

Study #1 (Thursday April 30) Mark 1:1-15

Author of the gospel: John Mark, a close friend of Peter

Audience: written to the persecuted church in Rome

It has been 400 years since the nation of Israel had heard God speak to them. Their last prophet was Malachi (last book of the Old Testament) and people, the Jews, are desperate for renewal. They are waiting for a “new exodus” – a time when God would come to His people, renew the covenant, cleanse the temple, restore the nation of Israel, and dwell with his people.

Old Testament references (Revised Standard Version)

Isaiah prophecy: Isaiah 40:1-5 “...³ a voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Malachi 3:1-5 “¹ Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? “For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the LORD. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. ⁵ “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

John’s description: 2 Kings 1:8 “⁸ They answered him, “He wore a garment of haircloth, with a girdle of leather about his loins.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”

Elijah’s return: Malachi 4:5-6 “⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”

Definitions

Baptism: a way for non-Jews to convert to Judaism

Wilderness & 40: imagery referring to a time when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years between their exodus from Egypt and their entry into the promise land.

Study #2 (Friday May 1) Mark 2:18-3:6

Old Testament references (Revised Standard Version)

Bridegroom: Isaiah 62:1-5 “...⁴ you shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight is in Her, and your land Married.... and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”

Plucking grain: Deuteronomy 23:25 “²³ If you go into your neighbour’s standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbour’s standing grain.”

David and Bread of the Presence: 1 Samuel 21:1-6 “....² And David said to Ahim'elech the priest, “The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, ‘Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.’ I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place.³ Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here.”⁴ And the priest answered David, “I have no common bread at hand, but there is holy bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women.”⁵ And David answered the priest, “Of a truth women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy, even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?”⁶ So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.”

Son of Man: Daniel 7:9-14, esp v. 13-14 “...¹³ and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

Definitions

Fasting: could be an individual or corporate expressions of grief, repentance, humble selves seek guidance from God. There was one annual fast (Day of Atonement) and then 4 additional fasts after the exile.

Sabbath: one day a week observed by the Jews in which they rested from their work.

Pharisees: a party of very devout Jews who are trying to bring about the Messianic age through their strict obedience to Jewish laws.

Herodians: leading citizens who supported Herod the Great and Herod Antipas (ruler of Galilee). Herod and his family were Roman ‘client kings’. They were partially Jewish by background, but worked for and were supported by the Roman empire.

Study #3 (Saturday May 2) Mark 5:21-43

Old Testament references (Revised Standard Version)

Bleeding: Leviticus 15:19-30 “¹⁹ When a woman has a discharge of blood which is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening...²⁵ If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.²⁶ Every bed on which she lies...everyone on which she sits shall be unclean...²⁷ And whoever touches these things shall be unclean until the evening.²⁸ But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean.²⁹ And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting.³⁰ And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge.”

Touching a dead body: Numbers 19:11-22 “¹¹ Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days...¹³ whoever touches a dead person, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from Israel...²² and whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean, and anyone who touches it shall be unclean until evening.”

Study #4 (Monday May 4) Mark 8:22-9:1

Old Testament references (Revised Standard Version)

Son of Man: Daniel 7:9-14 "...¹³ and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

Suffering imagery: Isaiah 53, esp. v.3-4 "...³ he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted..."

Ransom of life: Psalm 49:7-9 "⁷ Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, ⁸ for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, ⁹ that he should live on forever and never see the pit."

Definitions

Bethsaida: town Jesus had originally sent the disciples to after the feeding of the 5,000

Caesarea Philippi: a Roman city located at the base of Mt. Hermon. It has a temple to the Roman god, Pan.

Christ: anointed or chosen one, the Messiah

Study #5 (Tuesday May 5) Mark 11:1-25

Old Testament references (Revised Standard Version)

Colt: Zechariah 9:9 *“⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

Hosanna: Psalm 118:25 *“²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!”*

Fig tree: Jeremiah 8:13 *“¹³ When I would gather them, declares the LORD, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them.”*

Micah 7:1-2 *“¹ Woe is me! For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the grapes have been gleaned: there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripe fig that my soul desires. ² The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net.”*

House of prayer: Isaiah 56:6-8 *“⁶ And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant – ⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”
⁸ The Lord GOD who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”*

Definitions

Passover: Jewish celebration to remember the Exodus. Jews would make the pilgrimage from all over to Jerusalem.

Branches: in Israel’s history, waving branches was associated with previous Messianic figures (Maccabees) who purified the temple, recovered Israel, acted as warrior kings in the attempt to restore the Jewish nation to their former glory (like the days of King David).

Fig Tree: At this time of year, edible figs were still about six weeks away, but the bland fruit had recently appeared on the tree in late March; they would become ripe by late May. These were the early figs that preceded the main crop of late figs, which were ripe for harvest from mid-August into October. If only leaves appeared, without the early figs, that tree would bear no figs that year—whether early or late. (IVP Commentary)

Temple: main religious structure for the Jews located in Jerusalem. It has different courts that restricted access depending on worshipper (Holy of Holies, court for priests, court for Jewish men, court for Jewish women, court for Gentiles). Outer court is where Gentiles could come and worship – this is the location where the moneychangers and selling is set up.

Study #6 (Wednesday May 6) Mark 14:1-25

Old Testament references (Revised Standard Version)

Passover (event): Exodus 12:13 ¹³ *The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.*

Passover (celebration): Deuteronomy 16:1-8 ¹ *Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. ² And you shall offer the Passover sacrifices to the LORD your God....³ You shall eat no leavened bread with it....⁵ You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, ⁶ but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt....⁸ For six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.*

Blood of the covenant: Exodus 24:8 ⁸ *And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.'*

Feast of Unleavened Bread: Leviticus 23:5-6 ⁵ *In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is the LORD's Passover. ⁶ And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.*

Exodus 23:15 ¹⁵ *You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed.*

Definitions

Passover: Celebrating Passover was a command from God, as a way to remember how he rescued them from slavery in Egypt and renewed his covenant with them. This rescue involved 10 plagues on the Egyptians - the last one being the death of all first-born sons. The Israelites were instructed to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a lamb so the spirit of the Lord knew to pass over the first-born in these homes.

Covenant: agreement between two parties. In the Old Testament, God enters into covenant with His people as a way to be in relationship with them. Covenants were ratified by the blood of sacrifice.

Denarius: one day's wage