you over for persecution. In 13:10, "And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations," so Jesus is predicting that, before the end comes, his message, the Gospel message, will be proclaimed all around. Even though you have worse things happening, 13:12:

[54] Brother will betray brother to death, a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

[55] In other words, familial divisions even, that households will be torn apart by the suffering, by the conflict. Then 13:14, "But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be," now here's one of those little phrases, "Let the reader understand." The author is giving you a very, very clear clue that this is when you really better be paying attention, "let the reader understand." "When you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be." Have we heard that before? The abomination of desolation is the King James English translation of it. The desolating sacrilege is often what is translated in more modern Bibles; it all refers to the same language.

[56] Where have we heard about the abomination of desolation being set up where it ought not to be set up before? Daniel; the words come right out of Daniel. They occur three—Daniel was written in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic and this is in Greek, but this is the Greek translation. You have it in Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31, and Daniel 12:11, so this Jesus has read his Daniel. Then you have warnings and woes, verses 15 through 13, so you have all this stuff. What happens after that?

[57] The one on the housetop must not go down into house and take anything away; the one in the field must not turn back to get the coat. Woe to those who are pregnant, to those who

are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not be in winter. For in those days there will be suffering such as not had been from the beginning of creation that God ... and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved.

[58] Now notice, we're not getting any more historical events here, we're not getting any more stuff happening except right then he says, "If anyone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'Look! There he is!'—do not believe it." False Messiahs, false prophets, so there's more false besides false prophets. "In those days after that suffering," now here's where you really get the cataclysmic end, the world crashing down:

[59] The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and stars will fall from the skies, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then you will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great glory and power. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

[60] When does it happen? Right after the abomination of desolation is set up where it ought not to be. What is the abomination of desolation? Well, we don't know. Obviously if Jesus is reading Daniel, and this is where he's getting this, he also believes that something's going to happen in the temple. That author Daniel believed it was something that Antiochus IV Epiphanes may be sacrificed a pig on the altar or he desecrated somehow the altar in the Holy of Holies in the temple. Jesus doesn't believe that that event was the end event as Daniel thought it was. Jesus is predicting that this is going to happen, something's going to happen in the temple that is going to be so awful, and it's going to be an abomination, and once that happens then all hell breaks loose and when all hell is broken loose the worst, then the Son of Man will swoop down in the clouds with angels and put a stop to it all. That'll be the glorification.

[61] When does this happen? Well Mark has told us one thing: it's going to happen during your own generation. Jesus has said, "This generation will not pass away before this stuff happens." The apostles asked him, so he said, "Well it will be within a generation. Then he says, nobody's going to know the exact time,

but once you see the abomination of desolation set up in the temple where it ought not to be, that's when it's going to happen. Now did this happen? Well, we're not narrated anything about it. What does Mark not narrate in this section that we as historians know happened with the temple? What? What does he not narrate happening? Its destruction. Jesus predicts the destruction, Jesus prophesied about destruction, but Mark doesn't tell us that the temple in Jerusalem are destroyed. He doesn't tell us explicitly about the Roman armies led by Vespasian and Titus surrounding Jerusalem and besieging it for two years. He doesn't tell us that in the year 70, the Romans actually did take Jerusalem and burn the temple destroy the temple.

[62] If Mark knew about that why didn't he tell us about it? This is why scholars—a lot of scholars believe this is exactly like Daniel. Remember how we said, how do you date Daniel? You figure out when does his history gone right? When does his history not go right anymore? If you applied that same standard of text to this text, what you've got is a prediction of the temple destruction, so at least the writer knows that it is likely to happen. He can see it happening in the future but he doesn't narrate it happening. Yes sir?

[63] *Student:* I was just wondering about a timeline; the version I have has "a generation" translated also as "race."

[64] *Professor Dale Martin:* Yes. Conservative Christians know that more than one generation has happened since that time; many, many, many generations. They've taken the Greek word translated here as "generation," which I think is the right translation, and they say well, you can take that to mean "race of people." Of course what race would they then be referring too? The Jews, and so conservative Christians who don't believe—who believe this has to be an accurate prediction of something that's going to happen in our future also, translate that as race or say, the generation doesn't refer to a generation of time of forty years or so, it means they're a race of the Jews. As long as there are Jews in existence then this thing can still go on and it hasn't happened yet, so that explains the translation. Quite frankly, I think the translation's just wrong. It seems to me that what Mark's intention is to put some kind of time limit on this. He's trying to get his readers

to see a time. Well if you just say the race of the Jews, then that doesn't give you any sense of time. Did you have a question? Okay, so where are we now?

[65] I think what's going on is this, let's just think of—imagine this happening. 16:1-8 I've already read. What happens in 16:1-8? The women are told that Jesus has been raised from the dead, as Jesus predicted he would be, and the young man tells the women, go tell his disciples that he will go before them to Galilee, go meet him in Galilee. In fact earlier, in Mark, in one of these sorts of passion predictions, Jesus had told the disciples, once I'm dead I will go before you to Galilee. Implying that they're supposed to follow him to Galilee, but then 16:8 ends. One possible reconstruction for all of this, and this is just an interpretation put out by some scholars, accepted by some, rejected by a whole lot of others.

[66] What if Mark himself is writing right before the year 70? He knows—maybe he's even writing in Galilee himself, or in someplace close to Galilee. He knows—the Roman army went through Galilee first in the year 66 and 68 and destroyed lots of stuff, and they won their battles against the Jews in Galilee first. They won through Galilee on their way to Jerusalem, they get to Jerusalem around 68, and for two years they're besieging the city of Jerusalem. What if Mark has written right at that time, before Jerusalem had actually been taken, before the temple had actually been destroyed, because he has Jesus predict, like Daniel predicted, some abomination of desolation happening in the temple, but we don't know of anything like that really that happened as a historical event right then. The temple was simply destroyed by the Romans. We might think, well maybe he thinks that they're going to set up a Roman standard there or do something, but we're not narrated what actually happened.

[67] In this scenario Mark writes his Gospel with this message, "Things are going to get a lot worse before they get better, and just like they got a lot worse for Jesus before they got better, they're going to get a lot worse for us before they get better." You need to be prepared, because if you think that the Romans are going to win and we're all going to be carried off into slavery, you don't have the right faith. Jesus told us this. Jesus told us it wouldn't be all pie

in the sky by and by, it wouldn't be all good stuff, we're going to have to suffer just like He suffered. He writes this Gospel message that over and over again has Jesus saying, suffering must precede glory, suffering must precede glory. He even has Jesus predict around the time when all this will happen, when you see Jerusalem—if Jerusalem is surrounded by Roman armies who are pagans, you can pretty well guess that something's going to happen.

[68] I believe that the Gospel of Mark may have been written right before 70 or right around 70, but the destruction of the temple has not sunk into consciousness yet or is not known to happen. Maybe even Mark himself and his disciples are themselves in Galilee. Maybe this is why he says, we're supposed to be Galilee waiting for Jesus, and then He will appear to us. When all is worse, when it just seems like everything couldn't get worse, I tell you he's going to come in on the clouds and he'll destroy the Romans, and he'll set up the Kingdom of God. If he's doing this it makes a lot of sense for the document also ending where it ends. It says, "Tell them to go to Galilee and wait," and Jesus goes to Galilee to meet them. In a sense, Mark's telling his readers, all we have to do is stay here and he'll come for us.

[69] That's one historical reading of the Gospel of Mark that places it in one, not provable time; some scholars believe Mark was written in Rome. Some people believe it was written after 70. I would say if Mark was written 70, very long after 70, I would clearly expect him to narrate the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, as Luke does. When you read Luke, who used Mark as one of his sources, you'll notice that the writer of the Gospel of Luke uses this passage out of Mark

and he edits it, to add in the destruction of the temple before Jesus comes back. The reason? Because the writer of Luke knew that the temple had been destroyed. Why doesn't Mark tell about it? Because he doesn't know yet that it's been destroyed. Questions?

[70] Okay, I have to make a couple of announcements about the sections. You're supposed to have your first section meetings tomorrow and Friday. The problem is I haven't heard yet where you're supposed to have these. It may have been because of the bad weather, people may not be in their offices doing all the kind of bureaucratic work that we need. I'm still waiting to hear where your sections will meet. Here's the plan, if I hear anything about it by the time of sections tomorrow I will immediately email you over the classes server and tell you where your sections will meet. The list of the sections and the names to them are also on the classes server if you are unclear about which section you're assigned too, which time and which day. That's on the classes server. I will email you the classes server where the sections are to meet. If I don't hear anything by the time sections meet I will also email you that we won't be having sections this week, because we don't have any place to meet them. That means that we would have to double up on the assignment for the sections this week and do two different assignments for next week. Those of you who already started praying that I don't hear anything back about the assignment of classrooms, stop doing that, because I'm praying that we do hear back about assignment of classrooms, and my prayers are more powerful than yours because I'm closer to God.

[71] [end of transcript]