

## Challenges in Galilee



SABBATH—APRIL 23

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Mark 6:1–7:23.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “They all saw him [Jesus] and were terrified [afraid]. Right away he said to them, ‘Be brave! It is I. Don’t [do not] be afraid’ ” (Mark 6:50, NlrV).

**LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.** “But in the days to come he [God] will honor Galilee, where people from other nations live. He will honor the land along the Mediterranean Sea. And he will honor the territory east of the Jordan River. The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a dark land. But a light will shine on them” (Isaiah 9:1, 2, NlrV). Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in Isaiah 9:1, 2. Jesus came to a people broken by sin, sickness, ignorance,<sup>1</sup> and poverty.<sup>2</sup> He brought salvation, healing, and new life.

Jesus had a large group of people following Him in Galilee. For a while, He was a very popular leader. But the storm clouds were coming. Jesus’ popularity reached a crisis when He fed 5,000 people. The people were so excited, they wanted to crown Jesus king. But Jesus refused. Disappointed, many people turned away. As a sad example of the events<sup>3</sup> that will happen to Jesus, Mark next reminds us of what happened to John the Baptist. John, too, had been popular for a while.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Why did the people refuse to accept Jesus at Nazareth? In what ways did Herod and Pilate act the same? Why did so many people turn away from Jesus? Why was Jesus so rough on many of the religious traditions<sup>4</sup> of His time?

\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 30.

<sup>1</sup>ignorance—lack of knowledge.

<sup>2</sup>poverty—being poor.

<sup>3</sup>events—things that happen.

<sup>4</sup>traditions—religious customs that people have followed for a long time.

**SUNDAY—APRIL 24**

**CHALLENGE AT NAZARETH  
(Mark 6:1-5; Luke 4:16-30).**

News of Jesus and His miracles spread over Galilee. So the people of Nazareth must have heard about what Jesus was doing. Jesus grew up in Nazareth. Nazareth was a small town with perhaps 500–600 people. When one of the townspeople became famous as Jesus did, the people would talk a lot about it. Luke shows that Jesus taught, “Here is a saying you [the people of Nazareth] will apply [use for] to me: ‘Doctor, heal yourself! Do the things here in your hometown [Nazareth] that we heard you did in Capernaum’ ” (Luke 4:23, NlrV).

**Read Mark 6:1-3. What are the people saying? Why are they saying it? Why do you think the people did what they did? Did they have reasons to show doubt? Why were they so angry with Jesus? Luke 4:16-30.**

The people of Nazareth thought Jesus was being proud and acting like a know-it-all. Australians have a good way of describing what the people of Nazareth thought about Jesus. They call it “the tall poppy syndrome (problem).” When one poppy grows taller than the other poppies, they will cut down the tall poppy. The people of Nazareth thought Jesus was acting like He thought He was “taller” (bet-

ter) than they were. So they wanted to “cut Him down.” Almost the same idea is found in Scandinavia,<sup>5</sup> where they have the Jante law. This law says that people who are in an important job should not think they are special. They should not think they are better than anyone else. If they do think they are special, the same people who put them in that job can take that job away.

“Jesus laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. But he could not do any other miracles there [in Nazareth]. He was amazed [surprised] because they had no faith” (Mark 6:5, 6 NlrV). The people of Nazareth misjudged Jesus. They knew all about Jesus. They had watched Jesus grow up. They knew His parents, brothers, and sisters. To them, He was one of them and not anyone special. They thought they knew Him, but they did not.

**How have you misjudged God? Why is it so easy for us to misjudge God? What lessons have you learned from misjudging Him in the past?**

**MONDAY—APRIL 25**

**JOHN’S DEATH (Mark 6:14-22).**

Mark tells the story about Jesus sending out the 12 disciples (Mark 6:7-13). Afterward, Mark explains what happened to John the Baptist.

<sup>5</sup>Scandinavia—a group of countries that includes Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland.

This is the only place Mark does not picture Jesus as a man of action. At the beginning of his book, Mark said that John the Baptist was God's messenger. God raised him up to announce Jesus' coming (Mark 1:2-8). Mark does not mention John again until Mark 6. When Jesus sent out the 12 disciples, John already had been murdered. King Herod thought that John had come back to life as Jesus. Herod clearly felt guilty for the death of John, God's servant.

**Show the difference between the actions of Herod here and the actions of Pilate at Jesus' trial.**

**How do we know both men felt guilty?**

**How did both men feel about sentencing their prisoners to death?**

**What parts did the men's wives play?**

**How did Herod and Pilate each use their power?**

**How were both men "used" by other people?**



**"Let Barabbas go free!"**

The news of John's murder must have made Jesus think seriously about His future. Jesus was sad about John's death. John was His cousin and fellow worker. And Jesus knew that His death would soon follow. Ahead of Jesus lay the Cross.

**Think about Herod's and Pilate's characters. Are some of your weaknesses the same as the weaknesses of these two men? How can you protect yourself from letting these weaknesses ruin you?**

**TUESDAY—APRIL 26**

**THE TURNING POINT<sup>6</sup>  
(Mark 6:33-46).**

**Read Mark 6:33-46. What other information do you find in John 6:1-15? Why did Jesus not want the people to make Him king? (John 3:14; John 7:8; John 18:36).**

<sup>6</sup>turning point—a point, or time, at which an important change is to happen.



John explains what happened after Jesus refused to be crowned king: “From this time on, many of his [Jesus’] disciples [followers] turned back. They no longer followed him” (John 6:66, NIV). The people became discouraged. Their hopes were destroyed. Their ideas about making Jesus king were not fulfilled.

**Remember a time when you turned away from either a person or an organization because you expected something better from them. Were your hopes for them wrong or unrealistic? Should you have done more thinking before you got involved or before you turned away? What did you learn from this experience?**

When we try hard to win souls, we are in danger of giving people false hopes of what a Christian should be. We should not promise people that they will suddenly be happy, healthy, and successful if they accept Jesus and join our church. We do have won-

derful Bible promises. But we must also study other verses that show us how sometimes the Christian life can be a struggle. We need to expect trials, temptations, and suffering along the way (Acts 14:22; Hebrews 12:7-13; 1 Peter 4:12, 13 ).

**What false hopes did you have about what it means to be a Christian and an Adventist? How did you work through these false hopes? What advice would you give to someone who is struggling because of false hopes about the Adventist Church, God, or both?**

**WEDNESDAY—APRIL 27**

**JESUS WALKS ON WATER**

**(Mark 6:45-56).**

**After feeding the 5,000 people with just five loaves and two fish, Jesus walked on water. Why do you think He chose that time to walk on water? What does that tell us about how He will give us what we need to have faith?**



The disciples were astonished (very surprised). The Greek verb<sup>7</sup> means so surprised that they could not understand. According to Mark, the disciples did not think about the miracle of the fish and the loaves, because their hearts were hardened.

**Review the events in Mark, chapters 1–6, up until Jesus walked on water. What miracles did Jesus do in these chapters? Why should these miracles have caused His followers to fully believe in Him? What things happened that could have caused them to doubt who He was? What lessons can we learn from this about how we get faith, about how we keep faith, and about how we could lose faith?**

As sinful human beings, it is natural for us to lean toward evil and selfishness. It is not natural for us to lean toward a God who is good and selfless. It does not matter what God does for us. It does not matter how closely we see the Cross. It does not matter what miracles He has done for us. If we do not guard our souls and keep our faith strong, our hearts will become hard. Our natural path through life is toward self, sin, and death. By taking hold of God's hand by faith, we can stop this natural downward slide toward eternal loss.

**Think about your walk with Jesus. Why did you accept Jesus? What things has He done for you since then? Think about these things often. Pray for the Holy Spirit to remove all your doubts.**

#### THURSDAY—APRIL 28

#### CHALLENGE WITH THE PHARISEES<sup>8</sup> (Mark 7:1-23).

**Write in one sentence the message of Mark 7:1-23.**

**Which verses in Mark 7:1-23 catch Jesus' main point? Why did you choose these verses?**

People who do not like religion say that religion gives a certain kind of people power over other people. The priests were using the religious rituals (ceremonies; traditions) Jesus spoke against in Mark 7:1-23 to have power over other people.

For example, God gave rules about unclean things in the book of Leviticus. But the priests added many more rules over hundreds of years. The result was to exclude<sup>9</sup> more and more of the common people from temple services. This gave the priests great power over these common people.

It is scary to think that Jesus spent so much of His time fighting against very

<sup>7</sup>verb—a word that shows action.

<sup>8</sup>Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus' day who believed a person must keep God's law to be saved.

<sup>9</sup>exclude—to leave out, reject.

religious people who believed they were defending their faith. It is scary, too, that these religious people made traditions and commandments that at times spoiled the real purpose of God's commandments (Mark 7:1-11).



Have you set aside God's commands to follow your own rules?

**The greatest reason for serving God is because we love Him. But how can serving God because we love Him also be a dangerous reason? Why must people who believe they are working for God be careful in what they do for Him?**

**FRIDAY—APRIL 29**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, "The First Evangelists,"<sup>10</sup> "Come

Rest Awhile," "Give Ye Them To Eat [Give the People Something to Eat]," "A Night on the Lake," "The Crisis in Galilee," and "Tradition," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 349–358, 359–363, 364–371, 377–382, 383–394, 395–398.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In class, have people share their experiences of making mistakes while they thought they were working for God. What did they do? How did they treat people? What might they have done differently if they knew what they know now? What lessons did they learn that might help other people not to make the same mistakes?
2. What did Jesus mean in Mark 7:20 about unclean things? How is what He means different from what the rabbis<sup>11</sup> meant? What principle<sup>12</sup> is made clear by this difference?
3. Jesus spoke strong words about human traditions. Do you think Jesus was against traditions? If He was not, why did He speak against them? What are some of your traditions? Where did they come from? How are they like God's commandments? After reading what Jesus said about traditions in Mark 7, should you get rid of some of your traditions?

<sup>10</sup>evangelists—people who travel, preaching the gospel wherever they go.

<sup>11</sup>rabbis—Jewish religious teachers.

<sup>12</sup>principle—a law upon which other laws are based. For example, the Ten Commandments are based on two principles: (1) love for God and (2) love for other people.

**SUMMARY:** For many months, Jesus enjoyed support in Galilee. But a change came. Jesus' own people in Nazareth refused to accept Him. Then, even larger crowds refused Him. Jesus challenged the religious leaders with a strong rebuke (scold-

ing). Blinded by false pride, these leaders were really lawbreakers. They were two-faced in their teachings and actions.

Now Jesus is really moving toward the Cross!