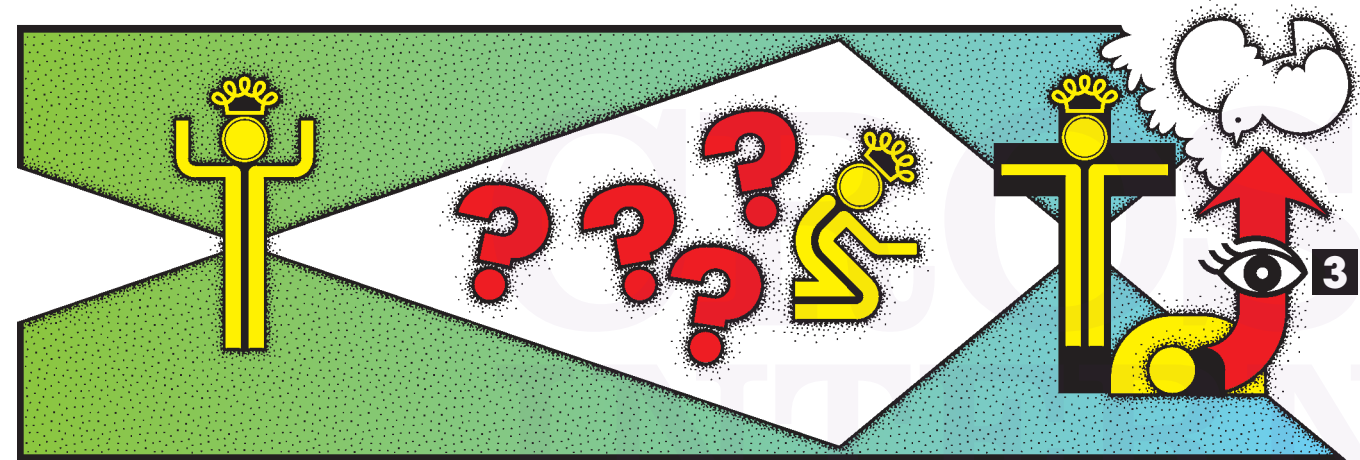
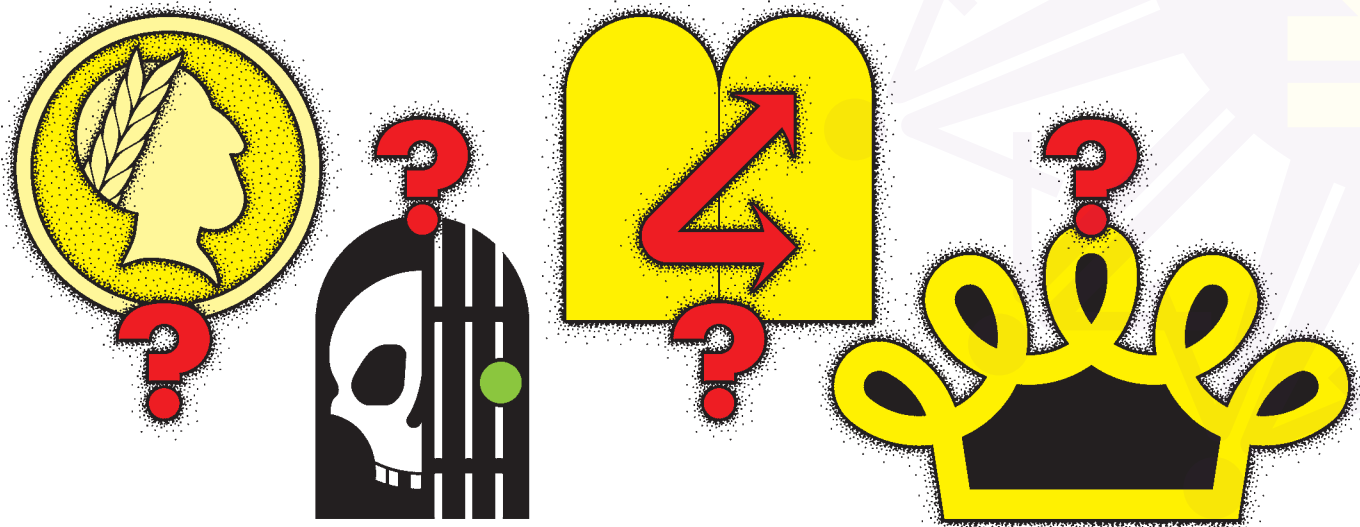
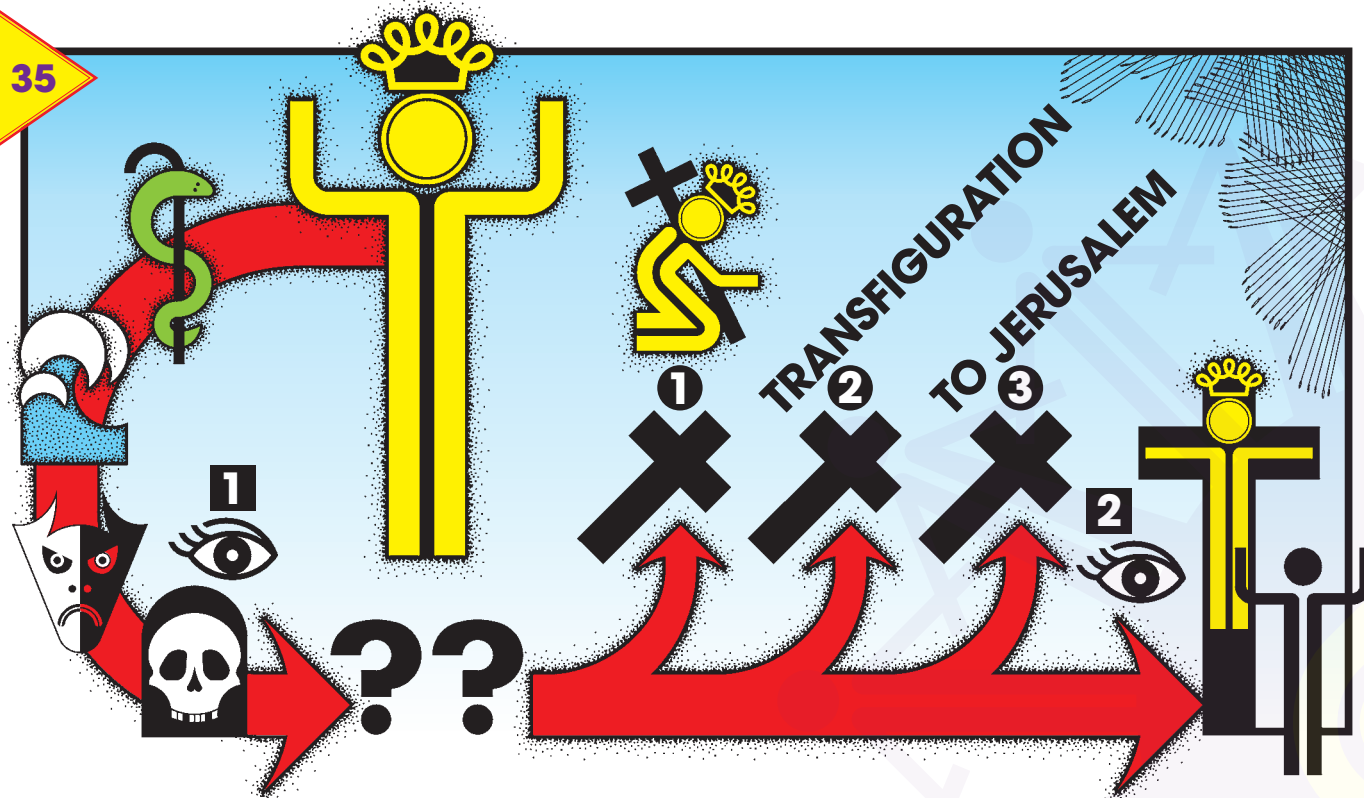


The Kingdom of God is at Hand! The Claim 34

Mark begins his Gospel by referring to Jesus as “the Christ,” “the Messiah,” 1:1. The implication is, “The **Messianic Age** is breaking into history.” The question then is: “**What is it like?**”

- 1 Mark 1:2 draws on Malachi 3:1 to state that, in Jesus, God will visit His Temple; note Mark 11:11. Mark 1:3 refers to Isaiah 40:3–5 to point out that God is now completing the final rescue, the “final exodus,” of His people. The real enemy is not Rome. It is Satan, sin, and death!
- 2 When John the Baptist carries out his ministry (at *Bethany beyond the Jordan*, **ILLUSTRATION 34**, according to John 1:28), Jews come to him for baptism, Mark 1:4–8. This is remarkable, for Jews baptized Gentiles converting to Judaism, but were never baptized themselves.
- 3 Jesus comes to John to be baptized (*drop of water, dove*) and to identify with the new movement. Eventually He will lead it. In His baptism (1:9–11), Jesus is declared *King* (**crown**, Psalm 2:7; Psalm 2 is a royal coronation psalm) and *servant* (**servant figure with halo**, Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 42:1–6 is a “servant song”). Jesus then goes into the wilderness to do battle with *Satan* (*bottom right*), the “occupying power,” 1:12,13. The key issue is, “Will Jesus walk the way of a servant of others, without limit?” Jesus the Servant is finally “enthroned” at Calvary, vindicated in His resurrection, and declared Lord over the trio of Satan, sin, and death.
- 4 During His ministry, Jesus travels south from *Nazareth* for His baptism (1:9–11), into the wilderness for the temptation (1:12,13), and then returns to Nazareth, 1:14. He conducts His ministry in *Galilee* (1:15–7:23), in *Syrophoenicia* (7:24–30), in the *Decapolis* (7:31–8:13), and then in *Bethsaida*, and as far north as *Caesarea Philippi* (8:13,22,27). When He feeds 5,000 men in *Galilee with bread and fish*, there are **12 baskets of leftovers**—one for each tribe in Israel, 6:30–44. After feeding 4,000 Gentiles in the *Decapolis* (8:1–10), there are **seven baskets of leftovers**. (The Jewish people often expressed hatred for the seven nations living on their borders; see Deut. 7:1–7). Jesus finally enters *Jerusalem* five days before His crucifixion, 11:1.
- 5 Although Mark states that Jesus *teaches*, he reports little about what Jesus says. However, Jesus’ whole *life* proclaims, “I am a King who walks the way of a Servant.” Jesus’ life demonstrates the Kingdom He came to establish and the life to which He summons people. Though Jesus does not declare in *words* that He is God or Messiah, His *actions* do. The miracles reported in Mark’s first eight chapters can be divided into four groups (see **ILLUSTRATION 34**, lower right):
 - a. **Miracles over sickness** (*serpent around staff*; see Numbers 21:4–9): Jesus gives sight to the *blind* (**eye**), hearing to the *deaf* (**ear**), healthy bodies to the *crippled* (**legs**), speech to the *dumb* (**mouth**)—thus fulfilling Isaiah’s “signs” (Isaiah 35:5,6). He heals two blind men, one at Bethsaida (**eye 1**, 8:22–26), another at Jericho (**eye 2**, 10:46–52).
 - b. **Miracles over nature** (*white-capped waves*): Jesus demonstrates power over “the deep,” 4:35–41, 6:45–52. The Psalms ascribed this same power to God; see 89:9; 107:23–32.
 - c. **Miracles over demons** (*demonic face*): Jesus casts out many demons and commands them to be silent about His identity, 1:23, 32, 34, 39; 5:2; 7:25; see also 3:22–27. Satan’s goal was and remains, “*Don’t serve God and others! Serve yourself!*”
 - d. **Miracles over death** (*tombstone*): Jesus raises the dead (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43), thus fulfilling the “messianic hope” expressed in Isaiah 25:8, 26:19 and Daniel 12:2.
- 6 After doing the miracles outlined in 5 above, Jesus, on the way to Caesarea Philippi, asks the disciples **two questions**: “Who do *the people* think I am?” “Who do *you* think I am?” Peter answers that though *the people* do not see Him as the Messiah, *the disciples* do, 8:27–30. When Jesus then predicts His coming passion three times (**crosses 1, 2 and 3**), the disciples never understand!



The Kingdom of God is at Hand! The Verdict 35

Upper section

1 Though the disciples recognize Jesus to be the Messiah, they do not understand what kind of a Messiah He is, and what being involved with Jesus implies for them. Their eyes have not been fully opened to “see” the truth concerning Jesus’ identity and mission, Mark 8:22–26; 10:46–52 (*eye 1* and *eye 2* in **ILLUSTRATION 34** and **ILLUSTRATION 35**). This is made clear in the following cycles of events:

- ▲ **Prediction:** Jesus predicts His approaching passion three times, 8:31; 9:30–32; 10:32–34 (*crosses 1, 2* and *3*). Each prediction follows a significant event—the *first* after Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi, 8:27–30; the *second* after Jesus’ Transfiguration (9:2–8); the *third* after Jesus leaves Galilee to go to Jerusalem—and death by crucifixion, 10:1,32.
- ▲ **Confusion:** Each time Jesus predicts His passion, the disciples’ confused responses reveal that their goal is power, position, prestige, and prominence, 8:32; 9:33,34; 10:35–37. Jesus’ teachings about *servanthood* and *carrying the cross* confuse them.
- ▲ **Clarification:** Jesus responds to the disciples’ confusion by stressing that involvement with Him implies servanthood without limit, 8:33–38; 9:35; 10:41–45.

Middle section

2 Jesus enters Jerusalem on the Sunday prior to Passover, 11:1–10. By entering on a donkey, He asserts that He comes on a mission of peace, Zechariah 9:9. The first thing He does is to examine the Temple, Judaism’s holiest place, Mark 11:11; note Malachi 3:1. The next day Jesus causes chaos in the Temple, 11:15–19. He attacks those in charge for denying Gentiles access to the Temple, and for exploiting worshipers through the sacrificial system, 11:17; see Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11.

Jerusalem’s political and religious leaders now confront Jesus with a demand that He justify His actions. Jesus responds by putting them in a dilemma (11:27–33) and by assuring them that unless they mend their ways swiftly and radically, His Father will take the Kingdom from them and give it to the Gentiles, 12:1–12. The authorities are furious!

In quick succession, Jesus handles **questions** put to Him by the *Pharisees and Herodians* (12:13–17; **coin**); the *Sadducees* (12:18–27; **divided grave**) and a *scribe* (12:28–34; **law-code**). Jesus then points out that though they are expecting David’s son, the One who has come is a much bigger Son than they realize! Jesus is not merely David’s physical descendant, “lord”; He is David’s *Lord and God* (12:35–37; **crown**).

Lower section

3 Only the faithful remnant, those who acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, Savior and Lord, belong to God’s True Israel. Though Jesus comes as **the new and true Israel**, few understand Him and most reject Him. They fail to *see* that His actions point to the breaking in of the Messianic Kingdom, and His manner of life to its true nature (**Servant King**). (The **four question marks** refer to Jesus’ words and actions depicted in **ILLUSTRATION 34**, lower right—miracles over sickness, nature, demons, and death.) During Holy Week, it appears Jesus’ mission will crumble. The disciples desert Jesus and the authorities crucify Him (**cross**). However, God vindicates and endorses Jesus by raising Him from the dead (**open tomb**).

The disciples and some of the people will begin to *see* when they meet the Risen Lord in Galilee, 16:1–8; note *eye 3* and “see,” v. 7. **Those who “see,” who finally come to faith in Jesus as Messiah, Savior and Lord, become the nucleus of the new community that will proclaim the risen and ascended Jesus (rising arrow) to the world! The Holy Spirit (dove) equips and empowers them for their ministry to the world.**



The Nature of the Messianic Kingdom

36

- 1 Some people believe that the Old Testament people of God were to save themselves by obedience to the commandments given at Sinai. This is not true. Salvation has always been *by grace, through faith* in God's merciful forgiveness of sins—a faith that expresses itself in obedience. The word *grace* weaves its way all through the Old Testament.
- 2 It is true that, during the period between the Testaments, some within Judaism thought that salvation was *by works*. They viewed the commandments as a *merit system* rather than as a *response system*.
- 3 The issue at stake in the Gospels is: What kind of a Messiah was Jesus? What was the nature of Jesus' Kingship? What kind of kingdom did He establish? Though the Jews were waiting for a Messiah, they were not expecting the life-style of the Messiah to be that of a servant.
- 4 **ILLUSTRATION 36** draws on John 13:1–17 to portray the nature of Jesus' Messiahship. It shows *Jesus on His knees washing Peter's feet*.
 - ▲ As **ILLUSTRATION 34** depicted, at His baptism, Jesus was declared to be **King** ("You are my Son, the Beloved," Mark 1:11; see Psalm 2:7; Psalm 2 is a royal coronation psalm) and **Servant** ("with You I am well pleased," Mark 1:11; see Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 42:1–6 is a "servant psalm"). Symbols pointing to these truths are at the *center* of **ILLUSTRATION 36** (**Servant King**).
 - ▲ Also included are symbols of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (**cross** and **open tomb**). When Jesus went to the cross, He went there as **the Servant without limit**. None who witnessed Jesus' trial and crucifixion expected Jesus to return to life. However, Jesus' Father raised Him from the dead and, in so doing, gave **the casting vote that declared Jesus to be the Messiah!**
 - ▲ Around the symbols depicting Jesus' ministry is a **circle of people holding hands in community**. God's desire is that all live in community, seeking to glorify God and serve each other in all they do. Unlike most humans, God is not interested in national borders, flags, and skin colors.
- 5 God sends the Holy Spirit (*dove*) to help people understand, believe, and embrace the tremendous truths that relate to Jesus' ministry, and to empower them to live as members of Jesus' servant community. As **ILLUSTRATION 38** will point out, the Holy Spirit uses the Holy Scriptures, baptism, and the Lord's Supper to communicate God's truth to humanity, to bring them to faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to empower them to walk in the way of discipleship in servant community.