MARK HIS WORDS
PRELUDE
MARK. The beginning of the story of Jesus, the Anointed One.
Isaiah wrote: See! I send my herald ahead, to prepare your way.
A voice cries in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’
John began to baptise in the desert, preaching a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins. People from all of Judaea and Jerusalem went there and were baptised in the Jordan, confessing their sins.
John wore a camel skin and leather belt, and lived on locusts and wild honey. This was his message:
JOHN. After me comes someone stronger, whose sandals I am not worthy to unfasten. I baptised you with water: he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.
MARK. At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan.
As he came up from the water he saw the heavens break open, and the Spirit descended on him like a dove, and a voice from heaven said: You are my beloved son, in you I delight.
Then the spirit drove him into the desert, where for forty days Satan tempted him. He lived among wild animals, and angels looked after him.
After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching God’s message. JESUS. The time has come, God’s kingdom is near.
MARK. Walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net, for they were fishermen.
JESUS. Come with me, I will make you fishers of men.
MARK. At once they left their nets and followed him.
A little way on, he saw James and John the sons of Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them and they left their father in the ship with the hired crew, and followed him.
They went to Capernaum and at once, on the Sabbath, he went to the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished, for he spoke with authority, unlike the scholars.
In the synagogue was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, who cried out: POSSESSED MAN. What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know you – you are God’s holy one.
MARK. Jesus rebuked him, saying:
JESUS. Be quiet, and come out of him.
MARK. And the spirit made the man convulse and then, with a great cry, left him.
They were amazed, and discussed it, saying: What is this? What new teaching? For he commands unclean spirits, and they obey him. And word of him spread all round Galilee.
From the synagogue they went to the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Simon’s mother-in-law was ill with fever, and they told him about her.
He came and took her hand, and raised her, and the fever left her, and she served them.
That evening they brought him all who were ill or possessed by demons, and the whole town crowded round the door. He cured many, and drove out many demons, not letting them speak, because they knew he was the Anointed One.
Very early next morning he got up and went out, to a remote place, and prayed. Simon and the others followed him and said: Everyone is looking for you.
JESUS. Let us go to the nearby towns so I can preach there too. That is what I came to do.
MARK. And he preached in all the synagogues in Galilee, and drove out demons.
A leper came and knelt before him, begging for help, and saying: ‘If you are willing, you can cleanse me.’ Jesus, moved to pity, reached out and touched him.
JESUS. I am willing: be cleansed.
MARK. At once the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. Jesus sent him away, sternly warning him:
JESUS. Tell no one, but show yourself to the priest and make the offering for cleansing as laid down by Moses.
But the man spread the story widely, so that Jesus could not go freely into towns, but stayed in remote places. Yet people thronged to him from all around.
He came back to Capernaum some days later, and was rumoured to be at home. Many people gathered, too many to get in, and he preached to them.
They brought a paralysed man to him, but could not get near because of the crowd,
so they broke open the roof and lowered the sick man through, on his mattress.
When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man: JESUS. My son, your sins are forgiven.
MARK. But some scholars sat nearby and thought:
SCHOLARS. Why is he blaspheming? Who but God can forgive sins?
MARK. Jesus realised what they thought, and said:

JESUS. Why are you thinking that? Is it easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your bed, and walk’?
But so you may know that the Son of Man has power to forgive on earth –
I say to you: stand up, pick up your bed, and go home.
MARK. And immediately he stood up, picked up his bed and went out. They all watched in amazement, praised God, and said, ‘We have never seen such a thing.’
He went out again, to the shore, and the crowd followed, and he taught them.
As he went he saw Levi, Alphæus’ son, sitting by the customs-house and said, ‘Follow me,’ and Levi stood up and followed him.
Then while Jesus sat at home, eating, many tax-collectors and sinners sat with him and his disciples, for many of such men followed him.
When the scholars and Pharisees saw him eating with tax-collectors and sinners they said to his disciples: SCHOLARS AND PHARISEES. Why does he do that?
MARK. And Jesus heard, and said to them:
JESUS. It is sick people, not the healthy, who need a doctor. I came to call not good men, but sinners.
MARK. One day, John’s disciples, and the Pharisees, were keeping a fast. People asked: PHARISEES. Why do John’s disciples and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?’
JESUS. Can the bridegroom’s friends fast while the bridegroom is there? They cannot. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken from them, and then they will fast.
No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old garment. The new patch pulls away from the old cloth, and the hole is worse.
No one puts new wine into old wineskins: the skins split, the wine and the wineskins are spoiled. New wine into new skins.
MARK. One Sabbath, he walked through cornfields, and as they walked, his disciples began to pick ears of corn. And the Pharisees said:
PHARISEES. Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?
JESUS. Have you not read what David did, when he and his men were hungry?
How he went into the House of God
in the days of the high priest Abiathar,
and ate the sacred bread, which only priests
may eat, and gave it to his men?
The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, and the Son of Man is also lord of the Sabbath.
MARK. Once he went into the synagogue and there was a man with a withered hand. And they watched to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they could accuse him.
He said to the man: JESUS. Come and stand in the middle. Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?
MARK. But they were silent. He looked at them angrily, grieved by their hardheartedness. Then he said to the man:
JESUS. Hold out your hand.
MARK. The man held it out, and it was healed, and was just like his other hand.
The Pharisees went out at once and began to plot with Herod’s men to kill Jesus.
Jesus and his group withdrew to the sea, and many followed him there, from Galilee, Judaea and Jerusalem, from Idumaea and Transjordan, and from round Tyre and Sidon, having heard what he was doing.
He told his followers to have a boat for him, to keep him apart from the crowd. For he had healed so many that he was besieged by sick people wanting to touch him.
When unclean spirits saw him they fell at his feet and cried out ‘You are the son of God’, and he warned them not to make him known.
He went up a mountain, and summoned those whom he chose, and they came to him. And he picked twelve, to be with him, and to go out and preach, and have power to heal sickness and to cast out demons.
He added ‘Peter’ to Simon’s name; then there were Zebedee’s sons James and John, whom he called ‘Boanerges’, which means ‘Sons of thunder’; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas,
James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite,
and Judas Iscariot who was to betray him.
They went into a house, and such a crowd gathered, they could not even eat. His family heard, and set out to take charge of him. ‘He is out of his mind,’ they said.
Scholars had come from Jerusalem, and said: ‘He is possessed by Beelzebub,’ and ‘He drives out demons by the prince of demons.’ Then he spoke to them in parables.
JESUS. How can Satan drive out Satan? 
A kingdom divided cannot stand, 
and a divided house cannot stand. 
I tell you, men shall be forgiven 
all sins and all blasphemies.
But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven; it is damned for ever.
MARK. He said this, because they claimed he was possessed by an unclean spirit. Then his mother and brothers arrived. They sent a message for him to come out. The crowd sat round him, and told him ‘Your mother and brothers want to see you.’
JESUS. Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?
MARK. And he looked at those sitting round him.
JESUS. Here are my mother and my brothers.
Whoever does the will of God
is my brother, my sister, my mother.
He taught by the sea again, and the crowd was so great that he went on to a ship, while the crowd stayed on the shore. He taught many things through parables.
JESUS. Listen: a sower went out to sow; some seed fell by the road, and birds ate it.
Some fell on stony ground, with little soil, and grew quickly, but having no root it withered in the sun. Some fell among thistles, and the plants were choked and bore no fruit.
But some fell on good ground and came up and flourished, and gave a good crop. The yield was thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold. If you have ears to hear, then hear.
MARK. When they were alone, his twelve disciples and others with them asked him about the parable, and he said:
JESUS. You have been given the secret of God’s kingdom: others need parables, so they may look and look, but see nothing, listen and listen, but understand nothing, lest they repent and be forgiven.
Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand any parables?
The sower sows the word. Some hear it, as it were, at the roadside, but Satan takes it away immediately.
Some, like the stony ground, receive the word gladly, but it strikes no root, so they soon give up; if there is trouble or persecution, they stumble
Then there are those among the thistles. They hear the word; but worldly cares, the lure of money, and other desires, choke it so it bears no fruit.
But then there are those with the good soil. They take in the word and produce fruit, thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold.
MARK. He spoke to them in many such parables, giving them his message in the way they could best take it in. To them he spoke only in parables, but explained everything privately to his disciples.
On the evening of the same day, he said:
JESUS. Let us cross over to the other shore.
MARK. So they left the crowd, and set off
in the boat he was sitting in, and
other boats went with them.
A great wind blew up, and waves swamped the boat. He was sleeping in the stern. They woke him and said, ‘Master, don’t you care that we are drowning?’
He stood up and rebuked the wind and the sea, saying:
JESUS. Be quiet, be still.
MARK. The wind dropped and there was a great calm.
JESUS. Why so fearful? Why have you no faith?
They were very frightened, and said to one another, ‘Who is this man, that even winds and sea obey him?’
They crossed the sea into the country of the Gadarenes; as he left the ship, he met a man coming from the graveyard, possessed by an unclean spirit.
He lived in the graveyard, and no one could restrain him, even with chains. He had often been chained, but always broke free. He was uncontrollable.
Night and day he was in the graveyard or on the mountains, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But seeing Jesus from far off, he ran and worshipped him and cried with a loud voice:
MAN FROM THE GRAVEYARD.
What have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God? I beg you not to torment me.
JESUS. Come out of him, unclean spirit.
What is your name?
MAN FROM THE GRAVEYARD.
My name is Legion, because we are many.
MARK. And he begged him not to send them away. A large herd of pigs grazed nearby on the mountain. And the spirits begged him, ‘Send us into the pigs.’
He granted that, and they left the man and went into the pigs. The whole herd, two thousand strong, rushed over the cliff to the sea, and drowned.
The swineherds ran away and spread the news, and people came to see what had happened.
And they found Jesus, and the man who was possessed, now clothed and sane, and they were frightened.
They heard what had happened to the man possessed by spirits, and to the pigs, and they asked him to leave their territory.
When he got on the ship, the man who had been possessed asked to go with him. Jesus would not let him, but said:
JESUS. Go home to your own people and tell them what great things the Lord did for you and how he took pity on you.
MARK. The man went home and spread the word in Decapolis, of what Jesus had done for him, and everyone marvelled.
When Jesus crossed back, a large crowd gathered. While he was by the sea, there came a leader of the synagogue called Jairus, who fell at his feet and begged him:
JAIRUS. My little girl is dying. Please come and lay your hands on her, and heal her.
MARK. Jesus went with him and a big crowd followed, pressing round him. In the crowd was a woman who had suffered for twelve years from bleeding. She had spent all her money on treatment by many doctors but had got worse rather than better.
When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him and touched his clothes, thinking: WOMAN. If I can only touch his clothes I shall be healed.
MARK. Immediately the bleeding stopped and she felt that she was cured. Jesus knew power had gone out of him. He turned round and asked: JESUS. Who touched my clothes?
MARK. His followers said, ‘You can see the crowd pressing round, and yet you ask who touched you?’ He looked round and saw the woman. And she, fearful because she knew what had happened, fell at his feet and told the whole truth.
JESUS. Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace, free of your illness.
MARK. As he spoke, people came from the house of the leader of the synagogue, and told him, ‘Your daughter has died. Why do you trouble the Master any further? Jesus heard, and said to Jairus: JESUS. Do not be afraid. Just have faith.
MARK. He let only Peter, James and John go with him. At the house he found a great commotion, with mourners wailing. JESUS. Why all this noise and weeping? The girl is not dead, she is asleep.
MARK. They laughed at him. But he sent them all away, and took the girl’s parents, and his disciples, to where the girl lay.
He took her by the hand and said:
JESUS. *Talitha kum.*
MARK. Which means: Little girl,
I say to you, stand up.
At once the child got up and walked about (she was twelve years old). Everyone was overcome with amazement. He told them not to talk about it, and to give her some food.
He went back to his home town with his disciples. On the Sabbath he taught in the synagogue and many who heard him were astonished, saying:
NAZARENES. How does he know these things? What is this wisdom of his? How does he do miracles?
Is he not the carpenter, Mary’s son, brother of James, Joses, Juda and Simon? We know his sisters!
MARK. And they were shocked. But Jesus said:
JESUS. A prophet is honoured except at home, among his family, in his own house.
MARK. He could do no miracles there, except to heal a few sick people, and he marvelled at their lack of faith. He went round teaching in nearby villages.
He called the twelve, and sent them out in pairs, with power to drive out unclean spirits. They were to take only a stick, no food or money, sandals on their feet, and only one coat.
JESUS. When you enter a house, stay there until you leave that district. If people won’t receive you or listen, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, to warn them. For I tell you, that place will suffer more than Sodom and Gomorrah when judgement comes.
MARK. They preached, calling men to repent. They drove out demons, anointed many sick people with oil, and healed them.
ENTRACTE
leading into Act 2
While you are listening to the music, 
Jesus has fed the multitude for the first time, 
and walked on the sea, 
and you have learned of the beheading of John the Baptist.
MARK. Then he went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. He went into a house which he tried to keep secret, but could not.
A woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him, and came, and fell at his feet. She was Greek, a Syrophoenician; she begged him to drive out the devil from her daughter.
Jesus said to her:
JESUS. First, let the children be fed. We should not take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.
WOMAN. Yes, Lord. Yet the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.
JESUS. Because you said that, go on your way: the devil has left your daughter.
MARK. And when she came to her house, she found her daughter resting on the bed, and the devil had gone.
At that time, a great crowd had gathered, with nothing to eat, and Jesus called his disciples and said:
JESUS. I feel pity for this crowd, for they have been here three days, and have nothing to eat. and if I send them home hungry they will faint on the way. Some of them come from far away.
DISCIPLES. How can we feed them, here in the desert?
JESUS. How many loaves have you?
DISCIPLES. Seven.
MARK. He told the crowd to sit on the ground. He took the seven loaves, gave thanks, broke them and gave them to his followers to distribute to the people.
And they had a few small fish, which he blessed, and told them: JESUS. Distribute these too.
They ate their fill; and what was left filled seven baskets. About four thousand people had been fed. And then he sent them away.
Then he and his disciples went by ship to the region of Dalmanutha.
MARK. He went back to the ship and departed. His followers had forgotten to take bread, and there was only one loaf on board. He told them: JESUS. Beware of the Pharisees’ leaven and of Herod’s leaven.
MARK. The disciples talked among themselves:
DISCIPLES. He said that because we have no bread.
JESUS. Why do you talk about having no bread?  
Do you still not understand or realise?  
Are your hearts so hardened? You have eyes:  
do you not see? You have ears:  
do you not hear? Do you not remember?
When we fed five thousand with five loaves, how many baskets of fragments were there? DISCIPLES. Twelve.
JESUS. When we fed four thousand with seven loaves, how many baskets of fragments were there?
DISCIPLES. Seven.
JESUS. Do you still not understand?
They came to Bethsaida, where a blind man was brought to Jesus, and they begged him to touch him.
He took the blind man’s hand, 
led him out of the village, spat in his eyes, 
laid his hands on him and asked 
if he could see anything.
And looking up he said, ‘I see men, they look like walking trees.’
He laid his hands on the man’s eyes again, and made him look up, and his sight was restored,
and he saw everything clearly. Then Jesus sent him home, saying: JESUS. Do not go into the village, nor tell anyone from the village.
MARK. Then Jesus and his disciples went to Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he asked them:

JESUS. Who do people say I am?
DISCIPLES. Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, some say one of the prophets. JESUS. Who do you say I am?
MARK. Peter answered, saying, ‘You are the Anointed One.’ And he warned them that they should tell no one about him.
Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer greatly, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and scholars, and be killed, and after three days rise up from death. And he spoke this openly.
Peter drew him aside and began to rebuke him; but he turned and looked at his disciples and rebuked Peter, saying:
JESUS. Out of my sight, Satan. You care more about human affairs than about God’s.
MARK. He called the crowd and his disciples to him and said:
JESUS. If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.
For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever is willing to lose his life for my sake, and the sake of my message, will save it.
What does a man gain if he wins the whole world, but loses his own soul?
MARK. Six days later Jesus took Peter, James and John high up a mountain, alone with him.
Before their eyes, he was transformed: His clothes became dazzlingly white, like snow, whiter than washing could ever make them.
Elijah and Moses appeared to them, talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus:
PETER. Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters, for you, Moses and Elijah.
MARK. He did not know what he was saying — they were all terrified.
A cloud appeared, overshadowing them, and a voice came from the cloud, saying: ‘This is my beloved son: listen to him.’
Suddenly when they looked round they saw nobody but Jesus and themselves.
As they came down from the mountain, Jesus forbade them to tell anyone what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.
They kept that saying to themselves, talking about it together:
DISCIPLES. What does he mean by ‘rising from the dead’?
MARK. He found his disciples surrounded by a great crowd, and scholars were debating with them. And at once the crowd, amazed to see him, ran to greet him. He asked the scholars: JESUS. What are you debating?
MARK. At once, one of the crowd answered him:
MAN IN CROWD. Master, I have brought my son, who is possessed by a spirit which makes him dumb. When it attacks him it flings him to the ground, he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth. He is wasting away.
I brought him to your disciples for healing, but they could not do it.
JESUS. What an unbelieving generation!
How long shall I be with you? How long must I endure you? Bring him to me.
MARK. They brought the boy to him. When he saw Jesus, the spirit flung the boy down, and he rolled about, foaming at the mouth. Jesus questioned the father:
JESUS. When did this start?
BOY’S FATHER. When he was little. Often it has tried to kill him, by fire or drowning. Take pity on us and help us, if you can.
JESUS. You say ‘If you can’, but to him who believes, everything is possible.
BOY’S FATHER. Lord, I believe: help my unbelief.
MARK. When Jesus saw people crowding round he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying: JESUS. Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you: come out of him and never go back!
MARK. The spirit cried out and threw the boy into convulsions as it came out. The boy lay as if dead, and many said that he was dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him, and he stood up.
When he went indoors, his disciples questioned him in private.
DISCIPLES. Why could we not drive it out?
JESUS. This kind can be driven out only with prayer and fasting.
MARK. They left, and went through Galilee, and he wanted no one to know, for he was teaching his disciples, and he told them:
JESUS. The Son of Man will be betrayed and killed, and he will rise from death three days later. MARK. They did not understand this but were afraid to question him.
He came to Capernaum, and once they were in the house, he asked them: JESUS. What were you arguing about along the way?
MARK. They said nothing, because they had argued about which of them was the greatest.
He sat down, called them together, and said: JESUS. If anyone wants to be first, that man will be last of all, and servant of all.
MARK. And he took a child, stood him among them, and put his arms round him. Then he said:
Whoever receives a child like this in my name, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives not me, but the one who sent me.
MARK. John said to him:
JOHN. Master, we saw someone drive out demons in your name, but he was not one of us, so we forbade him to do it.
JESUS. Do not forbid him, for no one who does great things in my name can easily speak ill of me. He who is not against us is for us.
Whoever gives you a cup of water in my name, because you follow the Anointed One, I tell you, that man will get his reward.
And whoever causes one of these little ones, who believe in me, to stumble, it would be better for him to be thrown in the sea with a millstone round his neck.
If your hand makes you stumble, cut it off. Better enter into life maimed, than go with two hands to hell, into the everlasting fire.
MARK. Back in the house, his disciples asked more about this, and he said to them: JESUS. A man who divorces his wife and marries another woman, commits adultery with her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery with him.
MARK. They brought children for him to bless. The disciples reproached those who brought them, but Jesus was angry, and said:
JESUS. Let the children come to me, don’t stop them. The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. I tell you, anyone who does not accept the kingdom of God like a child cannot enter it.
MARK. And he put his arms round the children, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.
As he left the house a man ran up, knelt to him, and asked:
YOUNG MAN. Good Master, what can I do to have eternal life?
JESUS. Why do you call me ‘good’? Only God is good. You know the commandments:

Do not murder. Do not commit adultery.
Do not steal. Do not give false evidence.
Do not defraud.
Honour your father and mother.
YOUNG MAN. Master, I have kept all those since boyhood. 
JESUS. One thing you lack, if you want to be perfect. Sell all your possessions, give all the money to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven. Then take up the cross and follow me.
MARK. He was sad when he heard this, and went away grieving, for he was wealthy. Looking round, Jesus said to his disciples: JESUS. How hard it will be for rich men to enter the kingdom of heaven.
Children, how hard for those who trust riches to enter the kingdom of heaven.
It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.
MARK. They were utterly astonished, saying to one another, ‘So who can be saved?’
Jesus looked at them and said:
JESUS. It is impossible for men, but everything is possible for God.
MARK. They were on the road to Jerusalem and Jesus was leading the way. They were amazed, and all who followed were fearful. And he took the Twelve aside and began to tell them what would happen.
JESUS. We are going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and scholars. They will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the pagans. They will mock him, spit at him, flog him and kill him. After three days, he will rise from death.
MARK. James and John, Zebedee’s sons, said to him:

JAMES AND JOHN. Master, we should like to ask you a favour.

JESUS. What do you want me to do?
JAMES AND JOHN. Grant that one of us may sit on your right, the other on your left, in your glory.
JESUS. You don’t know what you are asking for. Can you drink from the cup that I drink from? Can you be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?
JAMES AND JOHN. We can.
JESUS. You shall drink from the cup that I drink from. You shall be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with. But to sit on my right and my left, that is not mine to grant. Those places have been assigned.
MARK. They reached Jericho, and as he left there with his disciples, and with a great crowd, blind Bartimaeus sat begging by the road. When he heard Jesus of Nazareth was there, he cried out:
BARTIMAEUS. Son of David, Jesus, pity me!
MARK. Many people told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more:
BARTIMAEUS. Son of David, Jesus, pity me!
MARK. Jesus stopped, and said:  
JESUS. Call him.  
MARK. So they called him, saying, ‘Take heart, get up, he is calling you.’ He jumped up, threw off his garment, and came to Jesus.
JESUS. What do you want me to do?
BARTIMAEUS. Master, give me back my sight.
JESUS. Go your way: your faith has healed you.
MARK. At once he could see again, and followed Jesus on the road.
When they came to Bethphage and Bethany, by the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, he sent out two of his disciples, saying:
JESUS. Go to that village over there. You will find an unridden colt tethered. Untie him and bring him here.
If someone asks ‘Why are you doing that?’, say ‘The Lord needs him, and will send him back presently.’
MARK. They found the colt tied up outside a door, on the street, and untied him. Some men standing by said ‘Why are you untying that colt?’ And they answered as Jesus had told them, and the men let them go.
They brought the colt to Jesus, and spread their cloaks on his back, and Jesus mounted. Many spread their cloaks on the road, others strewed branches cut from the trees.
Those behind and those in front cried out:
THE CROWD. ‘Save us! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David. Save us in the heavens!’
MARK. Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. He looked round at everything, and as it was now evening he went back to Bethany with the twelve.
They came to Jerusalem. Jesus went to the temple, and began to drive out the traders and their customers, and upset the tables of the money-changers, and the stalls of the pigeon-sellers,
and would not let anyone
carry goods through the temple, and said:
JESUS. Is it not written *My house shall be called
a house of prayer for all peoples?*
But you have made it a robbers’ lair.
MARK. The scholars and chief priests heard of this, and sought a way to kill him. They feared him, because the crowd was astonished by his teaching.
So I tell you, whatever you ask for when you pray, believe you have received it, and it will be yours.
MARK. They went to Jerusalem again, and the chief priests, scholars and elders met him in the temple and said to him:
CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCHOLARS.
By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you authority?
JESUS. I too will ask you a question: answer it, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? Answer me.
MARK. They argued about this, saying:
CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCHOLARS.
If we say ‘From heaven’, he will say
‘So why did you not believe him?’
But if we say ‘Of men’...
MARK. They were afraid of the people, for everyone thought that John was a prophet.
CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCHOLARS. We do not know.
JESUS. Then I shall not tell you by what authority I do these things.
MARK. They saw the parable was aimed at them, and wanted to arrest him. But because they feared the people, they left him and went away.
They sent some Pharisees to him, and some of Herod’s men, to try to trap him by his own words. They said to him:
PHARISEES. Master, we know you are sincere, and seek no one’s favour. You teach God’s way sincerely. Is it then lawful to pay tribute to Caesar? Should we, or should we not?
JESUS. Why are you testing me? Bring me a silver coin to look at. Whose head is this, and whose inscription? PHARISEES. Caesar’s. JESUS. Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and pay God what belongs to God.
MARK. Next, Sadducees (who do not believe in an afterlife) came to him and asked:
SADDUCEE. Master, Moses wrote that if there are brothers, and one dies, leaving a wife but no child, his brother should marry the widow, to raise up an heir for his dead brother.
There were seven brothers. The first married, and died childless. The second, then the third, and in turn all the brothers married the widow, none leaving children.
Finally the wife died. At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since she was married to all seven of them?
JESUS. You are so mistaken! You know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. When they rise from death, men and women do not marry, but are like angels.
As for rising from death, have you not read how, from the burning bush, God said to Moses: *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?* He is God of the living, not the dead. You are far from the truth!
MARK. One of the scholars, hearing the debate, and knowing that Jesus had answered well, asked him:
SCHOLAR. Which is the first commandment of all?
JESUS. The first commandment is: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.*
That is the first commandment.
The second is like it: *You must love your neighbour as yourself.** There is no other commandment greater than these.
SCHOLAR. Indeed, Master. Truly, there is one God, and no other, and to love him with all one’s heart, mind, soul and strength, and one’s neighbour as oneself — that is better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.
JESUS. You are not far from the kingdom of God.
FINIS
There came to him the Pharisees and some scholars from Jerusalem. They found fault with Jesus’ disciples who were eating with unwashed hands.
The Pharisees and scholars asked him:
PHARISEES. Why don’t your disciples obey the tradition, but eat with unwashed hands?
JESUS. How right Isaiah was, to say of you hypocrites: *They honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is vain, for they teach only the commandments of men.*
You put human custom before God’s laws, with the washing of pots and cups, and many other such practices.
MARK. Another time he called people to him and said:
JESUS. Hear and understand, all of you. Nothing can defile a man from outside, for defilement comes from within.
When he had gone back indoors, his disciples asked about the parable, and he said to them:
JESUS. Are you dull-witted too? Do you not see that anything entering a man from outside cannot defile him? But what comes out of a man defiles him.
For from within the heart of man come evil thoughts, adultery, fornication, murder, theft, greed, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, the evil eye, blasphemy, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and defile a man.
MARK. He began to speak to them in parables. JESUS. A man planted a vineyard, hedged it round, dug a place for a winepress, built a watchtower, then leased it to vine-growers and went away. In due course he sent a servant there to collect his share of the crop.
They seized him, beat him, and sent him off empty-handed. The owner sent another servant. They stoned him, wounded him and sent him off humiliated.
He sent another, that one they killed; and many others were beaten or killed.
Lastly, he sent his beloved only son, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’
But the vine-growers said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Let’s kill him, and then the inheritance will be ours.’ And they seized him, killed him, and threw his body out of the vineyard.
What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy those growers, and give the vineyard to other people.
Have you not read in scripture: *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes?*