

ILLUSTRATION 34 and **ILLUSTRATION 35** outline Mark's account of Jesus' ministry, and summarize its message. Those who wish to understand Mark's narrative must work through his Gospel many times. The opening sentence on page 71 of the *See Through the Scriptures* manual is of tremendous importance. The issue in the Gospels and through the New Testament is: **Was Jesus the Messiah, and if so, what kind of a Messiah was He?** Study the notes provided on pages 71 and 73 which contain key insights. The questions that follow help people explain Mark's narrative and key themes on the basis of the details in **ILLUSTRATION 34**.

1 What does the *drop of water*, with a *dove* superimposed, signify?

These represent the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus went from His hometown of Nazareth in Galilee to where John the Baptist was working in order to be baptized. See point 3 on page 71 of the STS manual.

2 Where, according to John 1:28, did Jesus go to be baptized by John the Baptist?

Bethany beyond the Jordan.

3 What do the *crown* and *servant figure with halo* signify in relation to Jesus' baptism?

Crown: Jesus was declared king; servant figure: Jesus, in whom the Davidic dynasty was being restored, would walk the way of a servant. See point 3 on page 71 of the STS manual.

4 Where, according to Mark, did Jesus carry out the major part of His ministry? In what nearby regions did Jesus work?

According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus carried out most of His ministry in Galilee. According to Matthew and Mark, He also worked in Syro-Phoenicia and the Decapolis (both Gentile regions), which would have angered the Jewish religious leaders.

5 During His ministry, Jesus did not proclaim in *words*, "I am the Lord. I am the Messiah!" He revealed His identity through His *actions*. What do the following symbols signify?

a. The *serpent around the staff*, and the *eye, ear, legs*, and *mouth* to the left.

The serpent around the staff reflects Numbers 21:4–9, and serves as a symbol of healing. The eye, ear, legs, and mouth point to Isaiah 35:5,6 where the prophet stated that when the Messianic age broke in, the blind would see, the deaf would hear, the crippled would walk, and the dumb would speak. See point 5a. on page 71 of the STS manual.

b. The *white-capped waves*.

The Psalms ascribe to God power over the winds, waves, and storms, Psalm 89:9; 107:23–32. In stilling the storms and walking on the surface of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus demonstrated that divine power, Mark 4:35–41; 6:45–52. See point 5b. in the STS manual.

c. The *demonic face*, and the *symbols* to the left of that face.

Jesus cast out many demons and commanded them to be silent about His identity, Mark 1:23, 32, 34, 39; 5:2; 7:25. See point 5c. in the STS manual.

d. The *tombstone*.

Jesus raised the dead (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43), thus fulfilling the messianic hope expressed in Isaiah 25:8, 26:19; Daniel 12:1–3. See point 5d. in the STS manual.

- e. The **basket containing bread and a fish**, with the number **12**.

When Jesus fed 5,000 men in Galilee with bread and fish, there were 12 baskets left over—one for each tribe in Israel. See point 4 in the STS manual.

- f. The **basket containing bread and a fish**, with the number **7**.

When Jesus fed 4,000 non-Jews in the Decapolis (Gentile territory), there were seven baskets left over, Mark 8:1–10. Here the point seems to be that the Jewish people often expressed hatred for the seven nations on their borders, Deuteronomy 7:1. However, Jesus showed compassion for the Gentiles and fed them!

- g. **Eye 1** and **eye 2**.

Jesus opened the eyes of the blind on two occasions, Mark 8:22–26, 10:46–52. These two incidents bracket Jesus' predictions concerning His approaching capture and crucifixion. See the opening paragraph on page 73 of the STS manual.

- h. **Crosses 1, 2** and **3**.

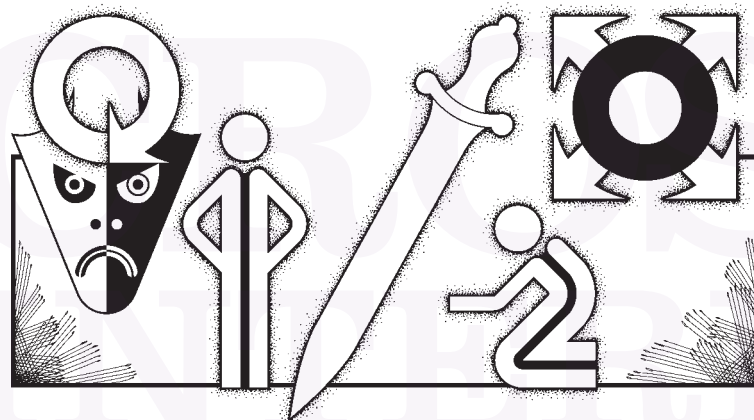
Jesus predicted His coming passion and death three times. See point 6 on page 71 of the STS manual, and also the section titled *Prediction* in the upper section of page 73.

- 6 What is the message of the **two question marks**—at the lower right, and above Caesarea Philippi?

On the way to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked the disciples two questions: “Who do the people think I am?” and “Who do you think I am?” (Mark 8:27–30). See point 6 on page 71 of the STS manual. Jesus could not have gone around proclaiming that He was the Messiah. Had He done so, the Jewish religious leaders would have responded angrily much more rapidly. Furthermore, the Roman leaders would have intervened very quickly, for they knew about Jewish messianic hopes—that the Messiah would encourage rebellion against Rome. Little wonder, then, that Pilate, when having to decide what to do with Jesus, insisted that he found no crime in Him and saw in Him no threat to Roman authority, John 18:38b; 19:4,6.

- 7 What does the illustration below suggest about the nature of the *holy war* that Jesus fought, and the battle to which He calls His disciples and followers?

Jesus taught in words, and showed in action, that the real enemy was not the Romans, but Satan and the demonic realm. He called His followers to walk the way of a servant (even as He did), and not to yield to the demonic call, “Serve self!” In Ephesians 6:10–14, Paul describes the nature of the “holy war” in which Christians are involved—a war in which the enemy is not some political power, but Satan and the demonic realm.



Prayer

Lord, grant us the desire to study Your Word frequently and deeply. As we do so, touch our eyes with Your Holy Spirit so that we might see the greatness of Your Son, Jesus the Messiah. Touch our hearts that we might commit ourselves to embrace Him in faith, and follow Him in joyous servant-discipleship. In the name of Him whom alone gives peace and hope. Amen.

The Kingdom of God is at Hand! The Verdict **35**

Upper section of ILLUSTRATION 35

- 1** The symbols to the left of the crowned figure of Jesus were also used in ILLUSTRATION 34. What do they signify?

The symbols represent Jesus' miracles over sickness, nature, demons, and death. See point 5 on page 71 of the STS manual.

- 2** What do the *two question marks* beneath the crowned figure of Jesus signify?

They represent the two questions that Jesus put to the disciples while they were on their way to the region of Caesarea Philippi. See point 6 on page 71 of the STS manual.

- 3** What do *crosses 1, 2 and 3* signify?

They signify Jesus' three predictions concerning His approaching passion and death, Mark 8:31; 9:30–32; 10:32–34. See point 1, *Prediction*, on page 73 of the STS manual.

- 4** Mark's three passion predictions are "bracketed" by Jesus opening the eyes of the blind, *eye 1* and *eye 2*. What do these actions signify in relation to the disciples?

Jesus' action in twice touching the eyes of a blind man (Mark 8:22–26) mystifies people. However, the point is: Though Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 8:29), he obviously did not understand ("see") what kind of a Messiah Jesus had come to be. Remarkably, blind Bartimaeus in Jericho seemed to understand who Jesus was and addressed him as "Jesus, Son of David," Mark 10:46–52. Although the disciples could see with their eyes, they could not see in their hearts who Jesus really was. They needed a second "faith touch" to give them full spiritual understanding concerning Jesus' person and mission! Note the introductory paragraph in point 1 on page 73 of the STS manual.

- 5** When are the eyes of the disciples finally opened? (Note the *eye 3* in the lower section of ILLUSTRATION 35, and the word *see* in Mark 16:7.)

Peter and the other disciples received the needed "second touch" to their spiritual eyes when they met the risen Lord in Galilee after His resurrection; note the use of the word "see" in Mark 16:7.

- 6** When Jesus was crucified, the disciples deserted Him. Who stood at the foot of the cross, and made a confession concerning Jesus' identity, Mark 15:39?

A Roman centurion. Although the (Jewish) disciples fled when they became aware of Jesus' approaching crucifixion, a (Gentile) Roman stood at the foot of the cross and made a confession concerning Jesus' true identity. The term "Son of God" in Mark 1:1 is repeated toward the close of Mark's Gospel in 15:39. Again, note the "bracketing" involved in the use of these terms. Jesus was and is indeed the Son of God—even though the disciples and the Jewish leaders had difficulty in recognizing who He really was.

Middle section of ILLUSTRATION 35

- 7** Relate the four symbols (*coin, divided grave, law-code, crown*) to the confrontations that took place between Jesus and His opponents after He entered Jerusalem.

The coin refers to the debate between Jesus and the Jerusalem authorities concerning whether or not the Jewish people should really pay taxes to the Roman authorities, Mark 12:13–17. The divided grave relates to Jesus' controversy with the Sadducees, who denied belief in the resurrection of the body, 12:18–27. The law-code depicts Jesus' discussion with a scribe concerning the contents of the commandments, 12:28–34. The crown points to Jesus' statement that although the Jewish leaders were waiting for a human descendant of David to come (lord), the One who had come was David's God (LORD). See the final paragraph in point 2 on page 73 of the STS manual.

Lower section of ILLUSTRATION 35

- 8** The *crowned figure with halo* is Jesus. The *expanding lines* to the right of this figure point to the fact that, during the early part of His ministry, people flocked to Him. The crowds came! What do the *four question marks* signify as to how Jesus revealed to them who He really was?

Jesus revealed His identity to His disciples and the community-at-large through His actions. See point 3 on page 73 of the STS manual.

- 9** When Jesus began making it clear that His mission consisted of walking the way of a Servant without limit, even to His death on a cross, what happened to the crowds? (Note that the *expanding lines now come together*, and meet at the *cross*.)

When Jesus' hearers began to understand the nature of His Messiahship, many began to desert Him; see John 6:66–71.

- 10** What do the *symbols* to the right of the *cross* mean?

Jesus' resurrection from the tomb (open tomb), His ascension (arrow rising into a cloud, a symbol of God's presence), the opening of the disciples' eyes (eye 3), and the giving of the Holy Spirit (dove).

- 11** Refer to the illustration on the right to describe the *big event* that finally opened the disciples' eyes, and validated Jesus as Messiah.

The event that opened the disciples' eyes, and validated Jesus as Messiah, was His resurrection from the dead—hence, the open tomb.



Prayer

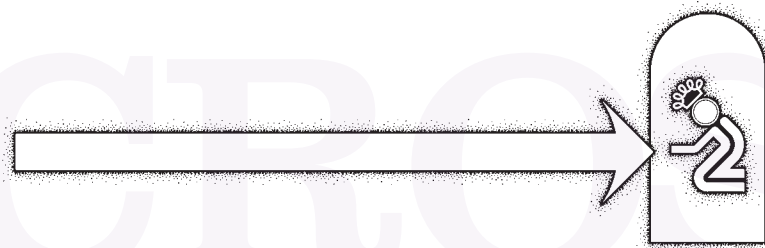
Lord Jesus, open our eyes so that we might begin to see the radical nature of the kingdom You came to establish. Help us to see how different Your kingdom is from those which we humans devise. Empower us to respond to Your call to come to You in faith so that we might experience the great joy of Your forgiving embrace. Inspire our minds to find life by losing it—by using it to glorify You by serving others. We pray in Your great and forgiving name. Amen.

The message in **ILLUSTRATION 36** is of great importance for Christians—and the world. The following information explains Jesus’ radical teachings concerning God’s will for His people.

- a. The Jewish rabbis taught that God gave humanity’s first parents *two commandments*; they were to serve God and each other. They sinned, and eventually God wiped out humanity, preserving only Noah and his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) and their wives.
- b. The rabbis also taught that God gave Noah *seven commandments*, “The Commandments of Noah.” These were understood to apply to all humanity. There are traces of them in Gen. 9 and Acts 15. The seven commandments dealt with (1) The practice of equity; and prohibitions against the following: (2) blaspheming the name of God, (3) idolatry, (4) immorality, (5) bloodshed, (6) robbery, (7) devouring a limb torn from an animal.
- c. God eventually rescued the Israelites from Egypt in the Exodus, and made a covenant with them at Sinai, in which God gave them the *Ten Commandments*, plus *603 additional commandments*. The *Ten Commandments* are recorded in Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21. The *603 additional commandments* are given in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. *The rabbis rightly insist that these commandments were given only to the Israelites and their descendants, the Jews—the people God rescued out of Egypt and gathered around Him at Sinai.*
- d. After the Jewish people who had been taken into exile in Babylon in 597 and 587 B.C. began returning to Judah in 538 B.C., they started developing *oral traditions* to explain the laws written in the Pentateuch. Some argued that God had whispered these to Moses, who memorized them and passed them on to Joshua, who passed them on to the elders, and who passed them on to the members of the postexilic Great Assembly. These *oral traditions* were finally written down in about A.D. 200 in a collection of writings known as the *Mishnah* (from the Hebrew *shanah*, “to repeat,” hence “to learn”).
- e. Jesus gave His followers *one commandment*, John 13:1–13,34,35. In doing so, He joined together “The Great Shema” (Deut. 4:5) and Lev.19:18; note Matt. 22:34–40. Any Old Testament commandment repeated in the New Testament is a commentary on Jesus’ *one commandment*. Jesus, our Lord, teaches and models what His followers are to believe and do. **Like Jesus, Christians are to use life to glorify God and serve others—full-time in all they do.**

Although no questions are posed in the Student Workbook, the leader should carefully discuss with students the supplementary information in points a. through e. The information offered helps Bible students understand the radical nature of Jesus’ teachings and ministry.

1 What does the illustration on the right suggest about the *one commandment* Jesus gives to His community?



The illustration sums up the supplementary information in the Student Workbook, especially point e. The will of God for humanity is expressed finally and dramatically in the servant life of Jesus the Messiah who walked the way of a servant even to death on a cross, and calls those who believe in Him as Savior and Lord to follow Him in servant discipleship.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, our Savior and Lord, we thank and praise You that You walked the way of a Servant all the way to the cross. You let people do their worst to You that You might do Your best for them and for us. We thank You for dying so that we might live. We thank You for showing and teaching us our new commandment—that we love one another as You have loved us. Empower us to tell people about You and Your love, and to show them Your will for our lives and their lives. To You be all honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.