

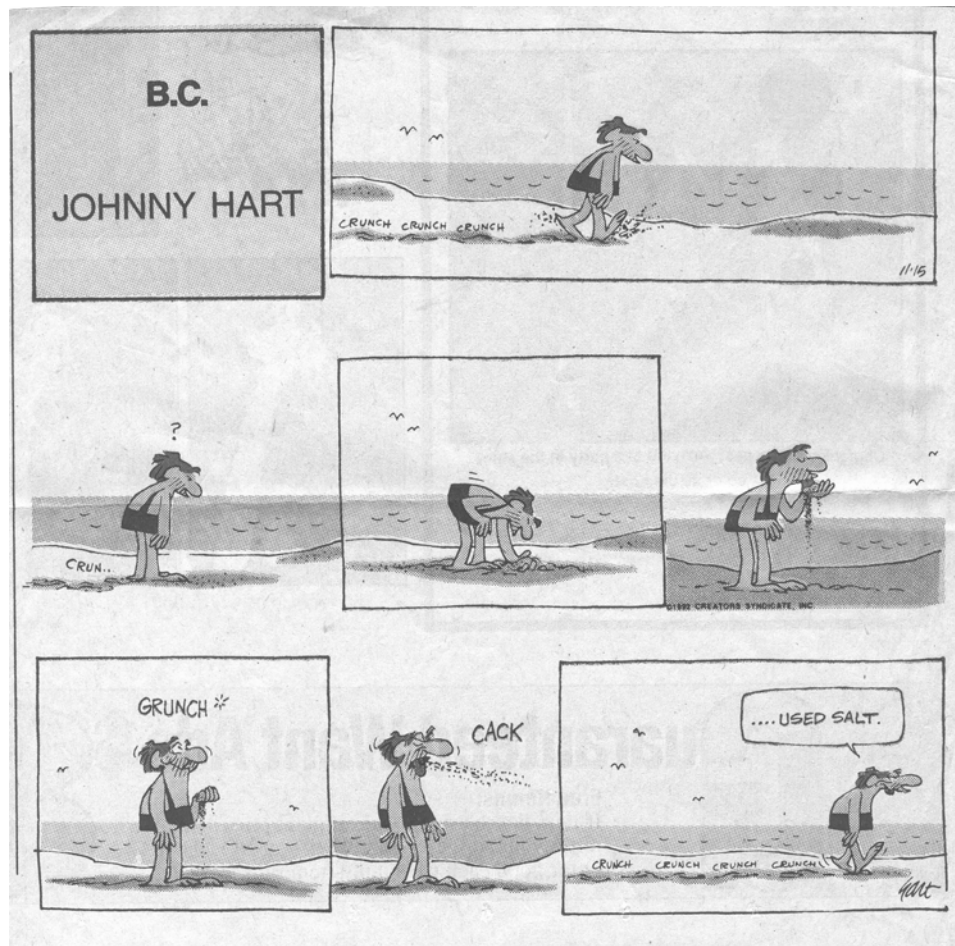
MARK 9:35-10:12

Salt, marriage, spiritual amputation, etc.

- Vv. 9:38-50 are a compilation of sayings that have been condensed into one passage, hence their somewhat disjointed character.
- 1. *Read 9:38-31.* Compare the passage of the exorcist with Numbers 11:24-30, particularly in Joshua's and Jesus' reactions.
- 2. Do Mark 9:40 and Matt 12:30 contradict each other? Explain how the two relate.
- Note: tying a millstone around a person's neck and drowning him was a form of capital punishment in both Rome and Palestine.
- 3. *Read 9:42-48.* In v. 42, who are the "little ones"?
- 4. In order to better articulate Jesus' point in v. 42, what would the (or an) *opposite* of Jesus' statement be?
 - Fun Fact: Shortly after the publication of William Tyndale's English New Testament, the attempt to restrict its circulation was defended on the ground that the simple reader might mistakenly take such language literally and 'pluck out his eyes, and so the whole realm will be full of blind men, to the great decay of the nation and the manifest loss of the King's grace...' ¹
- 5. In vv. 43-48, is Jesus using hyperbole? If so, why?
- 6. If "it is by grace that you are saved, through faith, so that no man may boast" (Eph 2:8-10), then why are our sins so dangerous? After all, doesn't God's grace bring forgiveness even for the sins of my eye, hand, etc.? What is a practical response to Jesus' words?
- 7. *Read 9:49-50.* Salt was used in ancient times (1) for seasoning, (2) as a preservative, (3) rubbed on newborn babies (Ezek 16:4), added to offerings as an indication of the covenant—a covenant sealed by salt was believed to be everlasting (Num 8:19, 2 Chr 13:5), and (4) as a way of making land unsuitable for crops (Judg 9:45). What does salt represent here or in Matt 5:13, where he refers to his disciples as the "salt of the earth"?
- 8. According to v. 50, what does Christ's saltiness look like? What effect does it have? Why did Jesus use this metaphor?
 - "Some texts of Mark append at v. 49—"everyone will be salted with fire"—a quotation from Lev 2:13, where the reference is more particularly to the cereal offering, 'and every sacrifice will be salted with salt.' This clause is probably not original in this context, but those who were responsible for inserting it (being moved to do so probably by the common theme of salt) may have intended it to mean: 'Every Christian, by enduring persecution, will be cleansed thereby and so become a more acceptable offering to God.'" ¹
 - Divorce in ancient Judaism didn't require legal action. A husband just wrote out a decree, "I release and divorce my wife this day," and gave it to his wife. If a husband initiated a divorce, he didn't need his wife's permission, whereas if she initiated, she did need his (from *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*).

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, (IVP: Downer's Grove), 1983.

- This passage is framed in the context of an inner-Pharisaic dispute between the stricter Shammaites, who held that only infidelity was grounds for divorce, and the more liberal Hillelites who, following Deut 24:1-4, taught that nearly anything that grieved the husband was a potential ground for divorce, including her not being as pretty as another woman (Mishnah *Gittin* 9:10) or speaking too loudly.² The ascetic Essenes (like John the Baptist, who complained of Herod Antipas' and Herodias' marriage) were strict on divorce, while Sadducees were most likely even more lax than the Hillelites.
9. Read 10:1-12. How does Jesus relate Gen 2:24 to divorce?
 10. Do you think Jesus was motivated in his interpretation by the desire to protect women, who were victimized by casual divorce? If so, why didn't he say so? And, if so, does that mean that in a society where men and women are on more equal economic footing divorce is okay?
 11. Jesus uses Gen to contradict Deut 24:1-4. Does the pre-fall state represents God's desire for humans?
 12. What, if anything, does this passage imply about (1) singleness and a life of celibacy; (2) homosexuality?
 13. In Matt 5:32, 19:3, 9 divorce is allowed in the case of unfaithfulness, and in 1 Cor 7:12, 15 in the case of an unbelieving spouse. Do these contradict Jesus' statements in this passage?



² Larry Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* (IVP: Downer's Grove), 2002, p. 204.