

## READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 2021 Week 7 (February 15-19)

("Let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly" ... so it may bear fruit in our lives) – Colossians 3:16.

### Historical Context (The Gospel of Mark)

- 49 BC Julius Caesar – in defiance of the Roman Senate – returns to Rome with his army, touching off a civil war. Assassinated in 44 BC, his great nephew (Octavius) emerges as Caesar Augustus – the first Roman Emperor – in 27 BC. This is the end of the Roman Republic.
- 6 BC Rome annexes Judea as a province. Judas of Galilee starts the Zealots in response to Roman taxation, and the desire for Judea to be free. While killed, his simmering revolt will lead to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (70 AD): and eventually to the destruction of Jerusalem, Jewish people being forbidden to live in sight of it, the massacre and exile of many Jewish people, and even the changing of the name "Judea" to "Palestine" (136 AD).
- 4 BC Jesus is born.
- 14 AD Caesar Augustus dies. His stepson, Tiberius, becomes Emperor.
- 30 AD After three years of ministry, Jesus is crucified, raised from death, and sends the Holy Spirit.
- 37 AD Tiberius falls sick, and is suffocated after his adopted son, Caligula is named Emperor. Herod Agrippa talks Caligula out of placing a statue of himself as god in Jerusalem's temple (39 AD), when Caligula wanted an image of himself set up in every temple in the Roman empire.
- 41 AD Caligula is murdered by his Praetorian Guard, and replaced by his uncle – Claudius. Claudius expels the Jews from Rome (49 AD) "... because of disturbances at the instigation of *Chrestus*" [Roman historian: Suetonius]. Is this Christ or someone else? Inconclusive.
- "50 AD" Date of the earliest fragment of Mark's gospel, found 28 miles east of Jerusalem.

### Day      Reading      Clarification from the Greek (the original language)

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| Mon.  | Mark | 6 (:34) <b>Compassion</b> = a gut feeling of what it's like, that leads to active care.  |
| Tues. |      | 7 (:11) <b>"Is corban"</b> = a gift dedicated to God. If someone didn't want another to have something requested, they might say "It's corban" which means you can't have it. Because of Numbers 30:2-3, the question was whether this promise was binding. This question was very current in Jesus' day:<br><br>From the Mishna: "A man spots a crowd of people eating figs from his trees and shouts, 'Corban to you!' What if his father and brothers are in the crowd? The disciples of Shammai (died 30 AD) ruled, "Everyone is prohibited from eating the figs except his family." But the disciples of Hillel (died 10 AD) ruled, "No, everyone is permitted to eat the figs." ( <i>Mishnah – Jewish Oral Law</i> , Nedarim – Vows, 3:1) to you," he's not vowing to give his figs to the Temple. What he means is 'Get your ... hands off my figs! As God as my witness, you're not allowed to eat them!' ... Later on, rabbinic law explicitly ruled that one could not make a vow that overrides one's obligation to "honor your father and mother" ( <i>Mishnah</i> , Nedarim 9:1). The rabbis actually invoked the same commandment that Jesus did to explain their reasoning." - <a href="http://www.jstor.org">www.jstor.org</a> |
| Wed.  |      | 8 (:31) <b>"Must suffer"</b> = cf. Isaiah 53, Psalm 49.  |
| Thur. |      | 9 (:7) <b>Listen</b> = This is the only command in the New Testament that comes straight from the Father.  |

Fri. 10 (:2) **Divorce** = The context is an unfriendly technical question by the unmerciful (Mark 3:1-6) to the one who's ministry was all about mercy. They have been accusing Jesus of breaking the Law. Knowing that Jesus is merciful, they ask: "what does the Law actually say?" Therefore, Jesus gives them a technical answer, which Jesus then continues in the house. This puts them in a real bind, as many are divorced. It's not the answer they were hoping for, by which they hoped to frame an accusation against Jesus. It's Jesus saying, "you want to play hardball? OK, let's play hardball. Are you willing to live by the burdens you would place upon others? (Matthew 23:1-4). This same kind of thing happened again in John 8, and in Mark 12:13-17. It's Jesus' compassion and kindness in interpreting the Law that leads to his death (Mark 3:1-6).