

The Kingdom of God is at Hand! The Claim **34**

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?

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

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

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

- 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

 - b. The **white-capped waves**

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

 - d. The **tombstone**

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

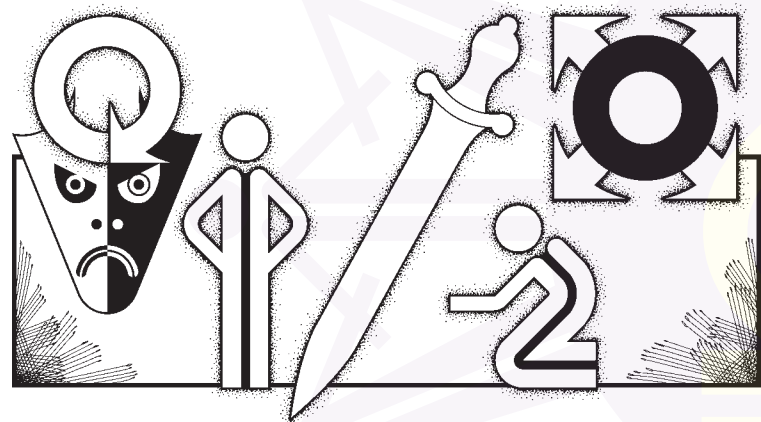
 - f. The **basket containing bread and a fish**, with the number **7**

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

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

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

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?



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?

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

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

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?

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.)

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?

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.

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?

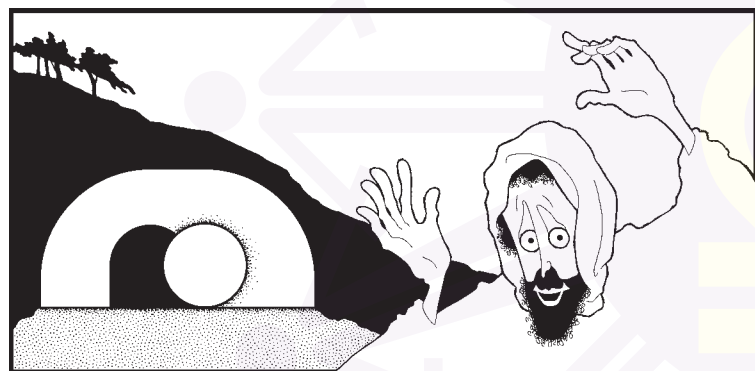
Prayer

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.

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**.)

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

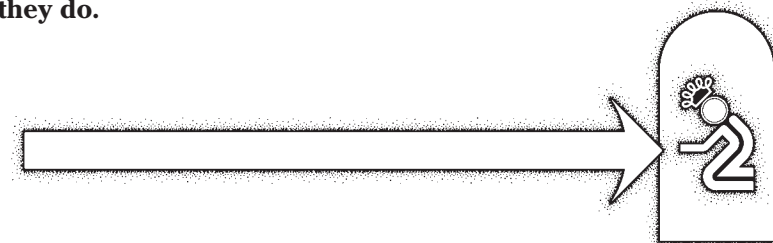
11 Refer to the illustration on the right to describe the **big event** that finally opened the disciples' eyes, and validated Jesus as Messiah.



The 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.**

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



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.

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.