

# MARK

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## Lesson 4

## Mark Chapter 4

As we now study Chapter 4 of Mark, we again find Jesus teaching along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. I have included this picture of it below, looking towards Tiberius, so that you can see what it looks like on a calm evening. Jesus spent a lot of time along this beautiful lake, and many of the disciples fished in it as well. As you travel along its shoreline, it is easy to imagine the large crowds that gathered along the shore to hear him teach. In this lesson, Mark provides us direct insight into what Jesus was teaching the crowds and his followers, the disciples.

We will examine the parable of the Sower and the Seed, as Jesus begins to open the disciples' eyes to His kingdom and to their purpose. At the end of his teaching, while sleeping on the boat, Jesus is awakened by his followers who are fearing for their lives, due to a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee. Through this event, Jesus will show them his authority over all creation.

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*Given that background, read Mark Chapter 4 and consider the following questions:*

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1. In this chapter, we see that Jesus has once again left Capernaum and is teaching "by the sea,"—the Sea of Galilee. In Mark 4:1-12 we get a firsthand look at Jesus and his teaching. As we can observe in this text, the crowds were again so large, probably numbering in the thousands, that Jesus gets into a boat to continue teaching the growing crowd on the shore. The lesson that he teaches is a story, a parable, about a sower, seed, and the soil conditions of the field in which the sower was planting. What is he specifically telling the crowd about the seed and the soil?
2. Did the crowd understand what Jesus was teaching? No, probably not. As far as they knew, he simply gave them a farming lesson that most of them would have understood from a practical perspective; but there was probably little understanding of the knowledge and wisdom that Jesus was imparting to them, including on the part of his disciples. The followers of Christ, his disciples, did not understand; and when Jesus was alone with them, they asked him for an explanation. What was Jesus' response in Mark 4:10-11?
3. In Mark 4:12 why did Jesus tell them that everyone else would only be revealed his message through parables? Doesn't this seem like a harsh response? (See also Isaiah 6:9-10 and Romans 16:25-26.)
4. Jesus then explained the parable to the disciples. He tells them that the "sower" is a person who is sowing the word, the Gospel. Then, what does he say that the different soils represent? (See Mark 4:13-20.)

5. Having explained the parable of the Sower and the Seed, he explains another important principle about spreading the Gospel. What illustration does he use to make this point? (See Mark 4:21-22.)
  
6. Jesus continues to teach regarding the lamp in Mark 4:23-25. What lesson is he teaching the disciples in these two verses?
  
7. Jesus extends the parable of the seed further in Mark 4:26-29. What can we learn from this parable?
  
8. Mark continues this theme of teaching about seeds with the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Read Mark 4:30-34. What is Jesus teaching them in this parable?
  
9. Following his teachings, as evening came, he told his disciples that they should travel over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Note that this account points out that "other boats were with him." Clearly some of the crowd had also gotten into boats to follow Jesus. A terrible storm developed and the disciples feared for their lives as the boat was taking on water. They believed they were going to sink and drown. When studying this account, it is always interesting to consider that, while the sea was raging, the boat was taking on water, and the disciples were in great distress; we see Jesus sound asleep, apparently unaware of the impending danger. What can we learn about this aspect of the story that can help us when our lives appear to be in turmoil beyond our control? In fact, there are several things that we should note here that can help us during times of great stress and uncertainty. What do you observe along these lines? (See Mark 4:35-38.)
  
10. Jesus then spoke, and immediately the sea became "perfectly calm." Amazing! Jesus has authority over everything, even the winds and storms. The disciples had seen him perform miraculous healings and cast out demons; and now this. With all that they had witnessed before the storm, what was their reaction to Jesus calming the wind and the sea? (See Mark 4:40-41.)
  
11. In addition to being surprised, Mark tells us in the aftermath of Jesus calming the seas, the disciples "became very much afraid" when they saw the power over nature that Jesus commanded. What does it mean when the text states that they were afraid of Jesus? Does it mean they were scared of him, or could it mean something else? Read Psalm 89:8-9, Psalm 104:5-9, Psalm 106:8-9, and Psalm 107:23-32. Who did they believe controlled the seas and the winds?

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Jesus now has the attention of his disciples in a way that they could have never previously imagined. Having demonstrated complete and sovereign authority over creation, Jesus will go on to continue his ministry on a scale not yet witnessed by his disciples. We will be examining this in the next chapter of Mark.

As we close this lesson, let it be clear to us as believers that we have been commissioned to sow the seed of the Gospel, regardless of the soil or the field he places us in. Then, we are to wait patiently for Jesus' return. Furthermore, as the toils and tribulations of life toss us to-and-fro, he is always there for us; and we are to depend on him and nothing else.

Have a great week everyone!

In Christ,

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