

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

“**Mark 1:1** *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*” (Mark 1:1)

INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to note that the life and ministry of Jesus on earth is recorded four times – two by Apostles (Matthew and John), and two by non-Apostles (Mark and Luke). As for this Gospel, it was written by Mark, who was neither an Apostle, nor a appointed earthly companion of the Lord Jesus – although some early teachers said he was one of the “*seventy*.” “*Mark*” was his Gentile name, and “*John*” his Hebrew name – a practice that was quite common in those days. We read one “*Joseph*,” Hebrew who was surnamed “*Barsabas*,” Gentile and “*Justus*,” Gentile who was surnamed “*Matthias*” Hebrew (Acts 1:23). Jesus “*surnamed*” people according to their character. Thus He “*surnamed*” Simon “*Peter*” (Mk 3:16), and James and John “*Boanerges*,” which is “*sons of thunder*” (Mk 3:17). Judas as “*surnamed Iscariot*,” which means traitor (Lk 22:3). The Apostles gave Jesus the surname of “*Barnabas*,” which means “*the son of consolation*” (Acts 4:36). In the case of this Gospel, the writer was Mark, that was his “*surname*,” his natural name being “*John*” (Acts 12:12,25; 15:37). After Acts 15:37, he is never referred to as “*John*,” but always as “*Mark*.”

His mother’s name was “*Mary*,” who was prominent among early believers, and in whose house the disciples were praying when Peter was delivered from prison (Acts 12:12). It is generally understood that Mark is the “*certain young man*” who fled naked the night Jesus was betrayed (Mark 14:51-49) – an event that only Mark records. It is also assumed that he is the one referred to as “*another disciple*” who followed Jesus when he was led away to the “*palace of the high priest*” (John 18:15). His mother was the sister of Barnabas (Col 4:10). Barnabas and Saul took Mark on their mission trip (Acts 12:25). He was the one who left the work in Pamphylia, and was the one over whom Barnabas and Paul separated (Acts 15:37-40). Mark did recover, and was later “*profitable*” to Paul “*for the ministry*” (2 Tim 4:11). When Paul wrote Philemon, Mark was one of his “*fellowlaborers*” (Phile 1:24). Peter refers to Mark as his “*son*,” indicating that he was converted through Peter’s ministry (1 Pet 5:13). Thus Mark was especially close to both Peter and Paul – a most unusual circumstance. It is understood by early historians that he was Peter’s scribe, and that the Gospel of Mark was written under the eye of Peter, and with his approbation. **We have in Mark an example of a young man raised in a surrounding of devotion to Christ – a home noted among holy people as a place of refuge and prayer.** It is also of interest that, like Timothy, Mark’s father is never said to be a follower of Jesus – only his mother.

“**Mark 1:1a** *The beginning . . .*”

In regards to the Gospel, there are four references to “*the beginning*.” Luke associates “*the beginning*” with the “*eyewitnesses*” of Christ’s ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension (Lk 1:2). John uses the word “*beginning*” in reference to Christ’s heavenly existence prior to coming into the world (John 1:1-2). In Luke’s record of the choosing of one to take the place of Judas, Peter

referred to the criteria as including being with the disciples *“all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning with the baptism of John, unto the same day He was taken up from us”* (Acts 1:21-22). Paul used the word *“beginning”* to refer to the first preaching of the Gospel among the Gentile nations (Phil 4:15). He also referred to Jesus Himself as *“the Beginning”* (Col 1:18). Jesus also referred to Himself as *“the Beginning”* (Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), and *“the Beginning of the creation of God”* (Rev 3:14). John also uses the word *“beginning”* as the point at which the Son of God was first revealed (John 1:1-14). He also repeatedly uses this word to identify Jesus as He who is *“from the beginning”* (1 John 2:13,14).

The point to be seen is that the era of Jesus marked the START of something: *a “beginning”* – a commencement, initiation, launching, and start. To view it from another point of view, it marked the cessation, conclusion, finish, and termination of something – a time when the inferior gave way to the superior, the shadow yielded to substance, and the preparatory conceded to the established and eternal purpose of God. The time of Jesus is the time of newness and change. It is a time of freshness. Just as *“the beginning”* of creation ended a period of darkness, chaos, and preparation (Gen 1:1-5), so the entrance of Jesus into the world brought an end to the reign of moral and spiritual darkness. A ray of glorious light penetrated into the domain of spiritual ignorance, and *“the people who sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up”* (Matt 4:16).

Just as the Lord provides a reference point for the heavens and the earth – *“the beginning”* (Gen 1:1; Heb 1:10) – so *“the day of salvation”* is noted for its *“beginning.”* The beginning of creation is referred to as *“the foundation of the world”* (Matt 13:35; John 17:24; Eph 1:4; Heb 4:3; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8). It is a point from which a valid understanding of life and its purpose proceeds. It is the point from which sound general reasoning begins. So it is with the *“great salvation”* of God. We are given a clear beginning point.

There is a point from which valid Kingdom thought proceeds – a particular time during which specific preparations had their genesis, and unparalleled light was shed upon the subject of man’s rescue from sin. It is the point at which Divine purpose began to be more precisely and exactly revealed. This point in time will clarify HOW God had purposed to bruise the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). It will illuminate precisely what was involved in blessing *“all families of the earth”* (Gen 12:3). This is the time when God will more particularly reveal what is resolved in raising a valley of dry bones (Ezek 37:4-14), turning the hearts of both fathers and children (Mal 4:5-6), giving people a new heart and spirit (Ezek 36:26), causing them to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments (Ezek 36:27).

Just as men cannot begin by ignoring the Genesis record of creation, and come to a valid knowledge about natural origins, so it is not possible to begin any other place than the Gospel, and come to proper conclusions about *“the salvation of God.”* When it comes to comprehending *“with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth all knowledge”* (Eph 3:18-19), we must *“begin”* at the right place. It is a place where we will get our spiritual bearings. It is a place where we will come to see something of the depths to which sin caused mankind to plummet. In this *“beginning,”* we will be exposed to the nature of our adversary, and will hear some exposition of his person and ways. There will be a delineation of what was involved in preparing *“the Lamb of God”* for the sacrifice He was to make, and how the adversary sought to oppose and abort that preparation. The impossibility of man saving himself will be clearly expounded and demonstrated in this *“beginning.”* The vanity of a religion in which darkness prevails will be seen. What is really required for men to be saved will be declared and illustrated by miraculous works.

It should be apparent that *“the beginning”* is not something addressed by speculation.

Revelation and understanding are imperative. Men may imagine they can entertain theories about how the universe was formed, and how life began, but there can be no speculation about spiritual beginnings. **A proper understanding of God and His salvation demands an accurate perception of how things got started** – of *“the beginning.”* The house of comprehension must be built on the proper foundation – *“the beginning.”*

“ **1b . . . of the gospel . . .** ” Other versions read, *“the good news,”* NRSV and *“the glad tidings.”* DARBY

The word **“Gospel”** means “good tidings.” THAYER or “good news.” FRIEBERG More specifically, it is the **content** of the good news – a message, or word, that is declared. That word is essentially *“good”* – i.e. generous, beneficial, pleasant, and upright. **It is “good” in both its contents and its effects.** For example, from an earthly point of view, it is possible to produce good results with something that is not pleasant: like ingesting medicine that is either bitter or offensive to the palate. Sinners also seek, what they conceive to be, good effects by wicked means, like taking drugs or consuming liquor.

The *“Gospel,”* however, is a message that is itself *“good,”* which also presumes that it is relevant. For those who recognize it as Gospel, there is nothing offensive about it. It fulfills the proverb of Solomon concerning a good word: *“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country”* (Prov 25:25). Again he wrote, *“a good report maketh the bones fat,”* producing inward health and optimism, brightness and happiness (Prov 25:25). Speaking of the powerful effects of good news upon those who heard it, Isaiah prophesied, *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”* (Is 52:7). Paul confirmed this had reference to the Gospel of Christ (Rom 10:12-15). Nahum also spoke of *“the feet of him who bringeth good tidings”* (Nah 1:15). In the case of the Gospel, the *“good tidings”* both contains and brings *“great joy”* (Luke 2:10).

“The Gospel” is a message – more specifically news, or tidings, containing intelligent substance. It is the announcement of what IS, not what should be! It declares something that has either taken place already, or has already been determined by a Sovereign God. It is news that cannot be effectively changed or altered. It is a message that sheds refreshing light on a situation, brings hope of a successful resolution, and anchors one to reality.

The Law of God was good and holy, but it was not Gospel. It announced death and condemnation, not life and justification. The Gospel has more to do with Divine accomplishment and hope, than of the diagnosis of humanity and the declaration of requirements. The Law declared what men ought to do, then condemned them for not doing it (Rom 3:19). The Gospel announces what God has done, then justifies those who believe it (Acts 13:39).

The word *“Gospel”* is used in a variety of ways (none of them are found in Genesis through Malachi). The *“gospel of the kingdom”* is the announcement – a message – of an *“everlasting kingdom”* that dominates all others (Matt 4:23; Mk 1:15). The *“gospel of the grace of God”* is a word that declares Divine favor, preference, and a willingness to bless (Acts 20:24). The *“gospel of God”* is the good news of a satisfied and blessed, or happy, God (Isa 53:11; 1 Tim 1:11). The *“gospel of your salvation”* is a word that declares that God has successfully dealt with sin, making full provision for the reconciliation of sinners (Eph 1:13). The *“gospel of peace”* is the announcement that peace has been made, and the issues caused by sin resolved (Eph 6:15). The *“glorious gospel of the blessed God”* is the report that something has been accomplished in the

behalf of fallen humanity that has pleased and blessed God Himself (1 Tim 1:11).

In each of these instances, as well as the text before us, “*gospel*” refers to an intelligent and uplifting message. It is not a word about obligation, but one of provision. It is the report of something that God has accomplished, through which He works and blesses. It is not a word of human speculation or possibilities, but of an effective and unalterable achievement.

A Divine message is at the core of all valid kingdom labors. That message is “*the Gospel.*” Mark describes his sixteen chapters, and over 16,000 words, as “*the beginning of the gospel . . .*” His book contains commandments, but it is essentially a message. It includes certain commissions, but it is fundamentally a report. He will not hesitate to affirm requirements made by the Lord Jesus, but primarily his book is an announcement.

One of the great failings of the church of our time is its failure to have a message. This is precisely why “how-to” books, opinionated writings, and religious philosophy are so prominent in our country. Endless speculations and human interpretations are the direct result of **not** having a message – a powerful announcement or report through which the God of heaven effectively works. Until the church, which is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15), takes up “*the Gospel*” as its fundamental and central word, it will remain weak and powerless. There is no other message through which salvation is realized (Rom 1:16).

“1c . . . of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Although we read of “*the gospel of God,*” “*the gospel of the kingdom,*” “*the gospel of peace,*” “*the gospel of the grace of God,*” and “*the gospel of your salvation,*” at its very heart, the Gospel is “*the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*” He is the One who is bringing us to God (1 Pet 3:18). He is the One who is administering “*the Kingdom*” (Eph 5:5; 2 Pet 1:11). He is the One who has “*made peace*” (Col 1:20). He is the One through whom grace is realized (2 Cor 13:14). He is the “*Captain*” of salvation (Heb 2:10). **It is folly to attempt to speak or think about God independently of His Son, Christ Jesus .** There is no valid thought concerning the kingdom of God that is not directly related to Jesus Christ. The peace of God becomes wholly irrelevant if it is not seen within the context of the Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus, the grace of God is beyond our reach, and can in no way be comprehended. There simply is no such thing as “*your salvation*” apart from the Son of God. In every way, whether by declaration, exposition, or personal perception, the Gospel concerns “*Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*”

The record of Christ’s earthly ministry is critical to an understanding of His Person. Until His ministry began at the age of thirty, His life was a holy preparation, given to growing in favor with both God and man (Lk 2:52). During His ministry, He prepared Himself for the real work He came to do – laying down His life and taking it up again (Lk 10:17-18). It was also a time when He chose twelve men “*that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach*” (Mk 3:14). The words He spoke were preparatory for the salvation He would effect, and therefore He only spoke only what His Father “*taught*” Him (John 8:28), and what He had “*seen with*” His Father (John 8:38).

Mark is very specific about how he refers to the Savior – the Substance of the Gospel. He does not call Him “*Mary’s son*” – a way in which His peers referred to Him (Matt 13:55; Mk 6:3). He does not refer to Him as a “*great teacher,*” or “*rabbi*” – a way in which Nicodemus referred to Him (John 3:2), as well as others (John 1:38,49; 6:25). He does not refer to him as a “*miracle worker*” – a view the Pharisees had of Him (John 11:47). He does not even refer to Him as one who possessed a great love for the people – although He was also seen by others in this manner (John

11:36).

To be sure, Jesus, in a very real way, was all of the above. However, that is not how He was **primarily** known. **There must come a point in each person's life where the Lord Jesus is seen in His primary and God-commissioned role.** Mark begins by focusing on the basic and foundational perception of the Savior, and it is remarkably thorough.

“JESUS.” The word “*Jesus*” refers to His humanity. That was His “*name*” among men, and was Divinely given: “*and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins*” (Matt 1:21). The name “*Jesus*” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name “*Joshua*.” It means “*Jehovah is salvation*.” Unlike Joshua, who successfully led the people into Canaan, Jesus saves “*His people from their sins*.”

The humanity of Jesus is critical to our salvation. Just as humanity fell through a man, so the reclamation had to come through a man (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:21). In other words, the Savior had to partake of “*flesh and blood*” (Heb 2:14). It was imperative that a MAN defeat the devil (Heb 2:14), spoil principalities and powers (Col 2:15), take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and make peace with God (Col 1:20).

“CHRIST.” “*Christ*” means “*anointed one*,” and accents the fact that He was chosen and commissioned by God to accomplish His great salvation (Isa 42:1; 1 Pet 2:4). He is the One to whom God gave “*all things*” (John 3:35). He is the One through whom God has chosen to speak (Heb 1:2). He is the One to whom “*all power in heaven and earth*” has been given (Matt 28:18; 1 Pet 3:22). He is the solitary One charged with the responsibility of bringing the sons to glory (Heb 2:10) – the One who ever lives to intercede for them (Heb 7:25).

“THE SON OF GOD.” This speaks of Christ's origin and holy association with the Living God. He is the “*only begotten of the Father*” (John 1:14), and the One in whom it has pleased God for “*all fulness*” to dwell (Col 1:19; 2:9). He is the “*express image*” of God (Heb 1:3), and is the only One through whom God can be perceived, understood, or believed in (Acts 13:39; 1 Pet 1:21). Only the Son truly knows the Father (Matt 11:27; Lk 10:22), and therefore only He can make the Father known and bring us to Him (1 Pet 3:18).

From the heavenly viewpoint, the Gospel is “*the record that God gave of His Son*.” The eternal destiny of men hinges upon their belief of that record (1 John 5:10). Because that record is said to be “*that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*” (1 John 5:11), in writing of “*the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*,” Mark is expounding how the foundation of salvation was implemented.

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Lesson 2

“ Mark 1:2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.” (Mark 1:2-3)

INTRODUCTION

In Mark's "beginning," the emphasis on Divinity is apparent: "**My Messenger . . . Thy face . . . Thy way . . . Before Thee . . . the Lord . . . His paths.**" The message of Christ – or "*the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*" verse 1 – is a precious gem placed within the setting of God's Person and purpose. As significant as the need of man is, it is not a suitable environment for "*the Gospel of Christ.*" The Savior is "*the Christ of God*" (Luke 9:20), and "*the Lord's Christ*" (Luke 2:26). He is therefore presented within the context of God Himself and what He has purposed. That purpose will define human need. If we begin with human need and proceed to Christ, we will not make a mental room or a place in our hearts that is large enough for Jesus. As great as it may appear, the perimeter of human need is too small. The "*eternal purpose*" of God Himself has a greater scope. It is more lofty, more filled with goodness, and larger in its implications. Therefore, at the very beginning of his Gospel, Mark will focus our thoughts upon what God is intending to do. He not only sent the Savior into the world, He sent a special messenger before Him to prepare the way for Him.

We must never lose sight of the purpose of the Gospel: to make people aware of Divine intent and provision. The Savior was not requested by men, but purposed and sent by the Creator of men. He was not tailored to meet what men wanted, but to supply their primary need as defined by God Himself. I do not believe we will ever arrive at a point in this world, or the world to come, when the luster of that truth will dim.

“ Mark 1:2a As it is written in the prophets . . .” Later versions read, "*It is written in Isaiah the prophet.*" This reading is based upon Western and Neutral classes of manuscripts. It is not, however, an altogether proper translation, for the quotation is found in both Isaiah and Malachi. I will therefore take the words "*prophets*" to be a proper one, and in harmony with the remainder of Scripture. Mark is not emphasizing WHO did the writing – although that may be of interest to the academical reader. He is rather pointing to the general source of the preparatory statements concerning the Savior – "*the prophets.*"

IT IS WRITTEN. God has placed a special emphasis on things that are "*written*" – things He has moved men to write through His Holy Spirit. Thus Peter wrote, "*for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet 1:21). The words of the prophets were also written. God commanded Moses to "*write*" the words given to him (Ex 17:14). Isaiah was told to write the words given to him, putting them in a book (Isa 30:8). Jeremiah was told the same thing (Jer 30:2; 36:2). For that matter, God Himself

“wrote” the words of the first covenant, the Ten Commandments, on tables of stone (Ex 34:28).

The phrase “*It is written*” occurs over eighty times in Scripture: seventeen in Genesis through Malachi, twenty-six in the Gospels, four in Acts, and thirty-three in the Epistles. It is the **writing** of God’s Word that sets it apart from other words. Scripture is never updated, revised, or abrogated. The various books that were added after Moses’s writings blended perfectly with what He said. They developed a purpose that was introduced by Moses, confirming that from creation until the time when the present heavens and earth are removed, a single purpose has driven all of God’s dealings with men.

In view of these things, the people of God are to be “people of the book.” They have advanced no more than their understanding of the Scriptures. **Their grasp of what is written forms a moral and spiritual border beyond which they cannot proceed.** This accounts for some of the seeming moral deficiencies of the patriarchs of old. The limitation of the God’s revelation in Scripture formed a restriction in the manner in which life was lived.

However, when the “*writings*” given to men have been thorough, and when they reveal and expound the workings of the Lord, there is no longer any viable reason for moral and spiritual deficiency. Thus we read, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is enough to say at this point, that the greatest advantage is found in writings that concern the greatest Person, the greatest purpose, and the greatest work.

IN THE PROPHETS. The prophets are pivotal in God’s dealings with men. They are necessary to a proper understanding of the Messiah, His accomplishments, and His present ministry. Mark will deal with their word concerning the world’s preparation for the coming Savior.

Peter, whom some say dictated the book of Mark, said of the Prophets, “*Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you*” (1 Pet 1:10). Their words were introductory, yet were foundational. Paul says the “*righteousness of God*” was “*witnessed*” by the prophets (Rom 3:21). He also affirms that the “*mystery*” of redemption is manifested “*by the Scriptures of the prophets*” (Rom 16:26). Prior to Christ, “*the prophets*” were the ones through whom God “*spoke*” (Heb 1:1). The salvation that is affirmed in the Gospel and expounded in the “*Apostles doctrine,*” was “*promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scripture*” (Rom 1:2). They are included in the foundation upon which the church is being built (Eph 2:20-21).

Thus, when Mark begins his Gospel by a reference to “*the prophets,*” he is speaking in perfect harmony with the thrust of Divine revelation. This is, of course, foreign to much that is being said of Jesus in our time. The “*Jesus*” that is being declared to many is really “*another Jesus,*” which was not preached by the Apostles (2 Cor 11:4). It is a Jesus that was not made known by the holy prophets, who wrote of “*the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow*” (1 Pet 1:11).

If it is true that Jesus is the fulfillment of what Moses and the prophets said would come (Acts 26:22), then an ignorance of the prophets circumscribes what can be known of Jesus – and knowing Christ is everything (Phil 3:10). The text before us will confirm this to be the truth. Behold with what forethought the Spirit moved people to speak of the Lord Jesus. He was carefully placed within the framework of the words of the holy prophets.

“ **2b . . . Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before**

Thee.”

These words are taken from Malachi 3:1: “*Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts*” (Mal 3:1). This was a messenger who would pave the way for the coming of “*the Messenger of the covenant*” – the One through whom the New Covenant would be ratified, declared, and mediated (Matt 26:28; Luke 4:18-19; Heb 13:20,24).

This prophecy paralleled the manner in which God led Israel into Canaan: “*Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared*” (Ex 23:20). In Malachi’s prophecy, the one preparing the way would be a man – a holy man, who himself was from the “*wilderness.*”

I SEND. The “*messenger*” of reference, as Mark will confirm, was John the Baptist, who was, in the flesh, a cousin to Jesus, and was six months older than the Savior (Lk 1:36). John says of him, “*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John*” (John 1:6).

John was a miraculous child, being an answer to prayer. His parents were Zacharias and Elizabeth, of whom it is said, “*And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*” (Luke 1:6). Zacharias was a priest, of the ancient course of Abijah (Lk 1:5; 1 Chron 24:10). Elizabeth was “*of the daughters of Aaron.*” From the standpoint of nature, “*they had no child because that Elizabeth was barren.*” One further complication – “*they both were now well stricken in years*” (Lk 1:7).

We learn from Luke that Zacharias and Elizabeth had been praying for a child. Now, being very aged, it appeared as though their prayers would not be answered. However, one day, while Zacharias was “*executing the priest’s office before the Lord,*” the angel Gabriel appeared to him, declaring that their prayer had been heard. Elizabeth would bear a son, and his name would be called “*John*” – ‘*Jehovah is a gracious Giver.*”

John would be no ordinary son. He would be “*great in the eyes of the Lord,*” would “*drink neither wine nor strong drink,*” and would be “*filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb*” (Lk 1:15). He would turn “*many of the children of Israel*” to the Lord, and would go before the Lord “*in the spirit and power of Elijah*” (Lk 1:17). The Divine explanation of this marvelous set of circumstances is simply this: “***I will send.***”

The way for Jesus would **not** be prepared by a former profligate. It would **not** be readied by someone who was **not** holy, or was **not** filled with the Spirit. It would **not** be prepared by someone who was powerless and unacquainted with the ways of the Lord.

MY MESSENGER. John the Baptist was a man with a message: God’s “*messenger.*” He was not a miracle worker like Elijah, for it is written, “*John did no miracle*” (John 10:11). His power was in his word – the message that He declared. He was, as Scripture affirms, “*the prophet of the Highest*” (Lk 1:76).

THY FACE. Malachi’s prophecy does not contain the words “*before Thy face.*” Malachi reads “*before Me.*” Mark is giving **the sense** of the text, just as Jesus did during His ministry, when He said of John the Baptist, “*For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee*” (Matt 11:10).

The meaning is this: before the fulness of God Himself (“*before Me*”) could be seen in

the bodily presence of Jesus (“*Thy face*”), God would send a man with a clear and necessary word. The following phrase declares why this would be done.

HE SHALL PREPARE THY WAY. This is the Father speaking with the pre-incarnate Word: “*I send My messenger before Your face, who will make ready Your way.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew reads, “*who will prepare Your way before You*” NKJV (Matt 11:10). The messenger, John the Baptist, would prepare an environment into which Jesus could profitably enter. He would do what Isaiah said must be done: “*Build up, build up, prepare the way, Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people*” NASB (Isa 57:14). He would make people aware of the darkness in which they were sitting (Matt 4:16). He would “*make straight the way of the Lord*” (John 1:23) so He could proceed directly to His work, and begin announcing His mission.

John the Baptist prepared the conscience of the people to receive Jesus. He provided a context in which a Savior could work, and a surrounding in which the word of salvation could be welcomed.

This “*messenger*” was a line of demarcation, standing between the Law and the prophets (which were “*until John*” – Matt 11:13) and the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

“**3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.**” This prophecy was given by Isaiah: “*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God*” (Isa 40:3).

THE VOICE. The word “*voice*” means “the sound of uttered words.” It also implies the lifting up the voice, so as to be the better heard. This is the kind of “*voice*” of which Isaiah prophesied: “*O lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid*” (Isa 40:9).

Here a man who was noted for what he said. Matthew says of John the Baptist, “*For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one . . .*” (Mat 3:3). Luke says the same (Lk 3:4). When John himself was asked concerning his identity, he answered “*I am not the Christ.*” When asked if he was Elijah (Mal 4:5), he answered, “*I am not.*” When asked, “*Art thou that prophet?*” (Deut 18:15-18), he answered “*No*” (John 1:20-22). He then confessed, “***I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias***” (John 1:23).

CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS. John began preaching “in the wilderness” – a barren and desolate place: “*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea*” (Matt 3:1). Jesus spoke of those who went out to see John the Baptist: “*Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?*” (Matt 11:7). The people had to inconvenience themselves to hear John speak, but if they were serious about the Lord, they were not disappointed. An area that was physically a place of disadvantage was suddenly turned into a place of eternal advantage. There was a sense in which the preaching of John fulfilled the word of Isaiah: “*for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert*” (Isa 35:6).

PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD. John was a man who, with words, made “*straight in the desert a highway for our God*” (Isa 40:3). He was used to prepare an environment in which God could work – a spiritual environment in which the redemptive purpose of God would be carried out.

The “*way of the Lord,*” or “*highway for our God,*” is the subject of reference in Isaiah 35:8: “***And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean***”

shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa 35:8). It was a Divinely appointed means that enabled men to approach unto God after a long and dreary season. The details of this "*beginning*" will be covered in verse four and following.

MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. Other versions read , "*make straight paths for Him,*" NIV "*make a straight road for Him,*" NLT and "*everyone must straighten out his life to be ready for the Lord's arrival.*" LIVING John's purpose was to clear the obstacles before the Lord, removing hindrances that had long dominated the people. Isaiah prophesied of this activity: "*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain*" (Isa 40:4). John the Baptist had a ministry similar to that of the prophet Jeremiah: "*See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant*" (Jer 1:10). He removed the traditional stubble that had accumulated, so that men's hearts could once again be touched – made ready for the coming Savior.

John did not come in the flowing robes of the Pharisees, or in the scholarly manner of the Scribes. He did not preach in the Temple, or attend the local synagogues. His ministry called for a separation from lifeless tradition and monotonous routine.

A TIME FOR A NEW BEGINNING. The time for a new beginning had arrived – called "*the fulness of the time*" (Gal 4:4). It was the time to separate from the old order, and begin to prepare for the new one. The time for "*a new thing*" had arrived (Isa 43:19), and John was the harbinger, or herald, of that time.

Here was a classic example of a principle enunciated by Amos, former "*herdman*" of Tekoa, and "*gatherer of sycamore fruit*" (Amos 1:1; 7:14). "*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets*" (Amos 3:7). The Savior of the world was about to be revealed, and God prepared the people for it by sending John the Baptist. He was a holy man, born of holy parents, and raised in a holy manner. He was not tainted with the ways of the world, did not come in the garb of stilted religion, and required that the people come to him. That is how "*the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,*" got started: "*the **beginning** of the Gospel . . .*"

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 3

“ Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey.” (Mark 1:4-6)

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel begins with the appointed preparation for the coming Savior. The preparation would be accomplished by a man – a holy man. He would deliver a message that was appropriate to making a people ready for the Lord. The world is likened to a “*field*” in which good seed is sown (Matt 13:38). However, before the seed is sown, the field must be made ready. This is what John was sent to do. Wherever there are circumstances that parallel those of John the Baptist’s time, an example of what is required is seen in his ministry. In John we also have a sterling example of the kind of person that will be used by God to address the situation. It will not be a mere academic scholar, or a person who caters to the whims of the people. It will not be through one who becomes absorbed into the culture, so that he looks, speaks, and acts, like all the other people.

Here is a part of the Gospel that has been greatly neglected in our time – the preparation of a people for the Lord. In this text, our attention will be focused on John the Baptist – the one who prepared the way for the Lord, and was used to create a proper environment into which the Redeemer could come. When God views the human race, this is a man who stands out among all others. He is a man noted for being filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb, and known for a wholly separated and godly life.

“ Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

How did John prepare the way of the Lord? – for he was “*the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!*” (Matt 3:3). How were the paths “*made straight?*” How did he “*make ready a people prepared for the Lord?*” (Luke 1:17). That is what Mark will now declare. He will show that John primarily made people conscious of the Lord and of their need to prepare for His Christ. He did not come to address the political or social issues of the day. He was not the kind of person the people demanded. His was a higher mission, and he was faithful to fulfill his ministry.

JOHN DID BAPTIZE IN THE WILDERNESS. The NIV read, “*And so John came . . .*” – that is, he came as “*the voice of one crying in the wilderness.*” Matthew reads, “*in those days came John the Baptist*” (Matt 3:1). Mark traces “*the beginning*” of the Gospel to the time when

John began preaching. He is the only Gospel writer that makes this precise association. Others might see this “*beginning*” as the **announcement** of the coming birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-18). Still other may associate it with the actual **birth of the Messiah** (Matt 1:18-25). A case may also be made for the Gospel beginning with the **baptism of Jesus**, when he was anointed with the Spirit and with power (Mk 1:10; Matt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21-22; John 1:32-34).

A special point is made of the fact that John “*did baptize.*” The Gospel of John reads, “*And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized*” (John 3:23). John personally testifies concerning the reason why he came baptizing. “*And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water . . . And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*” (John 1:31-33).

The primary reason for John baptizing, therefore, was that this was the means by which God would reveal His Son, the Savior of the world. Baptism was the door, so to speak, through which the Son of God would be revealed to men, and enter into His ministry. The secondary reason was the culturing of a people to receive the Christ.

The “*wilderness of Judea*” (Matt 3:1), in which John was baptizing, was an outward environment that reflected the spiritual surroundings of the time. Jerusalem and the surrounding area was an arid spiritual desert, desolate and spiritually impoverished. People were actually sitting in “*darkness,*” and were occupying “*the region and shadow of death*” (Matt 4:16). This area was the “*dry ground*” of which Isaiah spoke when he wrote of the coming Savior, “*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground*” (Isa 53:2). Thus John began his ministry in a place that paralleled the miserable moral and spiritual condition of the people. He was, in fact, breaking up “*the fallow ground,*” so that the Gospel seed did not fall “*among thorns*” (Jer 4:3; Hos 10:12).

PREACHING THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE. Luke reads, “*Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness*” (Luke 3:2). John was thirty years old when he began his ministry. It was six months before Jesus was revealed, who was Himself “*thirty years of age*” (Luke 3:23). When Mary was told she would give birth to the Son of God, Elizabeth, John’s mother, was in the “*six month*” of her pregnancy (Lk 1:26,36). He was, therefore, six months older than the One he came to announce.

We do not know much of John’s life prior to when he began preaching “*the baptism of repentance.*” His first thirty years are referred to in this way: “*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel*” (Luke 1:80). Thus John was separate from defiling influences until “*his manifestation to Israel.*” NKJV The notion, therefore, that servants of God must first mingle with those to whom they minister was not embraced by John. His ministry required a separation from the world.

Notice, John “*preached the baptism of repentance.*” Luke says John came “*preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*” (Lk 3:3). Peter said that “*preaching peace by Jesus Christ*” began “*after the baptism which John preached*” (Acts 10:36). Paul speaks of this “*preaching*” with even more precision. “*John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*” (Acts 19:4). John’s preaching, therefore, focused on the One who would come after him – Jesus.

Therefore, John's preaching informed people of the necessity of repentance, the means by which it was expressed (baptism), and the objective of that baptism (the remission of sins). This was the way in which he prepared the way of the Lord, making ready a people for the Lord. In other words, preparing the people for the Savior involved becoming keenly aware of their need of a Savior. People who have lost a sense of sin cannot possibly see the need for a Savior.

“ 5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.”

THERE WENT OUT UNTO HIM. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, but no person was sent to prepare the way for him! Among men, there was no survey that took place in order to prepare the way for John. He did not reserve a Temple court, or a place near one of the pools, in which to hold meetings. If you wanted to hear John, you had to leave the normalities of life and go where he was dwelling. No herald was sent to summon the crowds to him. The people came to John in the manner of which Hosea spoke, *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her”* (Hosea 2:14). Later Hosea accounted for a change that would be found in Israel: *“I drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love”* (Hos 11:4). Through Jeremiah God testified to the people, *“therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee”* (Jer 31:3). Solomon referred to such a drawing when he wrote, *“Draw me, we will run after thee”* (Song of Sol 1:4). Jesus spoke of the Father drawing people to Him (John 6:44). He also affirmed that if He was *“lifted up from the earth”* in death, He would *“draw all men”* unto Himself (John 12:32).

There is such a thing as an inner compulsion that drives a person to the Lord, or to a messenger of the Lord. God, who can turn the heart of a king, can cause such a thing to happen (Prov 21:1). God can cause His people to be *“pitied”* by ruthless captors (Psa 106:46). He can even turn the hearts of enemies *“to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants”* (Psa 105:25). Oh, how there needs to be a greater sense of the Lord's drawing power – inclining the hearts of men!

If men doubt that such a thing is possible, we have the example of John the Baptist, to whom the people came. *“THEY went out to him!”* There is only one possible way to account for this: it was of the Lord. At this beginning John was not a public figure. The people were sitting in *“gross darkness”* (Isa 60:2), and lifeless and vain religion dominated the people. Yet God worked!

ALL THE LAND OF JUDAEA. *“ And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem .”* Matthew reads, *“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan”* (Matt 3:5). The people poured out of Jerusalem, came from throughout Judaea, and all *“the district around Jordan.”* NASB They went out to hear a new kind of preacher, with a new doctrine, who practiced a new ordinance.

There was a certain freshness to John's preaching that was not found in the learned dissertations of the Pharisees and the detailing of the Law by the Lawyers. There is no doubt that John's message actually clashed with what the people were used to hearing. He shined the light in neglected areas, and spoke of things that were not common.

Later, when Jesus was preaching, He reminded the people of the unusual nature of John the Baptist – something they all had realized. *“What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold,*

they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet" (Mat 11:7-9).

WERE ALL BAPTIZED OF HIM. There were some people whom John did **not** baptize. When confronting "*many of the Pharisees and Sadducees*" who came to his baptism," John shouted out to them, "*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" He challenged them to "*bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance*" NASB (Matt 3:7-8). It is said of these people, "*But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him*" (Luke 7:30). They are not included in the "*all*" of this verse. They were outsiders, and are treated as such by the Holy Spirit.

It is said of those who responded in faith to John's preaching, "*And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John*" (Luke 7:29). Everyone else, as Paul would say it, "*not a Jew*" (Rom 2:28).

CONFESSING THEIR SINS. Here we see a new Divine thrust among men. The confession of sin on a large scale was exceedingly rare prior to John – and never of such an order as this. Adam and Eve never did say "*We have sinned.*" Cain did not say "*I have sinned.*" The first person of record to acknowledge personal sin was Pharaoh, and he did not do it out of true repentance (Ex 9:27). When Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses, and Miriam was stricken with leprosy, Aaron cried out "*we have sinned*" (Num 12:11). When God sent fiery serpents among the people, they rushed to Moses confessing, "*we have sinned*" (Num 21:7). Several other such confessions are recorded (Judges 10:10; 1 Sam 12:10). All of these confessions were made under the pain of the chastening of the Lord.

However, this is not the manner of confession that attended the baptism of John's hearers. They were not being chastened. No fiery serpents had been sent among them. Rather, they were touched with a message of a coming Savior, and of the time when He would "*thoroughly purge His floor*" (Matt 3:12). John's preaching moved the people to repent.

" 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey."

Jesus said John was **not** a "*man clothed in soft raiment,*" or "*fine clothes*" NIV (Matt 11:8). "*Soft clothes*" are luxuriously comfortable clothes as compared with the coarse and scratchy clothing of the poor. In this we see a most vivid picture of the incompatibility of a convenience-centered approach with the work of the Lord. While convenience is a manner that has been exalted to the position of an idol in our time, it has no genuine place when it comes to the work of the Lord. While it is not proper to make laws concerning the general apparel of the people of God, it is in order to adopt a posture in which one can more readily "*keep under*" the body, and "*bring it into subjection*" (1 Cor 9:27).

CLOTHED WITH CAMEL'S HAIR. This garment was not of spun camel's hair, which would have been considered "*soft*" or "*fine clothing.*" It rather appears be clothing made of the camel's skin, with the hair upon it, or a "*rough garment*" (Zech 13:4) made of unsoftened camel's hair. Such humble attire did not draw undue attention to John himself. Also, he had been living "*in the deserts till the day of his showing,*" and "*soft clothing*" certainly was not appropriate to such a dwelling place.

The clothing of John matched the doctrine that he preached – repentance and a certain disdain for then world. He so attired himself as not to clash with what he preached.

It ought to be noted that he who came “*in the spirit and power of Elijah*” was attired in much the same way as that prophet. It is said of Elijah, “*He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins*” (2 Kgs 1:8). The phrase “*hairy man*” probably referred to his clothing, as the NIV indicates: “*He was a man with a garment of hair.*”

A GIRDLE OF SKIN ABOUT HIS LOINS. A “*girdle*” corresponds to our belt. As a practical help, it was used to gather loose clothing about the waste, so as to make for more free movement. Jeremiah wore a “*linen girdle*” (Jer 13:1). Soldiers held their armor together with a “*girdle*” (Isa 5:27). The point here is that John was modestly and practically attired. He was not a man of luxury and fair clothing. His outward appearance matched his spiritual and mental posture – “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober*” (1 Pet 1:13). He was a man of inner and spiritual focus and discipline.

HE DID EAT LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY. Like Daniel and his three colleagues, John did not have a rich diet. It was nutritious and well adapted to his manner of life, but totally unappealing to those who were basically of this world. According to the Mosaic law, locusts were lawful to be eaten. “*Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.*” (Lev 11:22). These clean insects fell into the approved category of a flying thing “*which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth*” (Lev 11:22).

Thus John’s fleshly diet paralleled his character. Locusts depicted a life of contemplation that was able to leap, as it were, above the earth. His thoughts were not nailed to the world. Honey is also set forth as a type of spiritual richness and satisfaction. Thus the Lord spoke of making Israel “*suck honey out of the rock*” (Deut 32:13). The Savior is depicted by Isaiah as eating “*butter and honey*” in order “*that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good*” (Isa 7:15). The satisfactory ingestion of the Word of God is also referred to as being “*in my mouth as honey for sweetness*” (Ezek 3:3).

Thus everything about John – his habitat, clothing, and diet – reflected the nature of his ministry. While he was “*in the wilderness,*” separated from the world in body, in manners, and in thought, it is written of him, “*the word of God came to John the son of Zecharias **in the wilderness***” (Lk 3:2). It was a word that he was to preach “*in the spirit and power of Elijah.*” There was to be no compromise of his message, no watering down of its contents. He was preparing the way of the Lord, making the way straight for the Messiah to come to men, and for men to come to Him. Such a message cannot be delivered by one who is wed to the very domain which men are commanded to leave.

The way to Jesus is still set forth by men and women who are themselves separated from the world, and who do not feed upon its husks. While it is true that a great deal of professional religion is found within spiritual Babylon – religion that has a certain appeal to those who are “*carnally minded*” Rom 8:6) – let it be clear that no such approach can be found in the kingdom of Christ. If we are introduced to Jesus by separation from the world and contrition for sin, it is certain that we cannot maintain an association with Him where such qualities are not found. God be praised for the example of John the Baptist!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 4

“Mark 1:7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” (Mark 1:7-8)

INTRODUCTION

We know much of a person by what he preaches, what he thinks of Jesus, and what he thinks of himself. This text will provide some insights concerning John in these areas. John the Baptist is a key figure in history, yet he is not the focus of attention among worldly historians. The Britannica Encyclopedia, for example, lists fifteen historical figures with the name “*John*.” It does **not** have an entry for John the Baptist. Yet, according to holy men of God, he was a pivotal figure in God’s great salvation: **Isaiah** (Isa 40:3), **Malachi** (Mal 4:5-6), **Matthew** (Matt 3:1-6,11-16; 4:12; 14:1-12), **Mark** (Mk 1:2-11; 6:14-29), **Luke** (Lk 1:11-12; 3:1-2; 7:33-35), **Jesus** (Matt 11:4-15; 21:32; Mk 11:30-32, Lk 7:22-28), **the disciples** (Lk 11:1), **the scribes and Pharisees** (Lk 5:33-35; 20:6), and **Paul** (Acts 13:24-25; 19:4). McClintok and Strong’s Encyclopedia of Bible Knowledge has twelve pages on John the Baptist.

John was not noted for the longevity of his ministry, like Moses, David, Daniel, Hosea, Peter, and Paul. Historians tell us John was beheaded by Herod approximately one and a half years after he began preaching in the wilderness. The foundational part of his ministry lasted six months – until Jesus was baptized by him. Yet, though brief from a purely human point of view, John’s ministry sent a wake of influence throughout many generations. Twenty-seven years after he died, there was a group of believers’s in Ephesus, a Roman province in Asia, who were still following him (Acts 19:1-3). Our text will give us an idea of why his influence was so powerful, and why he accomplished so much within such a brief period of time. He started preaching at thirty, and died before he was thirty-two.

“Mark 1:7a And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I . . .”

HE PREACHED. Other versions read, “*he was preaching*,” NASB “*this was his message*,” NIV “*he proclaimed*,” NRSV “*he announced*,” NLT and “*his announcement was*.” Weymouth At its core, preaching is a message, an announcement, a declaration, a broadcast, and a proclamation. In John’s case, the announcement was of One who was to come. Yet that announcement was declared just as though it had already occurred. His message was firm, with no room for interpretation, opinion, or some neutralizing view.

John was “*a voice*,” thus he was noted for his preaching. Some people are called preachers, but few people know what they are saying. They are preachers only by title. However, John is known

because of what he said, not for great works that he did – for he “*did no miracle*” (John 10:41). He was not noted for feeding the poor, building an orphanage, administering as large church, or the likes. He was noted for what “*he preached.*”

THERE COMETH ONE. At the beginning, John did not know who this “*one*” was. He confessed, “*And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water*” (John 1:31). The Lord had told him that the one on whom he saw the Spirit descending and remaining, was the one he had been sent to announce (John 1:33). He was to prepare the people for the reception this one. John did not know when this “*One*” would come, or how long he would minister before God manifested Him to Israel. He did not know if he would be used for a long time (like Daniel), or a brief time (like James the brother of John). I gather that he preached with the fervency of one whose ministry would be brief, and with the faithfulness of one whose ministry would be long.

John did not know the name of the coming Messiah, even though it had been revealed to Mary and Joseph (Matt 1:21; Luke 2:21). Although related, there apparently had not been a lot of contact between John and Jesus, even though he knew Jesus was a righteous man (Matt 3:14). While Jesus was being raised in Nazareth (Matt 2:23; 26:71), John was in the deserts (Luke 1:80), being prepared for his brief but essential ministry – a ministry that had been prophesied approximately 740 years before his time (Isa 40:3). While Jesus was a carpenter (Mk 6:3), John was eating locusts and wild honey “*til the day of his showing unto Israel*” (Lk 1:80). Both grew “*strong in spirit*” during their youthful years (Luke 1:80; 2:40), yet apparently had no close affiliation during the time of their obscurity.

There are not many men who can be trusted to faithfully announce someone they do not know, or speak confidently of someone who is coming, yet has not yet been made known. But John could be trusted. He was “*counted faithful*” like Paul, and thus “*put into the ministry*” (1 Tim 1:12). Jesus could not be preceded by a messenger who did not carry out his commission. The Savior could not enter into a place that had not been prepared for Him. Thus John came preaching. He was not a political reactionary like Barabbas (Mk 15:7), but a man with a message concerning one who was coming – a promised One sent by God Himself.

MIGHTIER THAN I. Other versions read, “*more powerful than I,*” NIV “*greater than I,*” BBE “*stronger than I,*” GENEVA “*more important,*” IE and “*He Who is stronger (more powerful and more valiant) than I.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew and Luke both say the coming One is “*mightier.*” The Gospel of John records John as saying, “*is preferred before me*” (John 1:27).

The angel Gabriel said of both John and Jesus, “*he shall be great.*” Of John he said, “*he shall be great in the eyes of the Lord*” (Lk 1:15). Of Jesus he said, “*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His farther David*” (Lk 1:32). **In both cases, the greatness was in the eyes of God, not in man’s consideration.** Actually, Jesus was “*despised and rejected of men*” (Isa 53:3). Although John the Baptist was taken to be a prophet (Matt 21:26), there was no public outcry when he was beheaded by Herod. Yet, Both were considered “*great*” by God, and Jesus was “*greater*” than John. That is, they were “*great*” in comparison to all other men, yet Jesus was “*greater,*” or “*mightier,*” than John – and John knew it. **It is because Jesus was greater in God’s sight that His accomplishments were greater, His works were greater, and His influence was greater.** This forever puts to death the false notion that God sees everyone alike, and that no one is of greater value to Him than anyone else. Before God, John the Baptist was a giant among men (Matt 11:12), yet Jesus was greater than him.

We do not know how much of these sayings were known by John. From the historical narrative concerning the younger life of Jesus, it appears as though the awareness of Jesus' relation to God waned (Lk 2:48). I gather that John had reasoned in this manner: "The Person whose way I am preparing is by nature mightier and greater than myself. If my role is to introduce Him, we cannot be equals." This, of course, is one of the keys to the successful ministry of John the Baptist. He did not get in the way of Jesus, or shine the light on himself.

"7B . . . after me , the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."

AFTER ME. John stood as a line of demarcation. From heaven's viewpoint, he was a reference point for Divine workings. Jesus said, "*And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law mere commentators on world events. Further, the greater light of which they prophesied began to be revealed when John appeared on the scene. That light would rise to its zenith in Jesus, making all other lights inferior, though essential. Luke quotes Jesus as saying, "The law and the prophets were until John : since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16). Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was the thrust of the Prophets. Their ministry pointed primarily to Him. The regenerative work of God started "after" John. The greatest work began "after" John. The mightiest Person was "after" John.*

I AM NOT WORTHY. Other versions read, "*I am not fit,*" NASB "*I am not good enough,*" BBE and "*I am unworthy*" Weymouth Here was a man who was greater than all before him, yet he confesses to being "*not worthy.*" He is a man who was foretold by holy prophets more than seven centuries before he appeared, yet he says he is "*not worthy.*"

The expression "*not worthy*" means not good enough, not able, not sufficient in ability, and not meet, or fit. The expression is reminiscent of something Jacob once said: "*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant*" (Gen 32:10). You may remember the centurion who said to Jesus, "*I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof*" (Lk 7:6).

This saying is so significant that Paul referred to it in a word delivered in a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. "*And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose*" (Acts 13:25). What is it that constrains a holy man to say something like this? The psychiatrist might say it was "low self esteem" – a phrase invented by men, that has greatly corrupted the religious environment of our time. Actually, what the worldly wise call "low self-esteem" is promoted by the Spirit. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said anyone following Him must "*deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*" (Matt 16:34). From the higher view, God looks at the impressive nations of the world and says they are "*are nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity*" (Isa 40:17). This is an altogether true assessment. It is not an exaggeration or a hyperbole.

This does not mean God has no regard for mankind, or that He will not provide a great salvation for them. Rather, these assessments of nothingness and not being worthy are the result of a comparison of man with his Maker. In John's case, when he considered his own person and ministry next to that of the Lord, he concluded "*I am not worthy.*"

John knew he did not earn the right to prepare the way of the Lord, or make His paths straight. His calling was not the result of a kind of heavenly survey through which human excellence was seen in him. In the world, wrong comparisons are made that cause men to

think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Keenly aware of this situation, Paul refused to participate in such assessments. “*For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise*” (2 Cor 10:12). John did not compare himself with the harsh Pharisees of his day, or the rigid doctors of the Law. He compared himself with the One whose way he was preparing and concluded, “*I am not worthy.*” We know his appraisal was correct, for God used him for one of the most unique ministries in the history of mankind.

TO STOOP DOWN AND UNLOOSE. And what was it John said he was not worthy to do? It was to “*stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.*” NRSV This was the work of the lowliest servant – to put on and take off the shoes of the master he served. But there is something more to be seen here. John is here speaking of the humanity of Christ, and of his own unworthiness in comparison to the Man Jesus in his lowest state. Around 1128, St Bernard observed, “The majesty of the Word was shod with the sandal of our humanity.” Yet, even in that low and humble state, “*in the likeness of men,*” and in “*the form, of a servant*” (Phil 2:7), John saw himself unworthy of the lowliest service to the coming Messiah. Methinks it would cause many men to become better ministers of the Word if they would see themselves in this way. As Paul would say it, “*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Eph 3:8).

“ 8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Here is a statement that has caused all manner of controversy within the body of Christ. In my judgment, it has been greatly confused by the machinations of men, who have thought to boost their denomination rather than glorify the Lord. I will endeavor to approach this saying independent of the theological clutter that surrounds it, confessing that this is no small effort.

I INDEED HAVE. Other Versions read, “*Truth it is,*” GENEVA John points to a facet of his own remarkable ministry – his baptism. The word “*indeed*” means “truly, surely, or certainly.” This is not something he talked about, but something he did: “*I indeed have!*”

BAPTIZED YOU WITH WATER. This was a prominent part of John’s ministry. John elsewhere confessed that God “*sent me to baptize with water*” (John 1:33). Compare this to Paul’s statement, “*Christ sent me not to baptize*” (1 Cor 1:17). Matthew affirms John said, “*I indeed baptize you with water unto [or for] repentance*” (Matt 3:11). John records John as saying, “*I baptize with water*” (John 1:26).

The manner in which he spoke is important. John does **not** say he baptized “in” water, but “*with water.*” With the exception of the American Standard Version, Williams Translation, and Montgomery’s New Testament, all versions read the same: “*with water.*” While it may appear inconsequential on the surface, John is emphasizing who does the baptism, and the agent with which that baptism is accomplished. He is not referring to **how** men are baptized, but the substance with which they are baptized. In my judgement, the word “*with*” better suits this context, although it is unworthy an extended argument.

HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU. John affirms that the one coming after him would also baptize. All four Gospel writers make a point of this. “*He shall baptize you*” (Matt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16). This was a revelation given to John **before** he embarked upon his ministry. “*He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him , the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*” (John 1:33).

This does not **refer** to the baptisms accomplished by Jesus and His disciples prior to His death. As Jesus' ministry got under way, John tells us He "*baptized more disciples than John,*" adding that "*Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples*" (John 4:1-2). This was reported to John the Baptist (John 3:26). But this is not the baptism to which John referred.

WITH THE HOLY GHOST. Matthew and Luke add the words, "*with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*" (Matt 3:11; Lk 3:16). Both follow the word with an explanation of the fire: "*He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*" (Matt 3:12; Lk 3:17). Two comparisons are made. First, the baptism of John with the baptism of Jesus. Second, a comparison of the effects of Christ's ministry upon the saved and the lost, or the wheat and the chaff. Spiritually that happens at conversion, when the dross is removed from us. Ultimately it will take place when the unrighteous are removed from the presence of the Lord.

It is commonly taught by many that the baptism Jesus would accomplish occurred **only** for the Apostles, even though they are not the ones to whom these words were addressed. This would mean that John baptized "*all*" who came to him (Mk 1:5; Lk 3:21), while Jesus would baptize only some who came to Him. Jesus **did** say His Apostles would be "*baptized with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 1:5). Peter observed that the same baptism was experienced by those of the household of Cornelius (Acts 11:15-16). Paul says we all were "*baptized by one Spirit into one body,*" and were "*made to drink into one Spirit*" (1 Cor 12:13).

John spoke in broad terms concerning Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit. He was saying that the changes effected in salvation would be accomplished by the Spirit. A statement of the Spirit's role is found in First Corinthians: "*but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Cor 6:11). **Neither John nor Jesus spoke of accompanying signs of this baptism – although men are prone to do so.** Neither of them spoke of "the baptism of the Holy Ghost." Nowhere in Scripture is the phrase, "the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues" used. Jesus related this baptism to "*the promise of the Father*" (Acts 1:4-5). He also said of that event, "*ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me*" (Acts 1:8). Peter did say that Jesus pouring forth His Spirit on all flesh would result in sons and daughters prophesying, young men seeing visions, and old men dreaming dreams (Acts 2:17). It ought to be noted that there were no "*daughters*" or "*handmaidens*" among the Apostles. Because of the nature of this subject and the confusion that has resulted from the sectarian views of men, I will deal further with this matter in our next lesson.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 5

Mark 1:8 *I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*
(Mk 1:8)

INTRODUCTION

There is an inveterate and unchangeable tendency in “*the natural man*” to approach Scripture loaded with erroneous preconceptions. The one who has not been exposed to Scripture previously will approach it dominated by either fleshly preferences or by the wisdom of this world. The individual who exposes his mind to the Word of the Lord with fleshly preferences in mind will look for things that interfere with those preferences – words that do not allow the indulgence of fleshly appetites. Those words will immediately be viewed as either altogether spurious, or that do not mean what they actually say. Thus the sodomite will read of the destruction of Sodom and conclude the destruction of that city had nothing to do with aberrant moral behavior – that is, “*going after strange flesh*” (Jude 1:7). Further, the Word of God thus judged makes it irrelevant to the individual – particularly in those areas dealing with moral behavior.

There is also the individual whose conception of Scripture has been shaped by what his chosen companions have said **about** the Word – not by what the Word itself has said. This person filters the Word of God through sectarian dogma – teachings that permit people to isolate themselves from other professed believers. The Scribes and Pharisees were such people, who sifted the Word of God through the “*tradition of men*” (Mark 7:8). This particular approach to Scripture is most prominent in our country, and in much of the world. In this case “*the doctrines of men*” upstage “*the Apostles’ doctrine*” (Acts 2:42). Now, when the Scriptures are read, they are perceived as saying exactly what the sect says, because the understanding has been shaped by man’s teaching, not by the Spirit of God.

The text we are considering has been particularly used to promote doctrines that have had their genesis with men, not God. Further, men have taken their view of this text and used it to promote their own sect, and denigrate those who reject their view. All of this produces a sort of challenge to the individual who has received “*the love of the truth.*” Such an one desperately desires to be found acceptable in God’s eyes, yet must read His Word with the jangling sound of competing doctrines in his ears. This has moved some to simply ignore the passage before us, deciding it is better to just leave it alone. Some even conclude it’s meaning is purely a matter of opinion, and is of no consequence in the matter of salvation. The presence of these mitigating factors requires a further look at the text.

“ Mark 1:8a . . . but He shall baptize you . . . ”

HE WILL. Let it first be settled in our minds that John is announcing something

having to do with salvation. He is not simply affirming some peculiarities of the Lord Jesus. He we speaking of the Lamb of God, who would “*take away the sins of the world*” (John 1:29; 3:6). In the saying of our text, he was also preparing the way for the Lord, for that is what he was sent to do (Matt 3:3). That way was announced by Isaiah, who also referred to it as a highway: “*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*” (Isa 35:8). It was not “*a way*” leading to worldly prosperity or success, but was “*The way of holiness.*” It was a way upon which the “*unclean*” would not be allowed to pass. That is the kind of way John was preparing. Whatever, therefore, this word means, it relates to that way – the way of holiness.

The notion that Jesus would do this for only some of the people traveling this way – like the Apostles – is unworthy of the smallest amount of consideration. John was not speaking to those who would be Christ’s Apostles, but to the multitudes. In preparing the way for the Lord, this is something John preached – something that the One coming after Him **would** do. The very language leaves no room for the assumption that this was something the Savior would do **occasionally** , or for **some** of His followers. Just as surely as John was noted for what He did, Jesus would be noted for what He **did** – “*He will!*”

BAPTIZE YOU. The word “*baptize*” has a most precise meaning. Lexically it means “to dip, to cleanse by dipping . . . to wash . . . to overwhelm.” THAYER The word “*baptize*” is a transliteration of a Greek word – not a translation. That is, the Greek letters were simply converted to English ones: i.e. bapti,zw (bap-tizo) = baptize. The manner in which the word is used illustrates various nuances of it meaning. It is the word Jesus used when He said the rich man requested Abraham to have Lazarus “*dip the tip of his finger in water*” to cool his tongue (Luke 16:24). It is the word Luke used when he related how the Pharisees “*marveled*” that Jesus “*had not first washed before dinner*” (Luke 11:38). It is also the word Jesus used when describing Himself being overwhelmed with suffering, so that He would die (Matt 20:22; Luke 12:50).

John was comparing what Jesus would do with what he was doing. He was doing something visible, Jesus would do something **invisible** . His baptism dealt with the outward man, Christ’s would deal with the **inner** man. “*John’s baptism*” (Acts 19:3) was something for which he was noted, Jesus would have a baptism for which **He** would be noted. John dipped men in water. Jesus would **dip** them in the Holy Spirit. John washed men with water, baptizing them “*unto repentance.*” Jesus would **cleanse** them with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11). John covered them over with water, plunging them into the sacred wave. Jesus would put them into the Holy Spirit so that they would be able to “*walk in the Spirit*” (Gal 5:16).

Jesus’ baptism would be by affusion – that is by pouring out the Spirit. This is a higher form of being covered – one that is experienced from heaven. Thus the “*washing of regeneration*” includes the Holy Spirit being “*shed on us abundantly*” (Tit 3:5). Just prior to His ascension into heaven, Jesus spoke to His disciples, using the same words as John the Baptist did: “*for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now*” (Acts 1:5). When that word came to pass, Scripture says of those who were “*with one accord in one place,*” “*they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:4). Peter affirmed this was what Joel prophesied when he said God would “*pour out of My Spirit*” (Acts 2:18; Joel 2:28-31). Peter further said of this event, “*He [Jesus] poured out [shed KJV] this which you now see and hear*” (Acts 2:33). When the household of Cornelius received the Spirit, Luke described it in these words: “*on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 10:45).

Both Matthew and Luke include the following words in John's declaration of Jesus' baptism: "*Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*" (Matt 3:12). The idea is that Jesus will baptize those who are ready to receive Him – which ministry John the Baptist was performing. If people were not prepared, the only other alternative to Jesus baptizing them with the Holy Spirit was to be burned up with "*unquenchable fire.*" Therefore, whatever this baptism is, it is for all who are prepared, and have chosen the way prepared for Him. It is not a selective experience administered to some of the saved. Nor, indeed, is it primarily external. Jesus ministers it from heaven, and it has to do with Him being the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world, and saving His people from their sins.

“ 8b . . . with the Holy Spirit.” Other versions read "*in the Holy Spirit.*" ASV Both translations say essentially the same thing. Emphasizing the One doing the baptizing [Jesus], and the agency that is used in the baptism [the Holy Spirit].

There are those who have stereotyped this baptism, even concocting phrases that allow their doctrines to be more prominent than the Scriptural text itself: i.e., "the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues." Let it be clear, this phrase is nowhere stated in Scripture, nor is there any Apostolic doctrine that suggests it reflects the thoughts of a sound mind. The record of the events on the day of Pentecost will assist us in developing a proper understanding of this matter. This is the first occasion of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit, according to His own word (Acts 1:5; 11:15-16).

There were external phenomenon that accompanied this event. **(1)** A sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind that filled all the house where they were sitting [2:1-2]. **(2)** There appeared cloven, or divided, tongues of fire, with one of them sitting upon each of them [2:3]. **(3)** They were all filled with the Holy Spirit [2:4a]. **(4)** They all began to speak with other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance [2:4b]. **(5)** The people all heard them speak, in their own native language, "*the wonderful works of God*" [2:7-11] **(6)** Peter affirmed this was the very thing Joel prophesied when he spoke of God pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh, with sons and daughters prophesying – in fact he placed the accent on prophesying (2:16-18). **(7)** These were signs associated with the time when whoever called upon the name of the Lord would be saved [2:21]. **(8)** Peter associated this with the risen, glorified, and empowered Christ [2:22-33]. **(9)** The purpose of the attending signs was to confirm that Jesus had, indeed, been made both Lord and Christ [2:33-36]. **(10)** The impact of these events was that men were "*pricked in their hearts*" and cried out "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" [2:37]. **(11)** Peter promised the inquirers that, upon their repentance and baptism, they would "*receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). Those are the unvarnished facts in the case – faithfully recorded by Luke, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had "*a perfect understanding of all things from the very first*" (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1).

There is not a syllable in the account of the events of that glorious Pentecost that suggests something unintelligible. There certainly is the miraculous, but it was related to something perceived and the ability to declare it so it could be understood. Filled with the Spirit, Peter comprehended Joel (Acts 2:16; Joel 2:28-32). He had a grasp of the ministry of Jesus when He was among them (Acts 2:22). He clearly saw God's working in Christ's death and resurrection (Acts 2:23-24). He discerned the meaning of Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28). He saw the meaning of David's prophecy (Acts 2:30-31; 2 Sam 7:11-16). He knew Jesus had been exalted, was at the Father's right hand, and had received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). He knew the meaning of the 110th Psalm (Acts 2:34-35). He knew how to precisely answer the inquiry concerning what the people should do (Acts 2:38-40).

What is there about this text that would lead someone to associate Jesus baptizing people, with things that could not be understood – or with fleshly sensations that overwhelmed a person, moving them away from being profitable? Why didn't Peter draw attention to the sound of the wind, the tongues of fire, and Galileans speaking in languages they had not learned? I will tell you why: **because that not the manner of the Spirit!**

Jesus said that when the Spirit came He would “*testify of Me*” (John 15:26). He said He would “*reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*” (John 16:8). He said He would “*guide you into all truth,*” and “*show you things to come*” (John 16:13). He declared, “*He shall glorify Me,*” would take the things of Christ, and “*show it unto you*” (John 16:14-15). That is the Holy Spirit with which Jesus baptizes people! Why would anyone think that Spirit would do something that was not specifically associated with what Jesus said the Spirit would do? Did not the day of Pentecost confirm that the Spirit, when received, does precisely what Jesus said He would do?

The miraculous signs that accompanied Jesus shedding forth the Spirit on the day of Pentecost were not the baptism itself, but things accompanying it. As confirmed by the way in which the events are related to us, they were not intended to **always** accompany Christ's baptism. When, for example, the household of Cornelius was baptized by Jesus, there was no sound of a rushing mighty wind. There were no cloven tongues of fire. The receivers did not provide an exposition of Scripture. When they spoke in tongues they did not prophesy, but praised God and magnified Him (Acts 10:46). When Peter related the event to the brethren, he did not even mention them speaking in tongues, but drew attention to the fact that they had “*believed on the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 11:4-17).

“Matthew 3:11 . . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.”

When speaking of Jesus' baptism, Matthew and Luke include the words “*and with fire.*” Although the words that follow this speak of Jesus burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire, there is doubtless also a reference to the prophets who foretold a time of cleansing and purging. Isaiah prophesied, “*When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning*” (Isa 4:4). Zechariah also spoke fire in association with refining: “*And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God*” (Zech 13:9).

The prophets spoke of the Holy Spirit, and of the work with which He would be associated. This is the same Spirit with which Jesus would baptize. That baptism would doubtless prove to be the means by which these prophecies would be fulfilled – first in Jesus, and then in those who would be joined to Him.

The Holy Spirit would rest upon the Messiah Himself, and would provoke “*wisdom,*” “*understanding,*” “*counsel,*” “*might,*” “*knowledge,*” and “*the fear of the Lord.*” He would make the Savior “*of quick understanding,*” so that He would “*not judge after the sight of the eyes*” (Isa 11:2-3). The prophets declared the Holy Spirit, when “*poured upon us,*” would cause “*the wilderness to be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*” It is written that righteousness would “*remain in the fruitful field,*” and its work would be “*peace,*” and its “*effect*” would be “*quietness and assurance forever*” (Isa 32:15-17). Isaiah further declared that when God poured His Spirit upon His offspring, “*they shall spring up as among the grass by the water courses,*” saying to one another, “*I am the Lord's*” (Isa 44:3-5). Again, he said that when

God's Spirit was "upon" His people He would put His words in their mouth, and they would "not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed . . . from henceforth and forever" (Isa 59:21).

Ezekiel prophesied that when God put His Spirit "within you," He would "cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek 36:27). Joel associated the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit with sons and daughters prophesying, old men dreaming dreams, young men seeing visions, and with "deliverance" (Joel 2:28-32). Micah related the Spirit with "power," "judgment," and "might" to "declare unto Jacob his transgression, and unto Israel his sin" (Mic 3:8).

This is the Holy Spirit **with** which Jesus would baptize. The effects of that baptism would conform to the prophecies of His coming – just as the day of Pentecost did. On that day there was purging, wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord – just as Isaiah said. That day a moral and spiritual wilderness became a fruitful field, and peace, quietness, and assurance were realized. A spiritually fruitless people suddenly sprang up like flourishing grass close to the water courses. God's word was found in the mouth of His people, and they spoke it out with insight and understanding. The very people who were noted for being disobedient were changed to be obedient and responsive, walking in the word delivered to them, just like Ezekiel said.

When Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the occasion itself is not the point, but the results of it. Men are in error to seek a momentary experience of the Holy Spirit. Christ's baptism is a life-changing experience, where things are never the same. Men are "made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). That Spirit, into which we are plunged, and in which we remain, becomes the Administrator of our lives. He leads us in the subduing of the flesh (Rom 8:13). He causes us to "abound in hope" (Rom 15:13). He produces the fruit that causes God to be glorified (John 15:8; Gal 5:22-23; Rom 7:4). He enables us to patiently wait for "the hope of righteousness," when every vestige of weakness and deficiency will once and for all be removed from us (Gal 5:5). He is the one who produces the life that liberates us from the "law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). He "helps our infirmities," entering into the process of our salvation when we are in a state of ignorance (Rom 8:26-27). He enables those who once were fearful to become Christ's "witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

Forever thrust from your mind the notion that the Holy Spirit is capable of doing anything unrelated to these clear affirmations of His ministry. **When John told the people Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit he spoke within the context of the Holy Prophets, without which the people could have had no understanding at all of the Spirit .** This was another way of speaking of "life more abundantly" (John 7:38-39; 10:10).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 6

Mark 1:9 *And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: 11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (Mark 1:9-11)

INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the Lord – to make His paths straight, removing the obstacles and clearing the way for the Savior. This was done first by calling men to repentance. Second, it was accomplished by John identifying “*the Christ.*” The Lord told him he would know the identity of the coming Savior in the act of baptism. Thus he testified, “*And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*” (John 1:33). Therefore, it was at the baptismal waters that the promised Messiah would be made known. Matthew, Mark, and Luke provide a record of Christ’s baptism. John does not record the baptism itself, but mentioned the voice from heaven that followed it. Remember, Mark is declaring “*the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*” Christ’s baptism, therefore, is integral to that Gospel. It ought to be noted that this account should have a place in shaping our ideas about baptism. There is much controversy in the religious world over the subject of baptism. However, I know of no divisions over the Gospel account of Jesus being baptized. It serves as a sterling example of the sanctity of this ordinance. Here is an outward action through which the Son of God was identified. Men would not have chosen such a point of revelation. It serves to accent the humility involved in Jesus coming to the earth. He became identified with those he came to save – even in the matter of being baptized.

“ **Mark 1:9** *And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.*”

IT CAME TO PASS. Other versions read, “*it came about,*” NASB and “*it happened.*” NAB This phrase is used 453 times in Scripture. Many of those times it is used merely to denote that something occurred, without regard to specific Divine intentions. However, there are times where the expression declares that something that had been purposed by God came into being. The phrase is translated from a single Greek word that means “to come into existence, to appear in history, or appear on the stage. **STRONG’S Here the phrase refers to something God had purposed, coming into being.** This is something for which God is noted – bringing His purpose to pass: “*Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand*” (Isa 14:24). And again, “*I have purposed it, I will also do it*” (Isa 46:11).

IN THOSE DAYS. As John “*was baptizing,*” the time for the revelation of the Son of God came. From the announcement of the coming Seed of the woman until that very day, Satan has sought to stop this revelation – but the day arrived on schedule. Jesus was not made known in the normalities of life, but in an activity related to matters of the soul.

JESUS CAME FROM NAZARETH. After the wise men returned to their country, ignoring the word of Herod, Joseph was instructed in a dream to quickly leave Bethlehem with Mary and Jesus: “*Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him*” (Matt 2:13). Matthew says this fulfilled Hosea’s prophecy, “*Out of Egypt have I called My Son*” (Matt 2:15). As soon as Herod was dead, “*an angel of the Lord*” appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, telling him to “*take the young child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life*” (Matt 2:19-20). Upon returning to Israel, he heard that Archelaus reigned in Judaea in place of his father Herod. Joseph was then afraid to go into Israel. Notwithstanding, “*being warned of God in a dream,*” he went into “*the parts of Galilee.*” That is the point at which “*he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene*” (Matt 2:21-23; Num 6:13). This is the place in which Jesus was raised.

During His ministry, the people referred to Jesus as “*Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee*” (Matt 21:11). He was also called “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (Matt 26:71; Mk 10:47; 14:67). When the women, not knowing that Jesus was risen, went to anoint the body of Jesus, an angel referred to the risen Lord as “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (Mk 16:6). This was the city where Zecharias and Elizabeth, and the virgin Mary, lived prior to Jesus’ birth (Lk 1:26). It is also where Joseph lived when he went to Bethlehem to be taxed (Lk 2:4). Joseph and Mary made their early home there (Lk 2:39). Following his visit in the Temple at twelve years of age, the young Jesus returned to Nazareth where he was subject to His parents (Lk 2:51). Nazareth is described as the place “*where He had been brought up*” (Lk 4:16). Even demons referred to Him as “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (Lk 4:34). Seven times in the book of Acts, Jesus is said to have been “*of Nazareth*” (2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9).

Now Jesus comes to John “*from Nazareth in Galilee,*” where He had spent most of His life. This was a city with a bad reputation. Upon hearing Philip say they had found the one of whom Moses and the prophets did write, “*Jesus of Nazareth,*” Nathaniel responded, “*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*” (Lk 1:46). Yes! It can!

AND WAS BAPTIZED OF JOHN IN JORDAN. Matthew adds that He came “*to be baptized*” by John (Matt 3:13). It was at that point, still not knowing who Jesus was, that John tried to stop Jesus, saying, “*I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?*” (Matt 3:14). Jesus quickly responded, “*Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him*” [or consented] NIV (Mat 3:15). It is interesting that Jesus referred to John’s baptism as fulfilling “*all righteousness.*” The Amplified Bible reads, “*perform completely whatever is right.*” Jesus refers to this as something Himself and John were doing: “*us.*” It was right for John to baptize Jesus, and it was right for Jesus to submit to be baptized. Luke records that “*when all the people were baptized,*” Jesus was “*also baptized.*” He adds that when he was baptized, Jesus was “*praying*” (Lk 3:21).

Jesus, of course, was not baptized “*for the remission of sins,*” as were all others (Mark 1:4). His baptism was **not** “*unto repentance,*” as everyone else (Matt 3:11). Jesus, however, knew that baptism was the will of God, as well as the point at which He would be revealed. His attitude toward this ordinance reflected the kind of mind that would be realized by us in the New Covenant. There

would come a certain eagerness to do anything and everything that was ordained by God and pleases God. That is the manner of the kingdom.

“ 10 And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him.”

This was the first public appearance of Christ as the Messiah. Prior to this He was known, but not primarily as a public figure. John, for example, knew that He was a godly man (Matt 3:14). Others knew Him as *“carpenter, the son of Mary,”* with four brothers and some sisters (Mk 6:3). Still others considered Him to be *“the son of Joseph”* (Lk 3:23). However, until the day John baptized Him, Jesus was not in any way known as the Messiah or the Son of God. Now, as Jesus comes from Nazareth to be baptized, He is going to draw the sword of truth and throw away the scabbard! He would commence an assault on the kingdom of darkness such as had never before been known.

COMING UP OUT OF THE WATER. This does not refer to Jesus walking out of water onto the shore. The word translated *“coming up out”* means to *“arise, ascend, to go up.”* STRONG’S It refers to Jesus coming up out of the water into which He was plunged, or buried. This confirms that baptism is, indeed, a burial in, and resurrection from, water – where one goes down and comes up. That is why it is said of John’s baptizing, *“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there ”* (John 3:23). Matthew also says Jesus *“went up straightway [or immediately] out of the water”* (Matt 3:16). Luke emphasizes that this was part of His baptism: *“being baptized”* (Lk 3:21).

HE SAW THE HEAVENS OPENED. It is Jesus Himself that *“saw the heavens parting.”* NKJV Matthew records, *“ and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him ”* (Matt 3:16). Luke records, *“the heaven was opened”* (Lk 3:21). To my knowledge, the only time prior to this that the heavens are said to have been opened was in the days of Ezekiel. He wrote, *“Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened , and I saw visions of God”* (Ezek 1:1). That is when Ezekiel saw a cloud, enfolding fire, four living creatures and a free-wheeling and unhindered throne (1:4-28). As impressive as that sight was, it is not to be compared with the occasion of our text.

This was a special sign for the Son of God Himself – to see the heavens opened *“unto Him.”* It was the domain from which He had come – He *“came down from heaven”* (John 3:13). He is known as *“He that cometh from heaven,”* who is *“above all”* (John 3:31). He referred to Himself as *“the Bread of God,”* who *“cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world”* (John 6:33). And now, before He embarks on His mission, He is given to see the heavens opened. What a blessed and encouraging sight it must have been!

THE SPIRIT LIKE A DOVE DESCENDING. As Jesus peered into the heavens, He saw *“the Spirit like a dove descending.”* Luke writes, *“and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove”* (Lk 3:22). Matthews says *“ He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove”* (Matt 3:16).

What a fitting form for the Spirit to assume! It was a dove that Noah sent from the ark *“to see if the waters had abated from the earth.”* At first, that dove *“found no rest for the sole of her foot,”* and so returned to the ark. Seven days later Noah sent out the dove, and she returned with an olive branch in her mouth. After seven days he sent her out, and the dove did not return (Gen 8:8-12). Until Jesus, the Holy Spirit had rarely found anything living among men. Some few souls like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, and the prophets proved to be

noble souls – yet none were suitable as a Savior. At Jesus’ baptism, however, the gentle Holy Spirit, known for His tenderness, will find among men one who can save the world.

UPON HIM. This was the sign that John the Baptist had been awaiting for. Once seen, his own ministry would begin to diminish, giving way to the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire – something that no other man can do. Matthew says the Spirit descended “*like a dove, and lighting upon Him*” (Matt 3:16). Luke says the Spirit “*descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him*” (Lk 3:21). John was told the Spirit would descend and remain upon the one for whom he was preparing the people (John 1:33).

Peter probably was referring to this event when he told the household of Cornelius, “*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him*” (Acts 10:38). Here as a man – “*THE Man,*” upon whom the Spirit could remain. He would “*not fail nor be discouraged*” (Isa 42:4). Not long after this event Jesus stood in his home-town synagogue in Nazareth and said, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me*” (Luke 4:18). That Spirit was remaining, just as John was told He would. It is the Son, and only the Son, to whom God “*giveth not the Spirit by measure*” (John 3:34). The Spirit remained on Him!

“ 11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

A VOICE FROM HEAVEN. Prior to Jesus, the words “*a voice from heaven*” are only mentioned one time – and it was a judgment against Nebuchadnezzar. It is written, “*there fell a voice from heaven , saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*” (Dan 4:31-32). But this is no judgment that is heard at the baptism of Jesus! This is the first time a voice from heaven has publically proclaimed one who is Beloved of God and well pleasing in all that He did.

There are three recorded times when a voice from heaven spoke to the Son of God. This is the first (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:22). The next is when Jesus was transfigured on the mount. Then God said, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him*” (Matt 17:5). The third is when Jesus was approaching the time of His betrayal and death. He prayed, “*Father glorify Thy name!*” It is written, “*Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again*” (John 12:28). First, when Jesus embarked on His ministry. Second, when He was in the thick of His ministry, beginning to focus upon the time of His death. Third, when He was preparing to lay down His life a ransom for many.

THOU ART MY BELOVED SON. There is evidence that this Divine approval was, in fact, public. We know that John saw the Spirit descending in for the form of a dove, and remaining upon Christ. That was his sign that the Messiah had arrived. It appears that the voice was also heard by others. Both Mark and Luke present the voice as speaking directly to Jesus: “*Thou art my beloved Son*” (Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22). Matthew, however, records God as saying, “*THIS is My beloved Son*” (Matt 3:17). It was important that the Savior Himself know this before He embarked upon His ministry. It was also vital that John the Baptist know it so he would be aware of the conclusion of his work. Those with ears to hear also needed to know this so they could take up their cross and follow Jesus.

Isaiah prophesied of the kind of Savior that would come into the world. His prophecy precisely fits what is recorded in our text. “*Behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved,*

*in whom My soul is well pleased : I will put My spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles” (Matt 12:18). The Father’s love for the Son is declared to be the reason why He has shown everything to Him: “For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth” (John 5:20). It is why the Father has given everything into His hands: “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand” (John 3:35). There is a cause behind this love of the Father for the Son – an appointed condition. “Therefore doth My Father love Me, **because I lay down My life, that I might take it again**” (John 10:17).*

IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED. It is one thing to be pleasing, it is quite another to be “ *well pleasing.*” This is the reaction of the Father to the unwavering consistency of the Son. He testified, “*And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; **for I do always those things that please Him***” (John 8:29). Whatever you may think about pleasing the Lord, the One charged with saving the world could not in any way be displeasing to the Lord. He could not provoke the Father to anger, tempt Him, or murmur against Him. He could not withdraw from Him, be dull toward Him, or fail to hear Him. How pleasing it must have been to the Father when, at the tender age of twelve, Jesus said, “*I must be about My Father’s business*” (Luke 2:49).

Remember, this was spoken BEFORE Jesus began His ministry. It was said BEFORE He started preaching and teaching. Throughout His first thirty years – a period of relative obscurity – the Lord Jesus never failed to live for the Father, doing His will. During His formative years He “*increased in wisdom,*” and “*in favor with God*” (Luke 2:52). His life was so consistent and unflinching that when He went up out of the water, the Father declared to the world, “*in whom I AM well pleased!*”

That is the kind of Savior we HAD to have, and that is the kind that we DO have! What is more, the Father’s good pleasure in the Son has never waned. He is still “*satisfied*” with the travail of His soul (Isa 53:11). A milestone has been reached in our own lives when we obtain the mind of the Father concerning Jesus Christ. When we can say, “He is the beloved Son of God, and I am well pleased with Him,” help is surely on the way!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 7

“ Mark 1:12 *And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.*” (Mark 1:12-13)

INTRODUCTION

Mark begins the Gospel with the ministry of John the Baptist. Matthew begins with the genealogy of our Lord (Matt 1:1-17), provides significant details about His birth and infant days (1:18-2:23), and includes the ministry of John and His baptism of Jesus (3:1-17). Luke begins with an extensive word concerning John the Baptist, including a lengthy prophesy by his father (1:5-25,57-80). He includes the announcement of Jesus’ birth to Mary by Gabriel (1:26-37), and Mary’s visit with Elizabeth and her marvelous outburst of praise (1:39-56). He also includes several details of Christ’s birth (2:1-20), the dedication of Jesus by Simeon (2:21-39), his maturing years, including being in Jerusalem when He was twelve years of age (2:40-52), the ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-22), and His genealogy (3:23-38). John begins the Gospel with the pre-incarnate Word (1:1-5), the ministry of John the Baptist (1:6-36), including several explanations concerning the effects of salvation and their causes. **All of this confirms to us that the Gospel is not simplistic.** It begins with the Lord’s Person and purpose in eternity past, and a reason for the entrance of the Savior into the world. It is marked by Divine intervention from beginning to end, including God, the Word, the Holy Spirit, and holy angels. People from lowly shepherds to wise men from the East were brought into the picture. Holy people like Zecharias, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna were involved. Now we will be introduced to a singular event in the life of Christ – a time when He experienced an extended and concentrated assault by the wicked One. This was essential to Him being prepared to save us – particularly by His Intercession (Heb 7:25).

“ Mark 1:12 *And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.*”

Jesus has fulfilled “*all righteousness,*” being baptized by John. The Holy Spirit has descended upon Him from heaven, and is remaining upon Him. God has spoken from heaven, confirming that Jesus is His Son, and that He is well pleased with Him. Anointed and ready to begin His ministry, what will Jesus be directed to do?

AND IMMEDIATELY. Other versions read, “*And at once,*” NIV and “*And straightway.*” ASV This is the next activity in which Jesus was engaged. Now entering into His ministry, Jesus does not return home for some last minute adjustments, as one would-be follower wanted to do (Lk 9:61). His life had been lived with this in mind, and now He was ready to embark on the mission for which He was prepared. This is the manner of the Kingdom.

THE SPIRIT DRIVETH HIM. Other versions say the Spirit “*drove Him,*” NKJV “*impelled Him,*” NASB “*sent Him,*” NIV “*compelled Him,*” NLT “*put Him forth,*” YLT and “*[from within] drove Him.*” AMPLIFIED The word “*driveth,*” or “*drove,*” means “to cast out, drive out, or send out,” with a notion of violence. It is the word used to describe Jesus casting out demons (Mk 1:34,39). Here the word is used differently. Demons were cast out by a Person and power external to themselves – by the One who was against them. Here, the driving is **from within**, by the Holy Spirit who was in harmony with Jesus, not against Him. Thus, Matthew says Jesus was “*led up of the Spirit*” (Matt 4:1), emphasizing Jesus’ sensitivity.

Here we see what was involved in the Holy Spirit “*remaining*” on Jesus – the sign that was given to John concerning Him (John 1:33). Luke describes the “*remaining*” in a most precise manner: “*And Jesus being FULL of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan*” (Lk 4:1). Thus, what is described as the Spirit “*remaining*” upon Jesus was the way in which the indwelling Spirit was made known to John – as the cloven tongues on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Technically, the Spirit did not remain “*on*” Jesus, but **within** Him. It was Jesus’ spirit that was “*anointed*” with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). While, for the sake of John, this involved an outward experience, it was the inward reality that suited Jesus for His ministry, not the outward one. There is no indication that Jesus walked about with a dove sitting upon Him. It was the Spirit within that “*drove*” Jesus, compelling Him.

This too is the manner of the Kingdom – **inner compulsion**. Just as surely as Jesus was “*led*” by the Spirit, so those who are in Him are “*led by the Spirit.*” In fact, those who are so “*led*” are said to be “*the sons of God*” (Rom 8:14). It is only those who are “*led by the Spirit*” who are “**not under the Law**” NKJV (Gal 5:18). This is a direction from within. It is not direction as with a commandment, or a set of rules. The individual is driven by strong desire, inclination, preference, and a sanctified will. Jeremiah foretold this type of leading when he said the New Covenant would involve God putting His laws “*in their inward parts,*” and writing them “*in their hearts*” (Jer 31:33). For us, this involves a radical change – but it is not one that is irreversible. This “*change*” is facilitated by “*the Spirit of God,*” as affirmed in Scripture: “*changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*” (2 Cor 3:18). **That changing is quite similar to Jesus being driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. It is a spiritual alteration that takes place within through the operation of the Holy Spirit.**

If the Lord Jesus Himself, “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14), and having “*no sin*” (1 Pet 2:22) was compelled by the Holy Spirit, what person is there who is so foolish as to imagine he can be directed by rules and regulations, or some self-help system created by men? It simply is not possible for men to be directed from within independently of the Holy Spirit. If the Mediator of the New Covenant was so directed, it is utter vanity for those whom He is saving to the uttermost to attempt to be directed by anyone else. Although this may appear very evident, it is equally plain that the modern church is fundamentally ignorant of this circumstance. If those wearing the name of Jesus were actually experiencing the leading of the Spirit, many “*Christian ministries*” would dry up immediately. Also, let it be clear in your mind, no other direction is effective in Christ Jesus.

INTO THE WILDERNESS. Other versions read, “*the desert,*” NIV and “*the waste land.*” BBE In Scripture a “*wilderness*” is a “*solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited, and uncultivated area.*” STRONG’S The means of sustenance are not found in such a place, and dangers lurk everywhere. When **Moses** left Egypt, he first went into a desert (Ex 3:1). When **Israel** was delivered from Egypt, they first went into the wilderness (Ex 19:2). When **John** the Baptist came of age, he first went into the desert (Lk 1:80). When **Saul** of Tarsus was converted, he went into “*Arabia*” – a desert region (Gal 1:17). This, then, is also a Kingdom manner. When men leave the world and commence running the race set before them, it will first lead them through a desert, where they

become keenly aware of the poverty of this world.

“ 12a And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan . . .”

When Moses went into the desert, it was to receive his call from God (Ex 3:1-4:17). When Israel came into the desert, it was to receive a covenant from the Lord (Ex 19:2-8). When John the Baptist went into the deserts, it was to tutor him for His showing to Israel (Luke 1:80). When Saul of Tarsus went into Arabia, it was in order to be taught by Jesus (Gal 1:17; 1 Cor 11:23). However, Jesus’ time in the wilderness was for other purposes.

HE WAS THERE. Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, and remained there for forty days. Just as the Spirit “*remained*” on Christ, so that Spirit enabled Jesus to “*remain*” in the wilderness. He stayed there for the time appointed – “*forty days.*” Matthew says that He “*fasted forty days and forty nights*” and was not hungry until “*afterward*” (Matt 4:2). Luke writes, “*And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered*” (Luke 4:2).

We learn from this that the Holy Spirit enables those He directs to remain where He leads them. There is also a higher form of sustenance that causes all inferior appetites to wane – “*He afterward hungered.*” Later, when Jesus was sitting on a well, wearied with His journey and speaking with a certain woman, His disciples came with some food they had procured from “*the city.*” Jesus told them, “*I have meat to eat that ye know not of*” (John 4:32). As He had spoken with a searching woman, His earthly appetites had waned. So it was when Jesus was led up into the wilderness. For forty days and forty nights, He was **not** hungry!

TEMPTED OF SATAN. Mark says Jesus was “*tempted of Satan*” during the forty-day period. Matthew says the Spirit led Him “*into the wilderness TO BE tempted of the devil*” (Matt 4:1). Luke says of this time, “*Being forty days tempted of the devil*” (Lk 4:1). This, then, was an appointed time of testing – a time that would prepare Jesus for His ministry among men. Without this leading, Satan would have had no access to Jesus.

None of the Gospel writers provide the details of Satan’s temptation during those forty days. It is only the strongest temptations that are detailed – those that were leveled at Jesus in His weakest point – when He “*afterward hungered.*” It was when the forty days “*were ended*” that Satan came to Him in these epochal temptations (Lk 4:2-3).

TEMPTATION #1. Satan preceded this temptation with the words, “*If Thou be the Son of God*” (Matt 4:3; Lk 4:3). When Jesus’ appetite for food had returned and was at its strongest, Satan challenged Him, “*command that these stones be made bread*” (Matt 4:3). Luke says he took a particular stone and said, “*command this stone that it be made bread*” (Lk 4:3). Jesus drew the sword of the Word and answered that man did not live by bread alone, but by “*every Word of God*” (Lk 4:4; Matt 4:4; Deut 8:3). That word repulsed the devil, moving him to regroup. **This a temptation appealed to “*the lust of the flesh*”** (1 John 2:16a), and parallels Eve’s temptation to see the forbidden fruit as being “*good for food*” (Gen 3:6).

TEMPTATION #2. Satan also preceded this temptation with the words, “*If Thou be the Son of God*” (Matt 4:6; Lk 4:9). In some way wafting Jesus away to “*the pinnacle of the temple,*” Satan challenged Jesus, “*cast Thyself down,*” quoting the Scripture that affirmed God would not let Him dash His foot against a stone (Matt 4:5-6; Lk 4:9-11; Psa 9:11-12). Historians say the “*pinnacle of the temple*” stood 700 feet above the bottom of the valley below (the height of a 70-story building). BARNES Again, Jesus drew the sword and said, “*It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*” (Matt 4:7). Luke places this as the last temptation, stating that here

“the devil had ended all the temptation,” and departed from Jesus *“for a season”* (Lk 4:13). **This was a temptation appealing to “the pride of life”** (1 John 2:16b), and parallels Eve’s temptation to see the forbidden fruit as *“desired to make one wise”* (Gen 3:6b).

TEMPTATION #3. Satan did not challenge Christ’s Sonship in this temptation. He rather takes Jesus to *“an exceeding high mountain”* and gives him a panoramic view of *“all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them”* (Matt 4:8). Luke says he did this *“in a moment of time,”* or *“in an instant”* NIV (Lk 4:5). Affirming that these all had been given to him, and whoever he willed to give them (Lk 4:6), Satan offered *“All this power”* to Jesus if He would *“fall down and worship”* him (Matt 5:9; Lk 4:7). Jesus again draws the sword of the Word and affirms, *“Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”* (Luke 4:8; Matt 4:10). Jesus’ first words confirm this was, in fact, the last temptation. **This was a temptation to “the lust of the eye”** (1 John 2:16c), and parallels Eve’s temptation to see the forbidden fruit as *“pleasant to the eyes”* (Gen 3:6c). **Luke lists the temptations in the order of “all that is in the world”** – *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”* (1 John 2:16). **Matthew lists them in order of their actual occurrence.** At this point *“the devil had ended all the temptation”* (Lk 4:13).

“ 12a . . . and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.”

Mark provides an **overview** of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. He was tempted by Satan *“for forty days.”* During that time, *“He was tempted in all points like as we are”* (Heb 4:15). These *“points”* refer to the categories of temptations, not to every single temptation endured by men. It is foolish to imagine that Jesus was tempted to be drunk, do drugs, lay with another man’s wife, view pornography, or covet the possessions of His neighbor. There have been all manner of people who have not been tempted in such things. Rather, in every area of temptation Jesus was assaulted by the devil at His weakest point – *“after”* the forty days and nights. The magnitude of these temptations is not to be compared with those that we experience. They were the largest ones in Satan’s arsenal, hurled at the Son of God when He was at His weakest physical point. This was temptation at its optimum. Further, the three major temptations did not occur over a long period of time, but appear to have taken place rapidly and with supernatural power and attractiveness – something like Eve’s temptation which was also in the *“moment of time”* category.

Thus at the beginning of His ministry, and at the close as well, Satan assaulted Jesus with unparalleled temptation. At the beginning He sought to divert Christ’s attention from His ministry to his own fleshly interests. At the end, He sought to do the same thing. That is why Jesus cried out *“If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me”* (Matt 26:39). It was then that He *“offered up prayers with strong crying and tears”* (Heb 5:7), and especially *“suffered, being tempted”* (Heb 2:18). His latter temptation was unique to Him, for it involved a cup that He alone was intended to drink (Mark 10:38). We do not endure that type of temptation.

The temptation of our text, however, uniquely equipped Jesus to minister to those who are being tempted. As it is written, *“For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted”* (Heb 2:18). However seemingly complicated and frequent the temptation may be, it is in one of the three categories in which our Lord was tempted. He is therefore able to bring us through those temptations without us giving in to them.

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus overcame the devil in the three areas where Eve was overcome in the first place: *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.”* In Him, every believer has a fresh start in life, and the means to overcome the devil.

WITH THE WILD BEASTS. Only Mark provides this detail. This was an area not inhabited by men – a most remote and unfrequented place occupied only by the wild and untamed beasts of the earth. The term “*wild beast*” accents the dangerous circumstances that surrounded Jesus during this temptation. Other versions read, “*with the wild animals,*” NIV “*He was among wild beasts,*” NAB and “*He was out among the wild animals.*” NLT At night there was the wolf, the boar, the jackal, and the leopard. There were probably the lion, the serpent, and the scorpion. At least two things may be observed in this circumstance.

First, Jesus was not harmed by any of these “*wild beasts.*” These “*beasts*” were “brutal, savage, and ferocious.” STRONG’S Jesus was protected from them like Daniel was in the lion’s den. Ordinarily, this was a surrounding in which men could not survive. Yet Jesus, Lord of all, was not harmed or seemingly threatened by this vast arsenal of hostile animals.

Second, the most challenging situation Jesus faced was not the threat of wild beasts, but the subtlety of the wicked one. It is far most threatening to face “*the tempter*” (Matt 4:3; 1 Thess 3:5). Those who live close to the earth become unaware of this. People who would not for a moment go into a place occupied by wild and venomous beasts often think nothing of wandering into places where Satan’s temptations are stronger and more focused. Jesus had to be “*driven by the Spirit*” into this area – and it would serve a higher purpose. To be “*tempted by the devil*” is far more serious than to face physically threatening circumstances.

THE ANGELS MINISTERED TO HIM. Other versions say the angels, “*were ministering to Him,*” NASB “*attended Him,*” NIV “*waited on Him,*” NRSV “*took care of Him,*” BBE “*looked after Him,*” NJB “*were helping Him,*” IE and “*ministered to Him [continually].*” AMPLIFIED Matthew says they came when “*the devil leaveth Him*” (Matt 4:11). I gather this means in they then ministered in a special and accelerated way. **Thus, the very Scripture Satan used to tempt Jesus was being fulfilled throughout the forty days and nights.**

In the temptation prior to His death, when Jesus was praying in sweat and agony, “*there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him*” (Lk 22:43). So a multiplicity of angels miraculously sustained the Savior here, no doubt gladly ministering to and serving Him – strengthening Him to endure Satan’s assault.

We are also told that the holy angels have been “*sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*” (Heb 1:14). **Do not doubt that part of that marvelous ministry is occurring when you are being tempted!** You cannot perceive them with your eye, but you can sense them with your heart. You are being sustained by heavenly messengers!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 8

“Mark 1:14 *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”*

(Mark 1:14-15)

INTRODUCTION

“*The beginning of the Gospel*” involved the entrance of Jesus into the world, and Him coming into prominence, together with the events surrounding those grand occasions. It was also the time when the history of the world was being altered – when a new era was commencing, the likes of which had never before been seen. This was a time determined by God from before the foundation of the world. It had been announced in Eden, foreshadowed in the Old Covenant, and foretold by the holy prophets. This was a time when a mortal bruise would be delivered to the head of Satan, his diabolical purposes frustrated, and the reclamation of humanity announced. Prior to the Law, mankind, with but a handful of exceptions, was left without specific Divine guidance – with only the conscience and an intuitive sense of right and wrong to guide them. During the Law, a select number of people were provided the written details of morality, and the opportunity to approach God at certain times and seasons by means of elaborate ceremonies. However, man’s fundamental nature remained the same. Sensitive souls held to a hope that was spawned by a promise from God. A time would come when a single individual would enter the scene to bring deliverance to humanity. It was a time when men would be at peace with God, and would dwell with Him in safety. “*The beginning of the Gospel*” was the time when the fulfillment of those ancient promises was announced – a time when the Deliverer arrived.

“**Mark 1:14a** *Now after that John was put in prison . . .*” Other versions say John was “*taken into custody,*” NASB “*arrested,*” NRSV “*delivered up,*” ASV and “*thrown into prison,*” WEYMOUTH

This was the one who “*prepared the way of the Lord*” – John the Baptist. People had flocked to hear him as he declared a new and refreshing message of one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and eventually purge His threshing floor. The eternal destiny of the people would be in the hands of the man John said was “*mightier than I.*” Long after John had died, the chief priests and elders of the Temple were still afraid to say anything against John, for, they reasoned, “*all hold John as a prophet*” (Matt 21:26; Mk 11:32). You might imagine that such a person could not be put into prison without an outcry from the people. However, as soon as Jesus arrived, John’s ministry began to come to a close, being fulfilled. That is the **only** reason he could be put into prison. Until his hour came, like Jesus, no one could interfere with John’s ministry (Matt 26:55).

THE DETAILS OF JOHN’S IMPRISONMENT. Mark does not provide the details of

John's imprisonment here, but does give them in the sixth chapter. Matthew and Luke also provide some of the details. Mark tells us that this imprisonment was precipitated by John's rebuke of Herod. He had married his brother's wife, and John rebuked him for it. "*For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*" (Mark 6:18). This was according to the Law of Moses, which forbade such a thing (Lev 18:16; 20:21). Eventually, for his wife's sake (Herodias), Herod "*sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison*" (Mk 6:17). At that time, Herodias was angry with John for what he had said, and "*wanted to put him to death and could not do so; for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him*" NASB (Mk 6:19-20).

Matthew says that Herod would, indeed, have put him to death as his wife's behest. "*And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet*" (Matt 14:5).

Luke adds a few more details to this account. "*But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison*" (Luke 3:20).

SOMETHING TO BE SEEN. Some believe that the Law was given only to Israel, and had no application to the rest of the world. While it is true that, as a covenant, it belong exclusively to Israel, as a law it pertained to the whole world. For, we are told, it was given that "*every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty before God*" (Rom 3:19). The occasion of John's imprisonment is a case in point.

Herod was a member of the Herodian family. This family rose to prominence following the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity. They were Idumeans, descendants of Esau. These people were conquered in 130 BC by John Hyrcanus, and brought into Judaism. Thus, though aliens by birth, they had adopted the Jewish religion. They made religion an engine of the state, making it more political than spiritual. Eventually one of the Herod's built the temple that existed in Jesus' day, taking forty-six years up to that time to do so (John 2:20) – Herod commencing the rebuilding sixteen years prior to Jesus, and continuing thirty more years until the baptism of Christ. History tells us Herod continued the building until 64 A.D., six years before Jerusalem was destroyed according to the prophesy of Jesus (Lk 21:20-24).

FAUSSET'S BIBLE DICTIONARY

The point here is that the Law applied to Herod, even though he was not of the lineage of Isaac. Yet John rebuked him – even though he formally catered to religion, and had even rebuilt the temple – which was called "*the temple of God*" (Matt 21:12), and Jesus called "*My Father's house*" (John 2:16). John did not hold to what men now call "political correctness." He rebuked Herod for marrying his brother's wife, and "*for the many evils which Herod had done.*"

All of this occasioned John's imprisonment. He was "*persecuted for righteousness' sake*" (Matt 5:10). He certainly was no "*respector of persons,*" but rebuked sin wherever, and in whomsoever, it was found. John was also fearless, not fearing those who "*kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*" (Matt 10:28). He trembled before God, but not before men.

One might reason that such a bold and godly soul could not possibly be imprisoned. But this is not the case, as also seen in Joseph, Jeremiah, Daniel, Peter, John, Paul, Timothy, and a host of others. However, as with all holy men, **John could not be imprisoned prior to the completion of the work God gave him to do.** His imprisonment could only come after the One he

announced had arrived on the scene.

“ 14b . . . Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.”

JESUS CAME INTO GALILEE. Galilee is where Jesus was raised. After Joseph had left Egypt with Mary and the child Jesus, “*He turned aside into the parts of Galilee,*” dwelling “*in a city called Nazareth*” (Matt 2:22). When Jesus came to be baptized by John, He “*came from Galilee*” (Matt 3:13). Following his temptation in the wilderness, Matthew writes, “*Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee*” (Matt 4:12). Luke says Jesus “*returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee*” (Lk 4:14). This was “*the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtholim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles*” (Matt 4:15).

Of old time, the prophet Isaiah had declared Galilee would be the place of Divine manifestation. “*Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined*” (Isa 9:1-2). This, then, was a time of favor when a great light would shine upon Galilee, where people were walking in darkness in the land of the shadow of death. He came to the area where He was raised, and to his own home town. Now we will see the manner in which He shined refreshing light into that area.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Other versions read “*preaching the gospel of God,*” NASB “*proclaiming the good news of God,*” NIV “*He proclaimed the Gospel from God,*” NJB “*to preach God’s good news,*” NLT “*proclaiming the good news of the reign of God.*” YLT

John the Baptist had announced, “*the kingdom of God is at hand*” (Mk 1:15). This is synonymous with “*the kingdom of heaven,*” for Matthew records the same event in these words, “*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt 3:2). From the standpoint of the One governing the kingdom, it is “*the kingdom of God.*” Considering where it is headquartered, it is “*the kingdom of heaven.*”

The message Jesus announced, or “*preached,*” was “*gospel*” – good news. That is, He was announcing something that of itself was “*good.*” It was news to gladden the heart and cause hope to rise up from the ashes of despair. More recent versions eliminate the words “*the kingdom of,*” simply reading “*Gospel of God.*” While this translation is based upon certain preferred manuscripts, it does not represent the sense of what is here declared. For example, the same versions that omit “*the kingdom of*” in this text, include it in John’s words (Matt 3:2), and Jesus’ words as well (Matt 4:17). This is a declaration of the work of a Sovereign God – something that He was doing at that time. It does involve His “*kingdom.*”

THE KINGDOM OF REFERENCE. The kingdom of reference is the one that had been shown to Daniel in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The king had seen a great image that represented four great global empires. That image was dashed into pieces by a small stone that miraculously came out of a mountain. The stone eventually became a mountain that filled the whole earth (Dan 2:31-35).

The statue was described as four kingdoms. The first three were specifically identified, and the fourth we know by deduction. They were Babylon, The Medo-Persians, Greece, and Rome. Each kingdom supplanted the one before it, overthrowing it by force (Dan 2:37-40; 7:2-7; 8:20-22). It was then explained that during the reign of those kings, particularly during

the time of the latter (Rome), that God was going to do something especially significant. “*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever*” (Dan 2:44).

This is the kingdom John said was “*at hand.*” It is the kingdom that Jesus preached – a kingdom that would never end, and would eventually be the undoing of all other kingdoms. After four thousand years of ignorance and alienation, with Satan running roughshod over the human race, the Kingdom of God was at hand. It was good news because it announced the liberty of men and the demise of the devil. Now there would be an unparalleled demonstration of the truth proclaimed to Nebuchadnezzar: “*the heavens do rule*” (Dan 4:26).

This “*Gospel*” was not announced in Rome, or Athens, or Alexandria. Rather, it began to be preached in lowly Galilee, and in one of the smallest of all earthly regions. But there was a people in this region who had been Divinely cultured to hear this good news, and they would hear it from the mouth of the King Himself.

“ 15 And saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*”

THE TIME IS FULFILLED. Other Versions read, “*The time has come.*” NIV “*the time is accomplished ,*” DOUAY “*This is the time of fulfillment ,*” NAB and “*At last the time has come.*” NLT **This is the language of Divine appointment.** “*The time*” is an appointed or determined epoch. Jesus is said to have come into the world “*when the fulness of the time was come*” (Gal 1:4). Before He returned to heaven, Jesus told His inquiring disciples that “*times and seasons*” were “*fixed*” by the Father’s “*own authority*” NASB (Acts 1:7). Paul declared that God would reveal the Lord Jesus in all of His glory “*in His times*” – that is, the times appointed by Himself (1 Tim 6:15). God alone can “*change times and seasons*” (Dan 2:21), for they are all in His power.

There is a level of Divine activity in which men have no say whatsoever. These are times that are not brought into being by the supplications of men. They are appointed by the Lord, and when they come, the things determined for that time **do** come to pass. Such times include the flood (Gen 7:13), the birth of Isaac (Gen 17:21), the deliverance of Israel (Ex 12:41), the birth of Jesus (Gal 1:4), the coming of Jesus (1 Tim 6:15), and the day of judgment (Acts 17:31). These are fulfilled independently of human influence.

Jesus began announcing in Galilee that something appointed by God was about to take place. It could not be stopped by all of the powers of darkness. Even the wretched condition of the human race could not abort the fulfillment of this Divine appointment.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND. Other versions say the kingdom “*is near ,*” NIV “*has come near,*” NRSV “*has drawn nigh,*” DARBY “*is very near,*” IE and “*is close at hand.*” WEYMOUTH He did not mean the kingdom of God was beginning, or that it was being initiated. This is an “*everlasting kingdom*” Psa 145:13; Dan 4:3; 2 Pet 1:11). From the standpoint of perception and participation the Kingdom was “*near.*” **That is, men would become acutely aware of the un contested reign of God Almighty.** In Jesus it would become plain that “*there is no power but of God*” (Rom 13:1). All of nature would bow to Jesus, the King of this kingdom – whether winds, waves, trees, fish, or food. No adversarial power would stand before Him. He would dismiss them all with a word. He would cause people who had been bound by Satan for years to be released in a moment. In Jesus, the Kingdom of God was “*at hand*” – right there, where it could be perceived.

On the surface, it appeared as though Rome was reigning over all. Jewish leaders lived in fear that *“the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation”* (John 11:48). But Rome was a mere under-ruler, being subject to the Kingdom of God, which *“ruleth over all”* (Psa 103:19). Until Jesus, this is not the way it looked. But, how differently things looked after the Lord from heaven strode among men! The Kingdom was at hand!

REPENT. How ought men to respond to the message of the nearness of the Kingdom of God? What should they do? *“REPENT!”* Come into line with this Kingdom. Run away from anything that causes men to reject it, deny its presence, or compete with it. To *“repent”* means to think differently, or reconsider life in view of the kingdom of God. STRONG’S Repentance is what follows *“godly sorrow”* (2 Cor 7:10) – a sorrow that is produced by a keen awareness that God has been offended, and His government spurned. If the Kingdom of God, which is over all, is *“near,”* then allegiance to everything else must be brought to a grinding halt – *“Repent!”* It has already been revealed that this kingdom will utterly crush all other kingdoms. Therefore, it makes no sense to maintain any coalition that is destined for destruction – including serving purely self-serving interests – *“Repent!”*

BELIEVE THE GOSPEL. Let the heart embrace the good news of the Kingdom of God that is *“near”* – *“at hand.”* To *“believe”* the Gospel is to be convinced of its truth and embrace it. It is to depend upon the message, and bring the life into conformity with it. Believing involves trusting – leaning the whole weight of one’s life upon the good news that is delivered. It is the absence of doubt, and the presence of persuasion, when the substance and evidence of heavenly realities are possessed (Heb 11:1).

Believing the Gospel is not an activity of the mind, but of the heart. As it is written, *“with the heart man believeth”* (Rom 10:10). Jesus did **not** call upon men to investigate the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, or to research it. He called them to *“believe the Gospel.”* This is *“the obedience of faith”* mentioned in Romans 16:26, as distinguished from *“the obedience that comes from faith”* NIV (Rom 1:5). All unbelievers are disobedient.

Repentance and faith are the two pillars of human response: *“repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Acts 20:21). They lead us toward salvation.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 9

“ Mark 1:16 Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. 18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him.” (Mark 1:16-18)

INTRODUCTION

For Mark, the *“beginning of the Gospel”* has thus far involved the preaching of John the Baptist (1:1-8), the baptism of Jesus (1:9-11), the temptation of Jesus (1:12-13), and the commencement of the preaching of Jesus (1:14-15). These are all essential elements of the Gospel. They are involved in the Word becoming *“flesh”* (John 1:14), or coming in *“the likeness of sinful flesh”* (Rom 8:3), or becoming *“like unto His brethren”* (Heb 2:17). This is the facet of Jesus life to which Paul referred when he said, *“And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself”* (Phil 2:8).

There are several reasons for the life and ministry of Jesus prior to His betrayal and death. During this time, we were being exposed to God *“manifest in the flesh”* (1 Tim 3:16). The manner in which the mighty God thought and spoke was lived out before men. He spoke only what the Father told Him to say (John 12:49; 14:10). Men were exposed to the manner and objective of God’s works, for Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19). Now we will behold the kind of men God chooses, and what He does with such men. We will see an activity in which the Lord will involve His followers. We will also become familiar with the kind of human response that glorifies the Lord – the kind that is a prelude to extensive labors for the Lord. In this text, we will see God Almighty at work.

“ Mark 1:16 Now as He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.”

THE BACKGROUND OF JOHN’S ACCOUNT. John provides some details about Simon and Andrew that are not found in the other Gospels. He tells us that following John’s announcement of Jesus as *“the Lamb of God,” two disciples* who heard him speak *“followed Jesus.”* Jesus asked the two, *“What seek ye?”* They replied that they wanted to know where He was staying. Jesus said, *“Come and see.”* One of those two was Andrew, Simon’s brother. He first went to Simon and said, *“We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.”* He then *“brought”* Simon to Jesus, who renamed Simon *“Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone”* (John 1:40-42). I understand this occasion to have preceded the events of our text. Matthew’s account of our text refers to Simon as *“Simon called Peter”* (Matt 4:18).

HE WALKED BY THE SEA. We understand that Jesus was walking along the shoreline

toward Capernaum, where He would later enter into a synagogue on the Sabbath day and teach (Mk 1:21). As we become more familiar with the ministry of our Lord, we will find Him to be intensely active, always about His Father's business.

HE SAW SIMON AND ANDREW. These were brothers, and are apparently listed in order of their priority, with Peter being the oldest. Both were apparently followers of John the Baptist

The background of Luke's account. Matthew's account is identical with Mark's (Matt 4:18-22). Luke gives a few more details, providing the background of this text. Prior to this, Jesus had been preaching "*in the synagogues of Galilee*" (Lk 3:44). As time progressed, "*the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God*" (Lk 4:1a). They had never heard such marvelous words. When He opened the Scriptures to them, it whetted their appetites for more, and they were "*crowding around Him and listening to the Word of God.*" NIV Among other things, this confirms that John the Baptist had, indeed, prepared the way of the Lord (1:2-3). That preparation had awakened an appetite for God's Word. That is what a good minister will do as he speaks insightfully and confidently about what God has said. There is a certain drawing power in the Word of God, as it evident in this text.

As Jesus spoke the Word to the multitudes, He was standing "*by the lake of Gennesaret*" – another name for "*the Sea of Galilee.*" "*Gennesaret*" described the sea of Galilee according to its location, for "*Gennesaret*" was a "*land*" (Mk 6:53), in which the "*Sea of Galilee*" was found. As the people pressed to hear Him, He came close to the water. Luke informs us there were "*two ships*" there, and the fisherman were "*washing their nets.*" Jesus entered into one of the ships, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to "*put out a little way from the land.*" NASB Peter did this, and Jesus "*sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.*" When He had finished teaching, Jesus told Peter to "*launch out into deep, and let down your nets for a draught,*" or a "*catch.*" NKJV Jesus was going to pay Peter for the use of his boat. Peter responded that they had spent a fruitless night fishing, and had "*taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word, I will let down the net.*" When Peter put the net into the water, it "*enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.*" Peter then called to his "*partners, which were in the other ship,*" asking them to give him some assistance. They quickly came "*and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.*"

Having arrived at the shore, Peter "*fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*" Luke adds, "*For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken*" (Luke 5:1-9). Mark takes the text from there.

Now, in our text, as He made His way to Capernaum, Jesus "*saw Simon and Andrew his brother.*" As will be confirmed, this was not a casual glance, but one in which the Lord took due note of the men. Matthew says He "*saw two brothers*" (Matt 4:18).

THEY WERE FISHERS. Simon and Andrew were working – they were in the process of "*casting a net into the sea.*" They were not leisurely fishing, but were making a living – engaged in their regular work, "*for they were fishers.*" The Lord is frequently depicted as calling busy men. Moses was keeping sheep (Ex 3:1-2). Gideon was threshing wheat (Judges 6:11). Elisha was plowing a field (1 Kgs 19:19-20). Amos was keeping a flock (Amos 7:14). Now Jesus sees two men, occupied with their business – fishing.

However, Jesus did not see them as mere men, or even as fishermen, but saw their hearts, "*for He knew what was in man*" (John 2:25). He saw past their boat, past their nets, and past their occupation. His eyes, like those of His Father, were running "*to and fro,*" looking

for a man “*whose heart is perfect toward Him*” (2 Chron 16:9).

“**17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.**”

JESUS SAID UNTO THEM. It at once becomes apparent that Jesus was not merely beholding two brothers. Nor, indeed, was He pondering them from a novel point of view. When the eyes of the Lord are fixed upon a person, something is about to take place – either a blessing (as in this text), or a cursing (as with Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah).

Until this time, Jesus had been preaching to the multitudes. He had been preaching throughout Galilee (Mk 1:14). However, so far as the record is concerned, He had not delivered a special word to any specific person. Now, however, that will change. What was once general, will now become specific. Simon and Andrew had heard the preaching of John. They had also been exposed to the public teaching of Jesus. Now He will have a word to say to them personally, and it will radically alter their lives.

There must come a time when public preaching and teaching is personalized to the hearers – a time when they cease to be one of the crowd. For souls who are sensitive to the Lord, that time will involve their call into a love that is more concentrated on Jesus than on self. **COME YE AFTER ME.** Other versions read, “*Follow Me,*” NKJV/NASB “*Come, follow Me,*” NIV “*Come after Me,*” DARBY “*Come, be My disciples,*” NLT and “*Come after Me, and be My disciples.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew reads, “*Follow Me*” (Matt 4:19). The word “*come*” means “*come hither, or follow.*” STRONG’S It implies leaving where you are, and going to another place. In this text, that place is “*after Me,*” or in His footsteps – going precisely where Jesus was going. While this was not yet the calling of “*the twelve*” (recorded in Mark 3:13-19), the practical cause was the same: “*that they should be with Him*” (Mk 3:14).

Later, Jesus spelled out what was involved in coming after Him, or following Him. “*And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me*” (Luke 9:23). Matthew reads, “*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me*” (Mat 10:38). Again He said, “*And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple*” (Luke 14:27).

The qualifications for following Jesus are straightforward. (1) **Deny self** – assuming, at the very best, a secondary role. Self-interests are put to the side in favor of embracing Jesus and His cause. (2) **Take up your cross** – presuming the total repudiation of the flesh. This is to be done on a “*daily*” basis, putting to death “*the deeds of the body*” (Rom 8:13). (3) **Bear your cross** – the ongoing work of subordinating the flesh, keeping under the body, and casting down competing influences.

All of this assumes that Jesus is walking in a different direction, and doing a different work. To follow Him, there must be an abandonment of competing pursuits. Coming after Jesus, or walking in His footsteps, increases the distance between the individual and this present evil world. Paul expressed this kind of activity when he admonished the Corinthians, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (1 Cor 11:1). Again, this type of life is depicted in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: “*Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on Me*” (Rom 15:2-3).

I WILL MAKE YOU TO BECOME FISHERS OF MEN. Other versions read, “*make you*

fish for people,” NRSV and *“fishermen for the souls of people.”* LIVING Luke writes, *“from henceforth thou shalt catch men”* (Lk 5:10). This new kind of fishing would require the work of transformation. Just as professional fishermen seek ways to catch the fish, so Jesus would teach them to be proficient in the work of catching men.

Luke associates these words with the miraculous catch of fish *“that filled both boats,”* so that they *“began to sink”* (Lk 5:7). Luke also says Jesus said these words *“unto Simon.”* Mark says He said it to them all. Both sayings are true – Simon in particular, because it was his boat: all of them in general, because they assisted in bringing the catch to shore.

Peter surely must have thought of these words on the day of Pentecost. Then, as he made a single casting of the Gospel net, he *“caught”* three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). Later, Peter cast the net again in the Temple, bringing in a catch of *“about five thousand”* men (Acts 4:4). Throughout their lives, these men became known for their influence on others. They truly were made *“fishers of men.”*

Jesus did not make them *“fishers of men”* by teaching a soul-winning course. He rather provided them with a keen sense of man’s need of salvation, and the effective remedy for that need through the Gospel. He brought them to a point where they had a genuine and lasting interest in the eternal welfare of men.

“15 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him.” Other versions read, *“They immediately left their nets,”* NKJV *“At once they left their nets,”* NIV and *“They abandoned their nets.”* NAB .

STRAIGHTWAY. *“Straightway,”* or *“immediately,”* is the mode of the Kingdom. A leper whom Jesus touched was healed *“immediately”* (Matt 8:3). When Jesus had compassion on two blind men, and touched them, *“immediately their eyes received sight”* (Matt 20:34). When He told a palsied man to *“Arise and take up thy bed,”* *“immediately he arose,”* and *“took of his bed”* (Mk 2:12). When the woman with an issue of blood touched the hem of Christ’s garment, *“straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up”* (Mk 5:29). When Jesus said to Jairus’ dead daughter, *“Arise,”* *“straightway the damsel arose”* (Mk 5:42). When Jesus said to a deaf and dumb man, *“Be opened,”* *“straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed”* (Mk 7:35). The same immediate response took place when Peter healed a lame man (Acts 3:7), when Saul of Tarsus was healed by Ananias (Acts 9:18), when Peter healed Aeneas (Acts 9:34), and when the Apostle John was told by a voice from heaven *“Come up hither”* (Rev 4:2). Also, conversions like those on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-39), Cornelius (Acts 10:34-48), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), and the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:30-34) were all immediate.

So it was that Simon and Andrew suddenly forgot about their fishing trade. Jesus had captured their attention, and their hearts went hard after Him. An immediate response is the opposite of being *“slow of heart to believe”* (Lk 24:25), *“dull of hearing”* (Heb 5:11), and having a heart that has *“waxed gross”* (Acts 28:27).

I have noted over the years that a close proximity to Jesus promotes instant responses to His call. Equally true, when there is a distance between the individual and Christ, there is a retarded response (if any at all) to His summons. It is not without cause that it is written, *“They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs”* NKJV (Psa 65:8). There is a sense in which the Lord still speaks in *“a still small voice,”* as He did to Elijah. Prior to that. The Lord *“passed by”* the mountain to which He had called Elijah. It is written that there was *“a great*

and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire” (1 Kgs 19:12). After that came “the still small voice” – a “gentle whisper” NIV – and “Elijah heard it.” That kind of sensitivity allows for instant responses to the Lord. Oh, that there was more of this in our time.

FORSOOK THEIR NETS. Other versions read, “*left their nets,*” NKJV and “*yielding up their claim to them.*” AMPLIFIED Luke records, “*And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all*” (Luke 5:11). They left their nets, their boat, and their trade. How is it that they were able to make this sacrifice? Through John the Baptist, their hearts had been “*prepared,*” and the way was made “*straight*” for an instant response to the Lord. They recalled the great catch of fish they had realized, and correlated that event with a Man who had all authority and power, to say nothing of grace and truth. Their confrontation of the Lord’s Christ had dwarfed everything else. For them, their nets were like all the kingdoms of the world were to Christ when He was tempted of the devil (Matt 4:8).

The spiritual condition of a people or era can be judged by what is abandoned for the Lord. In the hearts of Simon and Andrew, catching men was perceived as more to be desired than catching fish. Where little is sacrificed, little, if any at all, has been seen.

FOLLOWED HIM. Forsaking nets is of no consequence unless it is followed by an eager pursuit of Christ. There are two extremes that are promoted by the devil, and, as we ought to expect, neither one is acceptable. First, men are tempted to keep their nets, so to speak, and **attempt** to follow Jesus. Second, they are tempted to stay with their nets and **not** follow Jesus. Jesus had made clear that He cannot be followed unless everything is forsaken (Lk 14:33). It is not that this is a sort of goal that we strive to reach. Rather, from the very beginning, this is the way it is.

Following Christ is an aggressive assignment. He is always involved in the work of His Father, ruling “*in the midst of*” His “*enemies*” (Psa 110:2). The “*highway*” upon which He leads us forbids the presence of anything “*unclean*” (Isa 35:8). As soon as a person senses the call to follow Christ, an immediate response is needed. The choice must be made for the duration of the journey. This involves the repudiation of every competing influence and the resolve to participate in “*the power of His resurrection*” and the “*fellowship of His sufferings*” (Phil 3:10). Such responses are not the exception, but the rule of the kingdom.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 10

“Mark 1:19 *And when He had gone a little farther thence, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20* **And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him.”**
(Mark 1:19-20)

INTRODUCTION

We are being exposed to several facets of Christ’s ministry. This is something of what was involved in the **Word becoming** flesh (John 1:14), being **brought** into the world (Heb 1:6), and being **sent** into the world (John 3:17). One thing will become very apparent in the book of Mark – Jesus did not come into the world to be a mere spectacle. He was not like a diamond being put on display, yet uninvolved with the people. While men did behold Him, He did not come into the world to be beheld as men view relics in a museum. Jesus was active – always doing something. None of what He did could be called entertainment or amusement. He was not on display like Samson in the Philistine arena. There was purpose and deliberation in what He did. Jesus was never intended to be the subject of novel interest or academic study. He is not to be studied like Rameses, Alexander the Great, or Socrates. He is not merely the Subject of history – an interesting consideration during the drone of life’s monotony. He was a Person, and He conducted His life with purpose and objective. The “*fulness of the Godhead*” dwelt in Him (Col 1:19; 2:9), and it was expressed in where He went, what He said, and what He did. His experiences – all of them – pertained to His mission, whether it was being born in a stable, raised in Nazareth, going to the Temple when He was twelve years of age, or going about doing good, healing all who were oppressed of the devil. In order to gain true benefit from the Savior, we must come to the point where we can connect what He did during His ministry with the purpose for which He was sent into the world.

“Mark 1:19 *And when He had gone a little farther thence . . .*” Other versions read, “*a little farther from there,*” NKJV “*went a little farther,*” NRSV and “*walked along a little farther.*” NAB Matthew reads, “*And going on from thence*” (Matt 4:21).

The idea is that after Jesus had seen and called Peter and Andrew, He continued walking toward Capernaum. It is possible for a person or persons to go some place and never see anything along the way – to be oblivious of what is all around them. But this was not the case with Jesus. He was acutely aware of His surroundings at all times, and never missed an opportunity that would reveal and contribute to His mission.

While others grew accustomed to the surrounding, Jesus could be in a synagogue to teach, and see in the crowd a man with a “*withered hand*” (Lk 6:6-8). He could sit wearied on

a well, and take special note of a Samaritan woman who would respond to His invitation (John 4:6-7). While teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath day, He would see a woman with a spirit of infirmity, who for eighteen years had been bowed together (Luke 18:10-12). On the way to the house of Jairus, whose daughter lay dying, he was aware of a single woman in the crowd who touched the hem of His garment (Lk 8:41-45). On the night of His betrayal, when the powers of darkness were granted their “*hour*” to do their worst, he took the time to heal the severed ear of Malchus, one of the arresting soldiers (Luke 22:49-51).

Christ always considered His mission – never unplugging from it. In this, He lived out the proper mode of livined. **All of life is to be lived in view of its ultimate aim.** For Jesus, it was to lay down His life, and take it up again, thereby securing redemption for a fallen race. From the time He began to grow in favor with God and man (Lk 2:52), He lived to “*be about*” His “*Father’s business*” – not merely living a virtuous life, but integrating everything He did with the ultimate reason for being sent into the world.

This is a lofty view of life, indeed, but it is the only valid way to live. It reveals the folly of living for self-gratification, oblivious to opportunities that are all about us. It confirms that our highest moments are not when we are being entertained, realizing security in this world, and enjoying some measure of earthly success. There is a higher, more noble, more satisfying reason for living, and we see it in the words of this text: “*And when He had gone a little farther*” NIV – “*a little farther*” en route to Capernaum; to the gathering of a holy cluster of devoted disciples; to the death He came to accomplish; to the time when the door of salvation would be thrown open by the enthroned Savior.

Jesus has just finished making a decision that directly related to the accomplishment of His purpose – the calling of Simon and Andrew. They would play a vital role in the execution of His purpose, being among the “*twelve Apostles*,” who themselves would be a foundation within His church (Eph 2:20). He is thinking of the will of His Father.

One small note on the words, “*a little further.*” From this text, together with several others, it is apparent that the life of our Lord was not marked by large gaps of spiritual impotence and a lack of personal involvement with His Father. He lived in such a manner as allowed Him to say, “*I do always those things that please Him*” (John 8:29). It is to be our aim to eliminate from our lives dry and fruitless periods. Our involvement with the Lord and His will can be preceded by going “*a little farther*,” rather than lengthy pit experiences. Indeed, this is a lofty view that few have realized. Yet, Jesus confirmed this can be done, for He accomplished this as “*a man*” who was “*straightened*” in a body of flesh (Lk 12:50).

Christ’s ministry directed to individuals. Jesus’ ministry began with a public posture – being baptized publically. It was followed by an intensely personal period, when He was tempted by the devil for forty days and nights. Then, in the power of the Spirit, He began a public declaration of His message – that men ought to repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. We are now beholding Jesus walking to Capernaum – in a seemingly neutral posture. Yet, here His ministry has taken a turn toward specific individuals. Already He has called Simon and Andrew, directing a specific word to them: “*Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men*” (1:17). Now, He is going to focus His attention on two more men.

In order to personally profit from the Lord Jesus, there must come a time when His attention is directed to you personally. The “*crowd*” mentality is not the posture in which lasting benefits are realized. There is a vast difference between a multitude of 5,000 men, and a young “*lad . . . which had five barley loaves, and two small fishes*” (John 6:9). All of those men, together

with the lad, ate the miraculous meal Jesus served up that day. But who is not able to see that the young “*lad*” really received much more than the multitude. So it is in our text. Assuming that, as usual, a great multitude was following Jesus (Matt 4:25), here are some men singled out of all of the rest to obtain a special benefit.

“ 20 . . . He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.”

HE SAW. This is a phrase that describes Divine focus and intent. Several times in the Gospels it is said of Jesus that “*He saw.*” In addition to seeing Simon, Andrew, James, and John, Jesus is said to have seen: **1–** “*the Spirit of God descending as a dove*” (Matt 3:16). **2–** Peter’s ill mother-in-law (Matt 8:14). **3–** Levi, also called Matthew (Matt 9:9). **4–** The woman who touched His garment (Matt 9:22). **5–** The wandering multitudes (Matt 9:36). **6–** His disciples toiling in the midst of a storm (Mk 6:48). **7–** The faith of four men who brought an impotent man to Him (Lk 5:20). **8–** Ten lepers (Lk 17:13-14). **9–** The city of Jerusalem (Lk 19:41). **10–** A poor widow casting two mites into the Temple treasury (Lk 21:2). **11–** A man “*blind from birth*” (John 9:1). Without a single exception, a gracious work followed these events – beginning with Him preaching after He saw the descending Spirit, to the healing of the blind man. When the Lord focuses His attention on anyone or anything, it is the prelude to some action. In most of the cases, it was a blessing.

An awareness of this circumstance is what moved David to reason, “*It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction , and that the LORD will requite me good . . .*” (2 Sam 16:12). It moved Isaiah to plead, “*Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory*” (Isa 63:15). There is an element of faith that persuades the suffering soul that if only the Lord will see or behold them, help will be sent “*from the sanctuary*” of heaven (Psa 20:2).

As in the calling of Simon and Andrew, Jesus sees James and John according to the will of His Father – for He only did what the Father was doing. As He Himself said, “*The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise*” (John 5:19). Jesus, then, as He walked to Capernaum, saw what the Father was doing, and thus correlates His perception of two men with that work.

JAMES THE SON OF ZEBEDEE AND JOHN HIS BROTHER. We know from Luke’s Gospel that James and John “*were partners with Simon*” in the fishing industry (Lk 5:10). Here they are mentioned in connection with their father, “*Zebedee.*” The name “*Zebedee*” means “*gift of Jehovah.*” THAYER From Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40, we know that he was the husband of Salome, who followed Jesus and was among some women who ministered to Him. She was also among the women who came to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body with spices (Mk 16:1). All four Gospels associate James and John with their father (Matt 4:21; 10:2; 26:37; Mk 1:19-20; 3:17; 10:35; Lk 5:10; John 21:2). No such association as made with Simon and Andrew – although Jesus called Simon, “*son of Jonas*” five times (Matt 16:17; John 1:42; 21:15-17). The point to be seen here is that James and John came from an obviously devoted family.

There was an Apostle referred to as “*James the less,*” (Mark 15:40), who was “*the son of Alphaeus*” (Matt 10:3), whose mother was also named “*Mary*” (Mk 16:1). Although an Apostle, this “*James*” did not attain to the stature of “*James the son of Zebedee.*” That is one reason the “*James*” of our text is singled out as Zebedee’s son, distinguishing him from the son of Alphaeus. Those who imagine that all believers are seen the same, do greatly err. If, among the Apostles themselves, there were two James’, one of which was “*less,*” such a thought is shown to be wholly erroneous.

James and John are among an elite group of three within the “*holy apostles*” (Eph 3:5;

Rev 18:20). Of *“the twelve”* they alone were present at Christ’s transfiguration (Matt 17:1), the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mk 5:42), and during Christ’s agonizing prayer in Gethsemane (Mk 14:33). Together with Peter and Andrew, these brothers were also given Jesus’ *“private”* teaching from *“the mount of Olives”* concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world (Mark 13:3).

Surely, as Jesus called these brothers, He saw them in their coming closeness to Him. These men, together with Simon and Andrew, were the first Jesus summoned to follow Him. That unique distinction characterized the remainder of their lives.

IN THE SHIP MENDING NETS. When Jesus called these unique brothers, they were engaged in an ordinary task – *“mending their nets.”* Like Simon and Andrew, they were faithfully about their earthly calling. However, the moment Jesus saw them, their lives were about to be changed to the extraordinary. They had proved themselves faithful *“in that which is least.”* Now they will be called into that which is *“much”* (Lk 16:10). No soul knows when such a gracious call will come, but when it does, the monotony of life is broken, and a new day dawns upon the soul. It is good to live with a listening ear that calls us higher!

“ 15 And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him.”

STRAIGHTWAY HE CALLED THEM. Upon focusing His attention on James and John, Jesus *“immediately”* NKJV called them. We know from the text that there were at least five people in the boat: James, John, Zebedee their father, and some *“hired servants.”* Here, Jesus does not speak of *“whosoever will,”* as He did on other occasions (Matt 16:25; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:24). Sometimes Jesus *“called the multitude”* (Matt 15:10). Now, however, He issues a Divine summons to only two men who were on that boat. Matthew said, *“and He called **them**”* (Matt 4:21). Once He called some scribes to Himself (Mk 3:23). Another time, from among many followers, *“He called unto Him the twelve”* (Mk 6:7; Lk 9:1). Another time, while in a synagogue, He called a single infirm woman to Himself (Lk 13:12).

Mark this well, **Jesus is not always speaking to the multitudes** . There is not only a simple and generic call that issues from His lips. There are places reserved at Jesus side that will only be filled by a select few. As Jesus Himself said, *“to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father”* (Matt 20:23; Mk 10:40). James and John were issued a unique call to an unequalled position. That call was in strict accord with the will of the Father. They were thus separated from several others, who were **not** ungodly. There is no evidence that Zebedee was in any way considered an unrighteous man. However, there was a higher calling, a more noble work, into which his two sons were called, and from which he was excluded.

This is a great lesson to learn. Everyone in the kingdom of God is not on an equal footing. There are general benefits and privileges that **do** apply to everyone. But there are special places *“prepared”* for those like Peter, Andrew, James, and John. There are lofty experiences in which only three of a sanctified twelve can participate. There are marvelous *“visions and revelations”* that only one like Paul is given to see (2 Cor 12:1).

In my judgment, those who participate in such lofty callings will be separated from the multitudes. They will not be isolated like hermits who live alone. Rather, there will come a certain solitude and loneliness that attend a close and uninterrupted walk with God. Jesus Himself is the most sterling example of such a walk. His Apostles stand out among their peers

in this respect. It is quite possible that if you walk in the Spirit, and live by faith, your life will be blessed with a call to higher things, more lofty insights, and rare privileges. You should be able to see this in the text we are reviewing.

It is interesting to observe that James and John were not called during a gathering in the synagogue. Nor, indeed, were they called during one of the ordained high feasts of the Jews. They were called during the ordinary pursuits of life – while they were mending their nets.

THEY LEFT THEIR FATHER IN THE SHIP. When James and John were called out, they went out. Without delay, they responded to a moving Savior, leaving their father and the hired help in the ship. Someone else had to continue mending the nets. As those whom Jesus described as willingly taking the “*lower room*,” they had heard the Divine summons, “*Friend, go up higher*” (Lk 14:10) – and they instantly responded.

Just as surely as the word of Jesus to an impotent man – “*Rise, take up thy bed, and walk*” – was attended by enabling grace and power to do it, so this call from Jesus was surely accompanied by the same, for “*His word was with power*” (Lk 4:32). That is precisely why James and John were able to respond as they did. The words they heard were mixed with faith, and they were therefore compelled to respond without hesitation.

I do not doubt that many souls have heard the still small voice, calling out “*Friend, go up higher!*” “*Come closer!*” “*Be more attentive!*” “*Leave lesser things, and obtain the riches that are for you!*” “*Come and labor with Me!*” Many have done as the rich young man who, after hearing the call of Jesus, “*went away sorrowful*” – unconvinced that what Jesus offers is greater than what this world presents. Yet, here and there, there is a James or a John whose heart is strangely warmed by the call of the Master. Such are willing to leave the religious multitudes, and follow close to the Savior. Such people are blessed indeed!

AND WENT AFTER HIM. Other versions read, “*went away to follow Him*,” NASB “*went with Him*,” LIVING and “*and went off after Him [to be His disciples, side with His party, and follow Him]*.” AMPLIFIED Whether it is being an Apostle, or being among the rank and file of the redeemed, **it all begins with following Jesus** – with being where **He** is. It begins with being within the circumference where His voice **can** be heard, and in the vicinity where His works **can** be beheld. **Jesus has no salvation to give, and no work to do, that does not require the individual to follow Him, and be with Him.**

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 11

“ Mark 1:21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. ” (Mark 1:21-22)

INTRODUCTION

The Lord Jesus was noted for His preaching and teaching – for proclaiming and expounding. The Prophets who foretold Him were also noted to their preaching and teaching. A special messenger sent to prepare the way for Him – John the Baptist – was also noted for these two activities. Immediately after His temptation, Jesus *“taught in the synagogues, being glorified of all”* (Luke 4:15). Sin had introduced a condition of spiritual ignorance in which both the nature and the will of God had become greatly obscured. Among other things, Jesus came to bring clarity concerning God, His purpose, and His salvation. As *“the Light of world,”* He brought lucidity into the religious arena – one that was fraught with tradition and lifeless legalism. We should therefore expect a kind of religious disruption to occur as Jesus begins to preach and teach. That disruption will not always be adversarial. It will, however, force people out of the mold of lifeless religion, and to consequently consider fresh perspectives of God, His purpose, and His salvation.

It is apparent that those who desire to obtain what God has to give must listen to what He has to say. A religion that leaves the people in a state of fundamental ignorance of the Lord and His *“eternal purpose,”* cannot be from God. It is imperative that the people of God be alert for religious encroachments that leave the mind and heart unchallenged and without spiritual substance.

“ 21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught.”

Jesus has drawn at least four ardent followers – Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Their day was interrupted by a call from the Master, and they embarked on a new career.

THEY WENT INTO CAPERNAUM. Matthew tells us that Jesus had left Nazareth, and was actually living in Capernaum: *“And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim”* (Matt 4:13). This was done in order to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up”* (Matt 4:14-16; Isa 9:1-2). While Jesus dwelt in Capernaum, it is written that He *“taught them on the Sabbath days”* (Lk 4:31). In our text, we will be privy to one of those times. It was after this initial move, while He was preaching throughout that region, that Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James, and John (Matt 4:18-22).

Now *“THEY”* (Simon, Andrew, James, and John) go with Jesus *“into Capernaum,”* returning to Christ’s home base with Him. The ministry of Jesus was in a state of dramatic growth. Matthew writes of this time, *“His fame went throughout all Syria.”* All of sick and infirm people, *“taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic (epileptics NASB), and those that had palsy”* were brought to Him, *“and He healed them”* (Matt 4:24-25). What a remarkable time it was – and Simon, Andrew, James, and John were with Him, being exposed to the mighty teaching and working of the Savior. They were coming into a fuller and more productive acquaintance of the Lord Jesus. This, of course, is a requisite for effective preaching and teaching.

It is one thing to hear others speak of the wonderful works of God – and, indeed, it is refreshing to do so. The men in Samaria heard of Jesus through the testimony of a woman (John 4:29-30). Simon first heard the testimony from Andrew (John 1:40-41). Nathanael heard the testimony from Philip (John 1:45-48). But the real change took place in them all when they personally met the Lord and were duly impressed with His Person, presence, words, and works. Many of the Samaritans believed on Jesus because of *“the saying of the woman.”* However, *“many more believed because of His own word,”* saying, *“Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world”* (John 4:42).

HE ENTERED INTO THE SYNAGOGUE. Luke informs us that the synagogue in Capernaum had been built by a *“certain centurion.”* This was the man whose faith caused Jesus to *“marvel.”* He said of the man, *“I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”* (Lk 7:1-10). From the Centurion’s response to Jesus, it seems apparent that he himself had frequented this synagogue, hearing Jesus who spoke there regularly.

A consideration. It is interesting to note that God never commanded His people to build synagogues. We are not certain of their precise origin. The word *“synagogue”* means *“gathering,”* and referred to a place where the people of God came together. We learn from the book of Acts that *“Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day”* (Acts 15:21). It is generally understood that synagogues had their origin sometime during or after the Babylonian captivity – the people then being deprived of the Temple. History informs us there were numerous synagogues throughout Palestine, and thirteen in Jerusalem itself. McCLINTOK & STRONG

Here was an example of the kind of devotion described during the time of Malachi: *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another”* (Mal 3:16). Jesus sanctified such gatherings, gracing the synagogues of the land with His presence and matchless teaching. We learn from the book of Luke that it was Jesus’ *“custom”* to go into the *“synagogue on the Sabbath day”* (Luke 4:16). That is a revelation of the Divine nature!

AND TAUGHT. Other versions read, *“and began to teach,”* NASB *“gave teaching,”* BBE *“He taught them,”* DOUAY *“taught the people,”* NLT *“He was teaching,”* YLT and *“where He preached.”* LIVING The word *“taught”* means *“to hold a discourse with others in order to instruct them,”* or *“instill doctrine into one.”* THAYER In this ordained way, Jesus was acquainting people with *“the manner of the kingdom”* (1 Sam 10:25). Those who have no appetite for teaching will not spend much time with Jesus, for He was a *“Teacher come from God”* (John 3:2). Jesus did not come into the synagogue to hold a community question/answer session, but to instruct people in things pertaining to life and godliness. That was His manner.

“ 22a And they were astonished at His doctrine . . . ”

It should not surprise us that Christ's teaching was unique. If He did, in fact, come into the world "*that they which see not might see*" (John 9:39), then He will administer some form of understanding – understanding that is essential to the obtaining of eternal life.

Fifteen times the Gospels say of Jesus, "*He taught*" (Matt 7:29; 13:54; Mk 1:22; 2:13; 4:2; 9:31; 10:1; 11:7; 12:35; Lk 4:15; 19:47; 20:1; 6:59; 7:28; 8:20). Eleven times we read of Jesus "teaching" (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 21:23; 26:55; Mk 6:6; 14:49; Lk 5:17; 13:10,22; 21:37; 23:5). We read of Him departing from one place to "*teach*" in another (Matt 11:1). Once, when Jesus told the people He was going where they "*cannot come,*" the Jews reasoned that He was going somewhere to "*teach*" (John 7:34-35). He taught in their synagogues (Matt 13:54), by the sea side (Mk 2:13), and "*in the Temple*" (Mk 12:35). When the people "*resorted to Him again,*" following Him to the "*farther side of Jordan,*" it is said of Jesus, "*and as He was accustomed, He taught them again*" NKJV (Mk 10:1).

Many of the contemporary views of Jesus do not make much of His teaching. However, that is a fundamental aspect of His ministry. Until the heart is brought to the point where the individual wants to sit at the feet of Jesus like Mary, to hear His word (Luke 10:39), little will be received from Him. Jesus said of Mary sitting at His feet, "*Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her*" (Lk 10:42).

In my judgment, this is a particularly weak area in the nominal church. There is little emphasis on a teaching Jesus. Yet, when delineating the nature of spiritual life, the Spirit witnessed, "*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind . . . But ye have not so learned Christ; **If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus :** That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Eph 4:17-24).

Those in Capernaum were not the last to hear the teaching Jesus. In fact, He has increased both the volume and depth of His teaching – teaching that is requisite to walking in His light, enjoying His presence, and participating in His great salvation.

ASTONISHED. *Other versions read, "amazed," NASB "astounded," NRSV "full of wonder," BBE "made a deep impression upon them," NJB "completely astonished," AMPLIFIED "surprised," LIVING "listened with amazement," WEYMOUTH "utterly amazed," ISV and "dumbfounded." WILLIAMS*

The word "*astonished*" means "to expel by a blow, drive out or away . . . to be struck with amazement, astonished, amazed." THAYER The imagery in this word is that of a sudden blast of air that removes everything else, filling the container with itself. When astonishment has to do with fear, what is said or done causes fearfulness to fill the heart. In our text, a sense of wonder and marvel came upon the people when Jesus taught.

The point is that there was a distinct uniqueness in what Jesus said and how He said it. What He said did not blend with the notions that were entertained in the religious community. This characteristic of the Lord's word is expressed in Jeremiah's words: "*Is not My word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*" (Jer 23:29). Matthew tells us that the people in Jesus' home town, after hearing Him speak, said, "*Whence hath this Man this wisdom, and these mighty works?*" (Mat 13:54). He spoke in a manner that His adversaries were not "*able to gainsay nor resist*" (Lk 21:15).

Perhaps you can recall when the Word of the Lord first arrested your attention, and you were astonished and amazed at the manner in which He spoke, and the content of His message. Jesus still breaks through the crust of religiosity and “church-as-usual.” His words are penetrating, discovering the “*thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb 4:12). It is no ordinary experience to hear Christ, and be taught by Him (Eph 4:20-21).

HIS DOCTRINE. Lexically, the word “*doctrine*” means “*teaching*” – but that definition does not produce much clarity. “*Doctrine*” is like a summary word. It not only includes **what** is said, but includes the **purpose** for which it is said. “*Doctrine*” has a certain direction – an objective, or something to be accomplished. It is not merely the communication of information, although that is certainly included. It is written that once Jesus said “*in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes*” (Mark 12:38). Another time Jesus said, “*Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me*” (John 7:16). In other words, Jesus taught people what God wanted them to know. He brought the things of God within the grasp of their hearts and minds. God said to Moses, “*My doctrine shall drop as the rain*” (Deut 32:2). That saying is fulfilled in the teaching of Jesus.

“ 22b . . . for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”

This text shows us that, by its very nature, the teaching of Jesus provokes a comparison with all lesser teaching. Divine tutelage has a certain quality about it – a character that dwarfs all competing instruction. Once Jesus’ teaching is duly heeded, the individual will make a comparison with other instruction. **This confirms there is a sharp contrast between the Word of the Lord and the words of men.** Wherever the truth is proclaimed in power, this contrast will become apparent.

HE TAUGHT THEM. Other versions read, “*He was teaching them.*” NASB The idea is that **while** Jesus was teaching, something became very apparent to the listeners. The words He employed, the manner in which He spoke them, and the thrust of His message arrested their attention. He was acquainting them with the God they professed to worship. He was opening to them the Law and the Prophets with which they thought themselves to be familiar. The people came to the synagogue that day, but they did not hear a lecture, or a learned disquisition on some facet of Jewish life. This day, they were “*taught.*” They were learning something, seeing things, and being exposed to thoughts that took hold of their hearts and minds. “*He taught them.*” I cannot begin to tell you how many religious gatherings I have attended where no teaching took place – where nothing was learned, and no precious nugget of truth was dispensed to the people. It was quite different for those who heard the Lord.

ONE THAT HAD AUTHORITY. Other versions read, “*as one having power,*” DOUAY “*with authority,*” NJB “*one who had real authority,*” NLT “*He spoke as an authority,*” LIVING “*there was authority about it,*” WEYMOUTH “*like One who had authority to teach,*” WILLIAMS and “*He taught with the ring of authority.*” PHILLIPS Luke says of this occasion, “*for His word was with power*” (Luke 4:32). To be sure, it was an arresting word!

During Christ’s ministry some Temple officers confessed, “*Never man spake like this Man*” (John 7:46). The people sensed that Jesus knew what He was talking about. He was not philosophizing, but declaring heavenly realities. Later He would say, “*I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me*” (John 5:30). **Jesus spoke out of the experience of communion with the Father.** Concerning God, He confessed, “*But I know Him: for I am from*

Him, and He hath sent Me” (John 7:29).

That is why Jesus spoke as one having authority! It was not because He had familiarized Himself with the religious writings of the day! It was not His academic training or familiarity with the teaching of the doctors of the Law that moved Him to speak with such obvious confidence. With startling candor He said, “*I speak that which I have seen with My Father*” (John 8:38). That is what gave the ring of authority to Christ’s words.

NOT AS THE SCRIBES. Other versions read, “*not as the teachers of the law,*” NIV “*Not like the scribes,*” BBE “*quite unlike the scribes,*” NLT “*unlike what they were used to hearing,*” LIVING and “*it was very different from that of the scribes.*” WEYMOUTH

The idea is not that Jesus simply had a different manner about Him. Rather, it is that the way He taught and the message He declared obviously clashed with the speaking of the scribes. They did **not** speak with authority, but founded their doctrines upon what men had said – uninspired men – “*teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matt15:9; Mk 7:7). They appeared very scholastic, but their words were limp and without vivifying power. Jesus characterized the scribes as “*blind guides*” (Matt 16:16,24). They did not really see, or understand, the things of God, and therefore their words had no power.

Referring to the same manner of teaching Paul said of his own preaching, “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*” (1 Cor 2:1-5). The truth of the matter is that attempting to preach within the context of human wisdom voids the power of the cross. “*not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect*” (1 Cor 1:17). Pure and insightful words are essential if men are going to have faith “*in the power of God*” (1 Cor 2:5).

Men cannot preach differently than Jesus, yet have the same results as He did. Jesus will not work through inferior messages. He did not when He dwelt among us in the flesh, and He does not now. If a person chooses to preach and teach what he himself has not comprehended, he is locked into a powerless condition. This applies to saturating messages with the sayings of mere men as well – our peers. The church of our day is languishing for a word that has power, and will cause godly astonishment among the people!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 12

“ Mark 1:23 *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.*” (Mark 1:23-24

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and has taught, acquainting the people with the manner of the Kingdom, and with God Himself. He is doing the works of His Father (John 10:37), only speaking what the Father has “*taught*” Him (John 8:28), and doing what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19). **It is the Divine nature, therefore, to be with, and teach, those who are gathered in the name of the Lord.** While Jesus did teach by the sea side (Mk 13:1; 2:13; 4:1), on a mountain (Matt 5:1; 15:29-30), and in houses (Matt 9:10; 26:6), and even by a well side (John 4:6-29), that is not where the majority of His teaching was done. It is written, “*in the day time He was teaching in the Temple*” (Lk 21:37), and that it was His “*custom*” to be in the synagogue every Sabbath day (Lk 4:16). Those who depict Jesus as constantly being among publicans and sinners have not correctly represented Him. It is written that often, when he taught publicans and sinners, it was because “*they came and sat down with Him and His disciples*” (Matt 9:10). Something of the grandeur of Jesus’ work will be missed if we fail to see this critical point. Jesus did spend more time with His disciples than anyone else. They alone were ordained “*that they should be with Him*” (Mk 3:14). It is this kind of circumstance that sets the stage for this text. Jesus is teaching the people in covenant with God in a place where they customarily gathered. He now encounters an adversary who was also there.

“ 23a *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit . . .*”

Now we will see something of our adversary’s manner as well. Not only do the powers of darkness blind and bind people, they often do so in religious surroundings.

THEIR SYNAGOGUE. Both Matthew and Mark use this expression (Matt 12:9; 13:54; Mk 1:23). The phrase “*their Temple*” is **never** used in Scripture, even though the Jews frequently gathered there, and Jesus taught there. Synagogues, however, were more localized, for occasions for traveling to the Temple were not frequent enough to sustain the soul. You may recall that Joseph and Mary, together with the young Jesus, went up to the Temple in Jerusalem “*every year*” (Lk 2:41). The synagogue was primarily a gathering place for the covenanted people. Although other people could often be found there, the focus of synagogue gatherings was not Gentiles, but Jews.

We will now see that what went on in the synagogue was of fundamental importance. This was not a mere gathering place for friends, where novel things were brought up, and a

sort of party atmosphere was found. In the book of Acts, we read of events taking place in the synagogues no less than twenty-two times. All of those occasions were marked by sobriety. Some of the most receptive listeners were found in them, as well as some of the most aggressive enemies. They were anything but a casual place – especially when Jesus showed up, or the Apostles after He had been enthroned in heaven.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the pervading lack of godliness in our land, and within the churches of the land, is that very little emphasis is placed upon solemn gatherings where the attention is focused on the Lord and His Word, particularly the Gospel of Christ.

A MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT. There the man was – in the very synagogue where Jesus was teaching, and all of the people were astonished at His word. The American Standard Version reads, “*And **straightway** there was in the synagogue a man . . .*” The Revised Standard reads, “*And **immediately** there was . . .*” Other versions read “*at once,*” NJB “*Just then,*” NRSV “*all at once,*” WEYMOUTH “*Suddenly,*” ISV and “*Just at that moment.*” WILLIAMS **The sense of the text is that Jesus’ teaching brought this man to the forefront, moving an expression to come from him .** Apparently the spirit dominating the man was quite content to allow him to spend time in the synagogue, participating in its various events, **until Jesus came !** There is something about the presence and teaching of Jesus that blasts through indifference and disinterest, which are promoted by the powers of darkness.

This man was “*with an unclean spirit,*” or “[*was in the power*] of an unclean spirit.” AMPLIFIED The idea is that he was “*possessed,*” DARBY I suppose this may have something to do with “free will,” for I cannot conceive of a person being in any sense “free” who is possessed, or under the control of an adversarial and wicked spirit.

Zechariah spoke of “*the unclean spirit*” being caused to pass out of **a land** (Zech 13:2) – but here we are speaking of a person. Here is a man, in a sense “*the image and glory of God*” (1 Cor 11:7), and yet there is in him “*an unclean spirit*” – the very antithesis of a holy and pure God. Unclean spirits are mentioned in the Gospels twenty-two times. They are mentioned twice in the book of Acts (Acts 5:16; 8:7), and once in the Revelation (Rev 16:13). Under the Law, there were unclean objects (Lev 5:2) and unclean foods (Lev 11:4-47). There were also unclean conditions from which men had to be cleansed (Lev 12:2-5; 13:3-8). The word “*unclean*” is paralleled with being “*unholy*” (Lev 10:10).

Within this man was an “*unclean spirit.*” Luke says of this man, “*which had the spirit of an unclean devil*” (or demon NKJV). In some way, this demon caused this man to be “*unclean,*” or defiled and contaminated – perhaps by a disease or some other condition as defined through the Law. It is possible that this demon flooded the man’s minds with evil thoughts and longings. We do not know the precise manner in which this spirit promoted uncleanness. Although the man was in the synagogue, he was not fit to be there. It was a condition over which he had no power. There was no procedure or set of rules that could make him clean.

It also appears as though there were periods when the man gained some clarity of thought, having some lucidity. We learn from the Gospels that demons sometimes vigorously assert themselves, as when a demon caused a young child to have seizures, often throwing him into the fire and the water (Mk 9:22). They appear willing to cause occasional disturbance.

The thing to be seen here is that there is a part of Satan’s kingdom that aggressively promotes spiritual uncleanness. No doubt these spirits operate under the powers described as

“*spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph 6:12). “*Uncleanness*” is something prohibited among the people of God (Rom 6:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:7). It is listed in “*the works of the flesh*” (Gal 5:19), and is contrasted with “*holiness*” (1 Thess 4:7). “*Uncleanness*,” as used in the Epistles, tends towards base immorality – licentiousness and concupiscence. This is a condition that especially marks our present generation, confirming the prominence of the devil in it.

“ **23b-24a . . . and he cried out, saying, *Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? . . .***”

HE CRIED OUT. One version reads, “*and he began shouting.*” NLT With the sound of the marvelous words of Jesus still in the air, and among a people who stood astonished at what they heard, suddenly the mouth of this man flies open, and he cries out. It was like a scream from the depth of the throat – a sort of guttural sound – for this is what the word “*cried*” means. THAYER This cry erupted from the man, but it was provoked by a demon. The “*gracious words*” that proceeded from Christ’s mouth were more than that dark spirit could stand. Thus it moved the man to interrupt Christ’s words with a doleful cry of discontent, as though the demon was actually being oppressed by the truth. Such cries are often said to have come from demons (Mk 3:11; Lk 4:41; 8:28). The truth disrupts and disorients the kingdom of darkness!

LET US ALONE. Other versions read, “*Away!*,” YLT and “*Why are you bothering us?*” NLT The words of Jesus were painful and disruptive to this unclean spirit. The truth agitated that spirit, and thus it cried out to be left alone in the darkness. On one occasion a demon pled with Jesus, “*torment me not*” (Lk 8:28). It is quite true, as James affirms, that the demons “*tremble*” in the presence of the Lord (James 2:19). They do not want the Lord around them, invading their territory, so to speak.

In the case of the Gadarene demoniac, the horde of demons that possessed him requested that they **not** be sent out of that country. “*And he besought him **much** that He would not send them away out of the country*” (Mark 5:10). They would rather enter into a herd of swine nearby than to be expelled from that region. When they asked the Lord not to send them away, they were saying “*Let us alone!*”

It ought to be apparent that it is really of no advantage to choose to live where Satan and his dark powers are dominant. One church in Asia was told by Jesus, “*I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even **where Satan's seat is***” (Rev 2:13). It may be that our lot in life finds us in such a place, as with the church in Pergamos. If that is the case, then it will require an extraordinary effort to hold Christ’s name firmly, and not be carried away with a tidal wave of iniquity. You may remember that this particular church (Pergamos), although not denying the faith, had allowed corruption to enter their presence. Some among them had embraced “*the doctrine of Balaam.*” Some held to the immoral doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which Jesus Himself hated (Rev 2:14-15). **The dominance of Satan’s influence in that area had removed the abrasiveness of false doctrine.** However, you may be sure that the offensiveness of Christ Jesus and the Gospel still effected the forces of darkness.

The repulsiveness of Jesus to Satan and his hosts is to be matched by a corresponding abhorrence among the elect of the devil and all of his ways – the world and all that is in it. It is an intolerable incongruity for Satan’s camp to be agitated with Jesus, while the camp of the saints is not offended by the devil and his ways.

WHAT HAVE WE TO DO WITH THEE? Other versions read, “*What do you want with us?*” NIV “*What have you to do with us?*” NRSV “*What business do we have with each other?*”

NAU **The demons know that Christ enters into no work with them.** They have nothing in common with each other. There is no joint-effort in which the mutual involvement of Jesus and demons is enjoyed.

Demons frequently said this to Jesus. The demoniac in the country of the Gergesenes cried out, “*What have we to do with Thee?*” (Matt 8:29; Lk 5:7). Demons know the enmity that exists between them and the Lord. Whatever they may not know, **they are keenly aware of the variance between themselves and the Lord of glory.** They are repelled by the presence of the Lord, just as surely as the Lord is repelled by the presence of the devil.

We can mark it well, that when the things of God are vigorously shunned, and people ask believers to speak no more of them, the devil **is present and is dominating the people.**

THOU JESUS OF NAZARETH. It is interesting that this demon refers to the Lord as “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” When Jesus was crucified, Pilate prepared a sign that was put on the cross. It was written in three languages – “*Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin*” – and read, “**JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS**” (John 19:19). Although Nazareth was a city with a bad reputation (John 1:46), yet the powers of darkness were especially aware of one of its citizens. Here was a unique Man, singled out of an entire city. Satan is always aware of genuine life in a wicked surrounding. It was so with Job, singled out of “*the land of Uz*” (Job 1:1). It was so with Lot, who dwelt in Sodom (2 Pet 2:7-8). Among other things, this confirms the very real clash of life with death, holiness with wickedness, and understanding with ignorance. How long the demons were aware of Christ’s person, we do not know. However, as He grew from a youth, increasing in favor with God and man, it became very apparent to Satan’s hosts that He was their enemy, having no part with them.

“ 24b . . . art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.”

“ US.” Although the man in question is said to have had “*an unclean spirit*” and “*the spirit of an unclean devil*” [demon], yet that spirit speaks for the whole host of darkness – “**US.**” He had pled with Jesus, “*Let US alone,*” and reasoned, “*what have WE to do with thee?*” There is a common destiny for the forces of darkness, and they appear painfully aware of it. Although there is a sort of hierarchy within Satan’s domain, yet there are matters in which they are grouped together – “*us,*” having no individuality.

HAVE YOU COME TO DESTROY US? Other versions read, “*Did You come to destroy us?*” NKJV “*Have you come to put an end to us?*” BBE “*Did you come HERE to destroy us?*” IE We know from other texts that Satan and his hosts are acutely aware of their condition. Even during the primitive times of Job, Satan knew he could not invade the territory from which God had barred him (Job 1:10). Hell, the lake of fire, has been “*prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt 25:41), and they appear to know it very well.

We know from Scripture that “*the angels that sinned*” have been delivered “*into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment*” (2 Pet 2:4). Whether by sense or by specific word, these fallen spirits know they are ultimately going to be destroyed, although they know not when. That Sabbath day, when Jesus walked into a Capernaum synagogue, this demon asked if this was the time when they would all be destroyed. The demons who had invaded and were controlling the Gadarene demoniac, caused him also to cry out, “*I adjure [implore] Thee by God, that Thou torment me not*” (Mk 5:7). Matthew says they asked, “*Art Thou come hither to torment us before the [appointed NIV] time?*” (Matt 8:29).

If the devil and his hosts are so keenly aware of their imminent destruction, is it comely for the church of the living God to be ignorant of this appointment? If they are caused to fear by the presence of Jesus, ought we not to be comforted by that blessed presence?

There is also something here that is highly disruptive of some false doctrines of the day. Some teach that when Jesus returns, the devil, together with the marshaled hosts of wickedness, will engage in a battle with Him and the saints? I suppose that Satan finds great delight in such stupidity, for he himself knows that he shudders at the very thought of the presence of Jesus – particularly since he has already received a mortal bruise from Him. If demons did not fight Jesus in the flesh, when He took upon Himself the form of a servant, is there anyone foolish enough to believe they will boldly confront Him in all of His glory? And if Satan and his hosts will not do such a thing when Jesus appears, how much less will men. Neither Satan nor his hosts will engage in battle with Jesus at that time!

I KNOW THEE WHO THOU ART. Now the demon speaks for himself. He sees past “*the carpenter*” (Mk 6:3). He knows this is not merely a man from Nazareth. God has already shown who He was through public announcements. There was the star that stood over the manger in Bethlehem (Matt 2:9). There was the attack against the young child Jesus by Herod (Matt 2:16). Satan must have been aware of young Jesus increasing in favor with God (Lk 2:52). He surely was not oblivious of His encounter with the doctors of the law when He was but twelve years of age (Lk 2:46-49). The heavens had opened and God Himself confessed Jesus to be His Son at His baptism (Mk 1:11). The Holy Spirit had descended from heaven and remained upon Him (Matt 3:16). Satan was soundly defeated by Him during forty days and nights, when he hurled every conceivable temptation at the Son of God (Matt 4:11). Here was a Person that the “*power of darkness*” was not able to touch or defile. How painfully aware they were of who Jesus really was!

THE HOLY ONE OF GOD. The demon does not say “*Powerful One*” – although He surely was that. He does not say “*Wise One*,” although that would have been equally precise. Because Jesus was the antithesis of “*the wicked one*,” the forces of darkness see Him as “*the Holy One*.” They know that the more prominent holiness becomes, the more they are restricted. It thus appeared to them that Christ might very well have come to get rid of them all. There is a remarkable clash of holiness with wickedness – an encounter that is more like lethal warfare than a mere contradiction. The holiness of God dispels the powers of darkness; that is why they associate it with their doom.

Christ Jesus is the composite of holiness, just as Satan is the embodiment of wickedness. It seems to me that men will cling to wickedness until they truly see that God is holy, and the scepter of Christ’s kingdom is “*righteousness*” (Heb 1:8). **Until Jesus is seen as “*the Holy One*,” men will see no imminent danger in being unholy.** Like the unclean spirit in this man, they will frequent religious places with no consciousness of God Himself.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 13

“ Mark 1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. 26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. 28 And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.” (Mark 1:25-28)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is teaching in the synagogue, and has confronted a man with an “*unclean spirit*” – a spirit that in some way contaminated and defiled the man he possessed. While the people themselves were not aware of the greatness of Christ, the “*unclean spirit*” knew very well who He was – the “*Holy One of God.*” Jesus had not been defiled by the powers of darkness, and that was known throughout the region ruled by “*the wicked one.*” While Satan and his hosts are not omniscient, or all-knowing, they are able to contrast the manner of Jesus with the nature of darkness, and draw a proper conclusion. The fact that they said “*Holy One*” rather than “*powerful One,*” confirms that Christ’s **character** has a disrupting effect among the hosts of wickedness. Apparently this “*unclean spirit*” had been able to work in this poor man without any obvious restraint – even entering into the synagogue without experiencing any form of limitation. But this was a different day. The “*Prince of life*” was among them. Whether anyone else knew who was in the synagogue that day, the hosts of darkness were keenly aware of the Lord’s presence. Already they have publically confessed Him as the “*holy one,*” acknowledging they have nothing in common with Him. It is clear this spirit does not want Jesus in their presence. What will Christ’s holiness prompt Him to do? Now we will see how the Lord Jesus responds to such a spirit.

“ 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.”

JESUS REBUKED HIM. Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit for what he has said. Do you remember what that was? (1) “*Let us alone.*” (2) “*What have we to do with Thee?*” (3) “*Have you come to destroy us?*” (4) “*I know who You are – the Holy One of God.*” From one point of view, these are all intelligent statements. They are driven by a certain perception of Jesus. There is an inquiry concerning the welfare of the “*unclean spirit*” – and of all who were with him (“*us*”). Further, all of these words were coming from the mouth of a man, even though they were being spoken by an “*unclean spirit.*” In our society, there is nothing in this dialog that would have suggested an unseen and unclean spirit was speaking with Jesus. In a modern church, this would be considered nothing more than the expression of a cantankerous church member. But Jesus sees and judges this situation as it really is. Jesus once said of Himself, “*as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just ; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me*” (John 5:30).

And again, “ **My judgment is true** : for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me” (John 8:16). Jesus sees this man, and hears the words that come from his mouth. He discerns the situation for what it really is, and is absolutely right and righteous in doing so. This is a situation that calls for a rebuke, not dialog. This is not a time for teaching, but for rebuke.

As we might expect, the word “*rebuke*” is very strong. It means “to reprove, censure severely, and charge one with wrong.” THAYER It also means “to restrain, or curb what is being done.” When men rebuke, restraint is not necessarily inherent in their word. That is, a rebuke may be followed by a refusal to receive that word. **However, this is not the case with Jesus.** When Jesus rebukes, the word is accompanied with power. Jesus “ **rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm**” (Matt 8:26). **He also rebuked a “foul spirit”** (Mk 9:25), and a “fever” (Lk 4:39). In every case, the rebuke was followed by **instant obedience** . Of old time, the drowning of Pharaoh and his armies is said to have been accomplished by the Lord’s “*rebuke*” (Psa 76:6). Even God’s “*countenance*” is said to constitute a rebuke that burns, cuts down, and causes His enemies to “*perish*” (Psa 80:16). When “*the waters stood above the mountains,*” they “*fled,*” receding below the mountain peaks, at the Lord’s “*rebuke*” (Psa 104:7).

It is no wonder that holy men have cried out, “*O Lord, rebuke me not*” (Psa 6:1; 38:1). There have been people who walked with Jesus who allowed Satan to work in them – and when they did, Jesus rebuked them. The one incident that comes to mind is when Peter sought to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross. It is written that Jesus said, “ *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*” (Matt 16:23). It is good to determine, by God’s grace, never to be in a situation that calls for the rebuke of the Lord. Should such an occasion arise, it will not be treated lightly.

HOLD THY PEACE. Other versions read, “*Be quiet!*” NKJV That brought an abrupt end to the speaking of this “*unclean spirit.*” Even though he had, from one point of view, said the truth – “*I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God*” – yet he was not permitted to speak. Later Mark will refer to “*many demons*” whom Jesus did not allow to speak because they “*knew Him*” (Mk 1:34). In the 3rd chapter Jesus “*straitly charged*” unclean spirits “*that they should not make Him known*” (Mk 3:11-12).

Those on earth who carry the vessels of the Lord are commanded, “*be ye clean*” (Isa 52:11). It is a principle in God’s kingdom that those with soiled spirits are not allowed to speak forth His truth. There are mysterious men like Balaam, who spoke remarkable things (Num 23:19-24). There are also heathen kings like Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, and Cyrus, who spoke things pertaining to the Lord. However, these were all spoken during dark times, and prior to Jesus. Now God speaks through His Son, who is His exclusive Spokesman (Heb 1:2). He will not allow demons to spread the truth about that Son. They had to hold their peace! **We learn from this that the one speaking the truth is not incidental or without significance.** There are personalities who have no right to speak concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

COME OUT OF HIM. We do not know how long this “*unclean spirit*” had possessed this person. This day, however, brought an abrupt conclusion to his possession of the man. This is a command – not to men, but to a demon, an “*unclean spirit.*” If you wonder at the authority that Jesus exercises in the region of darkness – even when He was in the flesh in this world – this text will make it clear. Men may have trouble with demons, but Jesus does not. **It only takes a command from the Lord Jesus, and Satan’s work comes to a grinding halt.** This brings great comfort to those who have faith in Him.

“ **26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of**

him.” We should note that there are external circumstances that are actually the result of unseen wicked hosts. This ought to move people to reconsider the myth of “free will.” The man Jesus is now confronting did not have a free will. There were words erupting from his mouth that were not his own. He was under the dominion of an “*unclean spirit.*” Unless unclean spirits have been banished from among men, this is still possible.

THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT TORE HIM. Other versions read, “*the unclean spirit had convulsed him,*” NKJV “*and throwing him into convulsions,*” NASB and “*the evil spirit shook the man violently.*” NIV What a pitiful sight this must have been! The spirit had no choice but to come out, but even in his exit he made his malignancy known. He exerted his last gasp of strength to “*steal, kill, and destroy*” (John 10:10). What a different kind of obedience is this? In obeying the word of the King, this “*unclean spirit*” still seeks to do harm. He has no respect for the poor man, and is only obeying the Lord because he has no choice but to do so.

In Luke’s account of this incident, he is careful to tell us that even though this spirit violently threw the man to the ground in convulsions, yet no harm was caused to the person. “*And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not*” (Luke 4:35). Although this “*spirit*” had every intention of hurting this man, Jesus would not allow him to do so! This spirit caused the man to go into some kind of massive convulsion, throwing him to the ground. But he could cause no harm to him.

On another occasion, a man brought his oppressed child to the Master. When the boy appeared before Jesus, the spirit possessing him “*immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth*” NIV (Mark 9:20). When Jesus commanded the spirit to come out of the boy, throwing the lad “*into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, ‘He is dead!’*” NIV (Mark 9:26). However, Jesus took the boy and lifted him up, safe and sound. Matthew says of that event, “*and the child was cured from that very hour*” (Matt 17:5).

HE CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE. The spirit did not speak in words, but shrieked, or screamed, apparently using the vocal chords of the man. Another version reads, “*he came out with a shriek.*” NIV The word used here (“cried”) means to “scream, shriek, cry out.” THAYER The expression “*with a loud voice*” means “a great, or exceedingly loud, tone and sound.” This was not an intelligent sound, but more like a shriek or scream of utter despair and pain. The demon did not want to leave, but had no choice in the matter. Satan and his hosts do not want to leave the area they have occupied. They must be driven out, like the Canaanites out of the promised land. Here, however, there was no battle. Jesus did not engage in a conflict with this unclean and defiling spirit. He only spoke a word: “*Hold thy peace, and come out of him.*” While his scream seemed to break the silence, the spirit actually did hold his peace. His mouth, so to speak, was muzzled so that he could not speak intelligent words, thus further contaminating the synagogue and inducing fear in the people.

HE CAME OUT OF HIM. Here is a case of obedience that is not from the heart, but is done with great reluctance, accompanied by loud cries and shrieks. Such a response is not attended by any form of blessing, but is the imperative response of wicked spirits to the word of the King. Here is an example of Jesus casting out demons “*with the finger of God*” (Lk 11:20). With His voice He simply “pointed,” as it were, to the “*unclean spirit,*” commanding him to let go of the man he held, and “*come out of him*” – and he instantly did. He caused the man to convulse, but could not hurt him, as Luke confirmed.

The thought of a person being dominated by an “*unclean spirit,*” or a demon, or a “*foul*

spirit,” is most arresting. Although Jesus, in His death, “*spoiled principalities and powers*” (Col 2:15), yet they continued to exercise influence in areas where God was not known. The book of Acts records “*evil spirits*” going out of people in the nineteenth chapter (Acts 19:12-13) – at least twenty-eight years after Jesus has been enthroned in glory. Paul spoke of people sacrificing to demons (1 Cor 10:20), and of not being able to drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, or eat from the Lord’s table and the table of demons (1 Cor 10:21). As late as 64 A.D. – thirty-five years after the day of Pentecost – Paul wrote to Timothy about “*seducing spirits and doctrines of demons*” (1 Tim 4:1). He spoke of them being active in “*the latter times,*” as well as at the present time. James said “*demons*” believe there is “*one God,*” and tremble in His presence (James 2:19).

Spiritual Babylon is known as the ultimate collecting place for demons – “*the habitation of demons, and every foul spirit*” (Rev 18:2). They are all still subject to the Word of the Lord Jesus, for which we give God thanks!

“ 27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. 28 And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.”

AMAZED AND QUESTIONING. Whatever may be said about these people and their level of understanding, they were acutely aware of the conflict between good and evil. We do not know if they were aware that this man had an “*unclean spirit,*” before Jesus came into their synagogue, but I do not doubt that they did. Jesus often met people who knew the ones for whom they sought mercy had an evil spirit (Mk 9:17). In fact, the enemies of Jesus said He had a demon (John 10:20). Others reasoned that a demon was not noted for doing good to people – like opening the eyes of the blind (John 10:21). All of this is to say that a different level of consciousness existed in those times, prior to the undue exaltation of the human intellect. Were this event to take place in the average church of our day, I am convinced few people would have any idea of what happened.

If the meeting in the synagogue was just a normal one that day, the normality certainly ended when Jesus commanded this unclean spirit to leave. The people were astonished, and began talking among themselves about what had happened. The Son of God had broken through the stilted crust of religious tradition and lifeless gatherings! Later, Mark writes of a time when the people “*were beyond measure astonished*” at the working of Jesus (Mk 7:37). Matthew says “*the multitudes marveled*” when Jesus cast out a demon, saying, “*It was never so seen in Israel*” (Matt 9:33).

WHAT NEW DOCTRINE? How is it that this was associated with Christ’s “*doctrine?*” The sense of the expression is this: “*What is this? A new teaching with authority.*” NASB In other words, the one doing the teaching possessed authority. He had jurisdiction over the world of fallen spirits – something unknown until the appearance of the Savior of the world. Just as in our day the people of that time had grown accustomed to powerless religion. Teachers spouted their philosophy, but had not real authority or power.

COMMANDING WITH AUTHORITY. Later in the history of the church, the powerlessness of pretenders was made known when the seven sons of Sceva attempted to cast a demon out of a man. Their words, however, were powerless. In fact, the possessed man leaped on them, overpowered them, and gave them such a beating they ran out of the house naked and bleeding (Acts 19:13-16). The people of that synagogue were familiar with demons causing things to happen in men – like blindness, deafness, dumbness, and having seizures. But here was a man who made the demons do things, and it caused the people to marvel and start talking about it. Jesus not only commanded the unclean spirit, the people observed, but “*they do obey Him.*” How that must have

ignited faith and hope in the tender of heart!

HIS FAME SPREADS. Mark says “*immediately His fame spread abroad*” throughout that region. Luke writes, “*And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about*” (Luke 4:37). Matthew says it spread “*throughout all Syria*,” a region of Asia (Matt 4:24).

When God works in extraordinary ways, it is the nature of men to spread the word. Balak saw how God enabled the Israelites to defeat the Amorites, and feared (Num 22:2-3). That is also what happened when Israel was delivered from Egypt. The word spread to Jericho (Josh 2:10), and to the inhabitants of Gibeon as well (Josh 9:9). When the Lord undergirded Joshua’s efforts, it was “*noised throughout all the country*” that God was with him (Josh 6:27). The Philistines quaked when they thought God had come among the Israelites (1 Sam 4:6).

On the day of Pentecost, when God poured out His Spirit, and they began to speak the wonderful works of God, “*it was noised abroad,*” and the multitude came together (Acts 2:7). Lectures and institutional success are not sufficient to bring the people together! It is no wonder that David cried out, “*It is time for thee, LORD, to work : for they have made void thy law*” (Psa 119:126). Habbakuk spoke similarly when he prayed, “*O LORD, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!*” (Hab 1:2). God responded by saying, “*I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you*” (Hab 1:5).

Make no mistake about this, if ever God bares His holy arm, men will talk – whether it is Israel being delivered, Nebuchadnezzar after being humbled, John the Baptist turning men, or the powerful preaching of the Gospel. The secret to spreading the Word is not a method of evangelism, but the Lord working in such a manner as is not common to men!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 14

“Mark 1:29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her. 31 And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.” (Mark 1:29-31)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has been ministering in the local synagogue. The people were all astonished, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Confronting a man possessed by an unclean spirit, He has cast the spirit out, forbidding it to dominate the man any longer. The people again are set to talking amongst themselves, inquiring concerning this “*new doctrine*,” for with authority He had commanded unclean spirits, and they obeyed Him. Among other things, this whole series of events suggests that the synagogue meeting was not brief – at least not when Jesus was there. After an eventful day like this, what will Jesus do? Where will He go? What of His disciples? Where will they go, and what will they do? Will they view their Sabbath obligation completed? Will they remain with Jesus? It is difficult to view that Sabbath day within the context of a Sunday in the average American church. There is nothing about the text that suggests brevity or disinterest. It is also clear that a certain climate was created by the presence of the Lord Jesus. He seemed to be prominent wherever He went, drawing the attention of the people. He also was prone to teach, expounding the Kingdom of God and speaking the words of God. He also was compassionate upon those within the synagogue. Things often happened there that did not take place elsewhere. I suggest the presence of Jesus still is after this manner. Where He is found there will be teaching, and insight, and understanding will be ministered. Compassion will be experienced, and discerning ones will be attentive.

“ 29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.”

Matthew records an incident that may have taken place before the one in our text. It was Jesus' encounter with the centurion who besought the Lord on the behalf of his servant, who lay “*sick of the palsy, grievously tormented*” (Matt 8:5-6). Jesus told the man, “*I will come and heal him*” (Matt 8:6). The man, however, said he was not worthy to have Jesus come under his roof. Being himself a man of authority, he told Jesus, “*Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*” At this point it is written that Jesus “*marveled at him, and turned Him about, and said unto the people that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*” When the servants returned to the house, they “*found the servant whole that had been sick*” (Matt 7:7-10). It appears as though this incident took place on the way to Peter's house. If this is so, it is another confirmation of the prodigious labors of our Lord. He was always going about “*doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil*” (Acts 10:38). Once the Savior is

seen as a Worker, men will be more prone to seek mercy from Him. Those who envision the Lord as only beholding men with a critical eye, or remaining primarily inactive, are not likely to seek mercy from Him, and grace to help in the time of need.

FORTHWITH. Other versions read, “*as soon,*” NKJV and “*immediately.*” NASB This may seem to conflict with Matthew’s account of the Lord confronting the Centurion. However, that difficulty is resolved by considering Mark to be dealing with **where** Jesus was found, or the next place to which He came. He did not go to the Centurion’s house. The next place Jesus determined to go is the point of the text. As though citing a heavenly schedule, Mark says they “*immediately*” left the synagogue, providing the next location.

THEY ENTERED INTO THE HOUSE. Mark says this was “*the house of Simon and Andrew.*” Luke says it was “*Simon’s house*” (Lk 4:38). Matthew says “*Peter’s house*” (Matt 8:14). I gather that Mark is showing that Andrew was a joint owner with Peter, although he was the more prominent one. Originally, Peter and Andrew were from the city of Bethsaida (John 1:44). It appears as though they had relocated to the place from which Jesus was operating – Capernaum (Matt 4:13). We are not told the time during which this move took place. God had no doubt providentially constrained them to make this move.

Notice that James and John were also with them. On the way to Capernaum, Jesus had called Simon, Andrew, James, and John, summoning them to follow Him. They went with Jesus to the synagogue. They left the synagogue with Him, and they went to the “*house of Simon and Andrew*” together. We will soon find that it is, indeed, “*good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psa 133:1). These four were the ones to whom Jesus delivered His discourse from Olivet on the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and His return (Mk 13:3). Peter, James, and John were privy the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt 17:1-1). When Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter, He only allowed “*Peter and James and John*” to accompany him (Mk 5:37). Jesus also took these three with Him on the night He prayed in a bloody sweat, when He “*began to be sore amazed and very heavy*” (Mk 14:33).

There are blessed occasions when holy clusters of disciples are given to see things that are most extraordinary. Blessed are those who enjoy such times.

There is also something else to be seen here. In these four men we are being exposed to what it means to follow Jesus. It involves going **with Him** more than Him going with you! Jesus did call disciples and ordain them to be “*with Him*” (Mk 3:14). Viewing things from this side of the cross, Paul exhorted us to do precisely this – remain with the Lord. “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him*” (Col 2:6). In our text, this means walking to Capernaum with Him. It meant entering the synagogue with Him. It also means leaving the synagogue with Him, and entering into the house of Simon and Andrew with Him. Once a person is called of God, life takes on a radical change. We are called “*out of darkness*” into “*His marvelous light,*” and there we are to remain (1 Pet 2:9). We are “*delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son,*” and there we are to remain (Col 1:13).

Elsewhere the necessity of abiding is addressed in these words, “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*” (Gal 5:25). Our eternal destiny hinges on this matter of abiding – remaining with Jesus, or staying where He has called us. Thus John writes, “*And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming*” (1 John 2:28). One of the grand secrets of growing “*in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet 3:18) is simply remaining where He

puts us, and moving forward as He leads us.

“ 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her.”

SIMON'S WIFE'S MOTHER. Peter, then, was a married man. We learn from Paul that the wives of the Apostles were known to have accompanied them on their journeys. “*Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?*” (1 Cor 9:5). In this text, it is apparent that Peter was caring for his mother-in-law, who no doubt lived with him and his wife.

LAY SICK OF A FEVER. Matthew also says this woman lay “*sick of a fever.*” Luke, however, is even more pointed about this, confirming this was no ordinary fever. “*And Simon's wife's mother was **taken with a great fever***” (Luke 4:38). Some versions say “*a high fever.*” NKJV The words “*taken with*” mean “imprisonment, hold in custody, hold prisoner.” ROBERTSON “*holden with a great fever,*” ASV “*pressed with a great fever,*” YLT “*suffering in the grip of a burning fever.*” AMPLIFIED This was something that could not be resolved by human wisdom.

We will learn from our Lord's response to this circumstance that this was more than a simple affliction, or one that could be accounted for from a medical point of view. This woman was under the control of this fever, held within its prison, as it were. In the Law, God spoke of punishing the disobedient by smiting them with “*a fever*” (Deut 28:22). This was also called “*the burning ague,*” or a “*fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life*” NIV (Lev 26:16). We know from our Lord's response that this was **not** the kind of fever Simon's mother-in-law had. However, I cite these texts to show that there were occasions that could not be accounted for by medical explanations.

Surely everyone has lived long enough, and has had sufficient experience to know there are circumstances in which absolute helplessness is revealed – things about which we can do nothing. These are but a reminder of the way all things would be if the Lord was not merciful to us. They should teach us to seek help from the Lord quickly, knowing how helpless we can become in a moment of time.

ANON THEY TELL HIM OF HER. Matthew says “*And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever*” (Matt 8:14). Mark is telling us what led to Jesus seeing the woman “*lying sick with a fever.*” NASB Apparently she had been in this condition for some time, for “*they tell Him of her.*” I assume this refers to Simon and Andrew, or perhaps some who were caring for the woman.

The word “*anon*” means “straightway,” “forthwith,” or “immediately.” It does not necessarily imply that they spoke to Jesus about this matter as soon as He entered the door. I gather that as soon as, in their thinking, they had **associated the authority and power of Jesus with the circumstance in their house**, they told Him “*of her.*”

Luke says, “*they besought Him for her*” (Lk 4:38). Other versions read, “*they made request of Him in her behalf,*” NASB “*they asked Jesus to help her.*” NIV and “*they pleaded with Him for her.*” AMPLIFIED This was not a casual petition, but a fervent one. The NLT reads, “*‘Please heal her,’ everyone begged.*” The idea is that they “*kept entreating Him for her.*”
MONTGOMERY

There are several valuable lessons to be learned from this incident. First, we ought to

be quick to tell Jesus about deficiencies in our house, whether they are physical, moral, or spiritual matters. Such times are appropriately called a “*time of need*,” and we are urged to “*come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help*” during such occasions (Heb 4:16). We read of a mother who told Jesus of her afflicted daughter (Mat 15:22-28). A man named Jairus told Jesus about his afflicted daughter, seeking mercy for her even after she had died (Matt 9:18). Another man told Jesus of his son, who was a “*lunatic*” (Matt 17:15-18). We should certainly not be hesitant to tell Jesus of our infirm loved ones.

We are also urged to let our “*requests be made known unto God*,” and to do so “*by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving*” (Phil 4:6). God never tells His people to handle their problems on their own. He does not tell them that there are things they need not bring to Him. Instead He urges us to make our requests known “*in everything*” (Phil 4:6-7).

There is also something to be said about several people petitioning the Lord about a single thing. In our text “*they*” besought the Lord for Peter’s mother-in-law. One time Christ’s disciples spoke for a certain centurion, saying he “*was worthy for whom He should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue*” (Lk 7:2-5). On another occasion, four men brought a palsied friend to Jesus, letting him down through the roof of a house to the feet of Jesus (Mk 2:3-4).

There is also the matter of boldness – for a certain boldness is required to ask the Lord to do something for us. Nevertheless, we are urged to come “*boldly*” to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16).

“ 31 And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.”

HE CAME AND TOOK HER BY THE HAND. Matthew reads, “*He touched her hand*” (Matt 8:15). Luke says, “*And He stood over her*” (Lk 4:39). The picture is that of a concerned and thoughtful Deliverer. He stands over her, as though diagnosing the situation. He touches her hand, identifying Himself with her grievous trial. He takes her by the hand as one through whom all things become possible. Christ’s works are personal. They are not wrought as a professional, who may be disassociated from the situation. Jesus approaches this woman as one who can “*command deliverance*” (Psa 44:4). God’s people must be convinced of this: if ever they can get the Savior’s attention, and He “*touches*” their circumstance or condition, deliverance is at hand.

HE LIFTED HER UP. This the hand of omnipotence – the “*hand of the Lord*” that “*doeth valiantly*” (Psa 118:15). When this hand is extended toward a person, the situation is about to change! When a certain man brought his son to Jesus, pleading for mercy, the Savior commanded the evil spirit who possessed him to depart. The Spirit threw the boy on the ground, and it looked as though he was dead. It is written, “*Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up*” (Mk 9:17). When Peter commanded a lame man to “*rise and walk*,” it is written that “*he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up*” (Acts 3:7). When Peter commanded Dorcas to rise from the dead, she opened her eyes, saw Peter, and “*sat up*.” It is then written, “*and he gave her his hand, and lifted her up*” (Acts 9:41).

THE FEVER LEFT HER. The fever left “*immediately*,” not gradually. Matthew says the Lord touched her, “*and the fever left her*” (Matt 8:15). In his characteristic way, Luke provides a most edifying detail . “*And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever : and it left her*” (Lk 4:39). We do not know if an evil spirit was promoting this fever – like a “*spirit of infirmity*” (Lk

13:11). That is of no consequence here, for no circumstance can remain if the Lord has rebuked it, regardless of the cause of that circumstance!

When the Lord parted the Red Sea for Israel to cross over on dry land, it is written, “*He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up*” (Psa 106:9). Through Malachi, God spoke of delivering His people from plagues they had brought upon themselves. “*And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground*” (Mal 3:11). During a storm that as threatening the lives of the disciples, Jesus arose and “*rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm*” (Matt 8:26).

The point to be seen here is that only a word from the Lord resolves any dilemma. The word of the Lord is “*quick and powerful*” (Heb 4:12). “*The voice of the Lord*” is said to be “*powerful,*” and is “*full of majesty.*” It “*breaks cedars,*” “*divides the flames*” so they cannot burn us, and “*shakes*” the intimidating wilderness (Psa 29:4-8). If the Lord says “*Be thou clean*” to a leper, he is “*immediately cleansed*” (Matt 8:3).

SHE MINISTERED UNTO THEM. The thoroughness of the Lord’s work is seen in its results. The woman “*arose and ministered unto them*” (Matt 8:15). Luke says, “*and immediately she arose and ministered unto them*” (Lk 4:39). When Jesus arrived with James and John at the house of Simon and Andrew, Peter’s mother-in-law was laying in bed in the grip of a great fever. Now, she is ministering to them in “*perfect soundness*” (Acts 3:16). Normally, a person stricken with a great, or high, fever is sapped of all of their strength, and considerable time is required to recover. But no ordinary circumstances follow the touch and word of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

On one occasion, when a woman of ill fame washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, our Lord said to criticizing Simon, “*Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment*” (Luke 7:45-46). Such could not be said of the mother of Peter’s wife! Like the Philippian jailor who was loosed from his sins and ministered to the very men he had previously beaten, she ministered to Jesus and His disciples. It was said of that jailor, “*And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house*” (Acts 16:34).

It is a sure mark of a thankful heart when those who are helped and delivered by the Lord minister to His people. That is the best use of recovered strength and renewed energy.

The Sabbath day is not yet over, and yet so much has already occurred. The sun has not yet set, and the day has been filled with gracious words and deeds. May the Lord increase our aptitude to receive much, for He “*daily loadeth us with benefits*” (Psa 68:19).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 15

“ Mark 1:32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33 And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34 And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him.” (Mark 1:32-34

INTRODUCTION

It is apparently still the Sabbath day – a day that has already been filled with new and refreshing things. He has astonished the people with His doctrine, speaking as one having authority, and not as the scribes. In the synagogue Jesus has confronted a man with an unclean spirit, cast out the spirit, not permitting the spirit to speak of Him, and set the people to marveling again with a display of obvious power and authority. Now Jesus is at the house of Simon and Andrew, together with James and John. He has just healed Peter’s mother-in-law, and she has been ministering to them. What a prodigious Worker He is! We will now be further exposed to the Savior, who knew nothing of personal convenience. He is wholly devoted to the will of His Father, and, as when He was only twelve, “*must be about*” His “*Father’s business.*” He has come into a region that has been pervaded by great spiritual darkness. Matthew says His entrance into Capernaum fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy of the Messiah, “*The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in **the region and shadow of death** light is sprung up*” (Matt 4:16). It is as though Satan had captured this “*region.*” Later in His ministry, Jesus will upbraid Capernaum because their response was not appropriate for the amount of light that had been shown to them. They had been “*exalted unto heaven,*” being favored by His “*mighty works*” (Matt 11:23-24). We are now considering some of majority of those in Capernaum.

“ 32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.”

AT EVEN. At this time, it was dark, for it was “*after the sun had set.*” NASB The sun was not in the process of setting, but had already sunk beneath the horizon. The outward circumstance now matched the spiritual condition of that region – the “*gross darkness*” of which Isaiah had spoken (Isa 60:2). Because this was apparently a citadel of Satan, the people are said to have been sitting in darkness (Matt 4:16).

From a practical point of view, you catch a glimpse of the Divine nature here. Even though the Lord was robed in the flesh, which greatly “*straitened*” Him (Lk 12:50), yet He is zealously doing the work of His Father. Truly, He had been “*eaten up*” with the zeal of the Lord (Psa 69:9; John 2:17). As Isaiah foretold, He was “*clad with zeal as a cloak*” (Isa 59:17). David also spoke of this marvelous trait, speaking of being “*consumed*” with zeal (Psa 119:139). Also, when Isaiah

spoke of the reign of the Messiah, and of the increase of His “*government and peace*,” he declared “*The zeal of the Lord hosts will perform this*” (Isa 9:7). There were opposing spiritual forces in this region that could not be successfully confronted with a spirit of mediocrity or ordinary religious activity.

THEY BROUGHT UNTO HIM. The activities of Jesus have been the subject of much casual talk. I have heard people say if Jesus came to town, He would go where all of the people were, and would be found at all times among the sinners and low-lifers. It all has a sound of authenticity to it, but is it really true? There are numerous instances of people being “*brought*” to Jesus (Matt 4:24; 8:16; 9:2,32; 12:22; 14:35; 19:13; Lk 19:35; John 1:42). I will say more on this matter when commenting on the next verse. At this point it is enough to say that in my judgment, there has been a fundamental misrepresentation of Jesus and of the focus of His earthly ministry – which was an index to His heavenly one.

ALL THAT WERE DISEASED. Luke says of this occasion, “*they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him*” (Luke 4:40). The idea of the text is not that they searched through the region, finding every diseased person, then bringing them to Jesus. Rather, everyone who had diseased people among them brought those infirm people to Jesus. Jesus was in Simon’s and Andrew’s house, and had healed an infirm person there. That word had apparently got out, and now the people began seeking mercy for “*diseased*” people in their own houses.

In a marvelous display of insight, the people had made an association of the Lord Jesus with their own circumstance. They had not seen the Savior as a mere phenomenon, with themselves sitting in the stands as spectators. **They had heard of the exercise of His power in the rebuke of the fever of the mother of Simon’s wife, and it had opened the door of hope to them.** Light had “*sprung up*” among them (Matt 4:16), and it had illuminated the situations in which they had been living.

Luke points out that these were “*divers*,” or “*various diseases*” (Lk 4:40). Verse thirty-four of this text will also use that expression. Jesus was not a heavenly specialist in healing certain diseases. He had authority over them all. With Him “*all things are possible*” (Matt 19:26).

THEM THAT WERE POSSESSED. These were “*demon possessed*” NKJV people – those who were in the grip of “*the power of darkness*” (Lk 22:53). There are eleven references to such people in the Gospels (Matt 4:24; 8:16,28,33; 9:32; 12:22; Mk 1:32; 5:15,16,18; Lk 8:36). This gives us some indication of what is involved in sitting in “*darkness*.”

APPLICATION. In our day and place, there is a great need for making an association of Jesus with our own weaknesses – when people can see the Lord Jesus as one who is “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities*” (Heb 4:15) – indications of human frailty.

This debility is not confined to the various “*diseases*” of the people being brought to Jesus. **There is also a frailty that is realized in the inability of those, with whom the diseased dwell, to help them.** With Peter and his wife, it was his wife’s mother. How long she had laid with a fever, we do not know. But Simon and his wife were unable to change the situation. Thus, Jesus had mercy upon **them also** by healing the woman.

This kind of mercy should not be strange to us. On one occasion, when Epaphroditus was in prison with Paul, “*he was sick nigh unto death*.” It appeared as though the condition would not change, and Paul, who himself had done many great works, could not resolve this particular dilemma. However, the situation was changed when “*God had mercy*” on Epaphroditus, apparently restoring his health. Of that occasion Paul wrote, “*For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but*

God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil 2:27).

“ 33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.” What a sight this must have been: *“The whole town gathered at the door.”* NIV It does not appear as though this involved everyone coming at once. Rather, as the word spread, people began coming *“ Until the whole town was gathered about the door.”* AMPLIFIED *“The door”* was the entrance into Peter’s house, and the time was after dark on the Sabbath day – after the sun had set.

The Jewish Sabbath was from evening to evening: *“It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even , shall ye celebrate your sabbath”* (Lev 23:32). Thus, these people honored the Sabbath day, as ordinarily understood. **However, as soon as they felt they could get to Jesus, they came.** This kind of attraction was introduced by John the Baptist, to whom the people also came, **going out to him** (**Matt 3:5**). John, therefore, not only introduced the Savior Himself, but the manner in which He would relate to the people. **They would come to Him!**

This particular aspect of the Savior’s ministry – **the people coming to Him** – fulfills certain prophecies concerning Him. This view of Jesus, as I have already indicated, contradicts some of the things that are now being said of Him. It was Jacob who first said this of the coming Messiah, and he said it in veiled words: *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be ”* (Gen 49:10). Jacob’s meaning is that Judah’s prominence would last until the Messiah came. The word *“Shiloh”* means, *“He whose it is”* – that is, the scepter, or right of rule, belonged to the promised One, and Judah would remain prominent until He came.

Notice, the people would gather to the promised Savior – **they would come to Him!** Moses also foretold of this phenomenon: *“unto Him ye shall hearken”* (Deut 18:15). The Psalmist said that even kings would **“bring”** Him *“presents”* (Psa 72:10). Isaiah said of Christ’s reign, *“All nations shall flow into it”* (Isa 2:2). Even the Gentiles would **“seek”** this Lord (Isa 11:10). He also said God would lift up His hand to the Gentiles, and *“they shall bring their sons in their arms, and their daughters on their shoulders”* (Isa 42:22). Isaiah further promised, *“nations that knew not Thee shall run unto Thee ”* (Isa 55:5), and *“the Gentiles shall come to thy light”* (Isa 60:3). Zechariah spoke of the reign of the Messiah as one in which *“there shall come people,”* saying, *“us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also”* (Zech 8:21). He added, *“Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD”* (Zech 8:22). **This is a trait of the Savior – people are moved to come to Him!**

Jesus Himself spoke of a certain drawing that would compel people to come to Him. *“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him . . . It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall be all taught of God.’ Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me . . . Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father”* (John 6:44-45,65). Again, Jesus said of His post-resurrection ministry, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me”* (John 12:32). There is no need to attempt to neutralize this great text. It is better to believe it.

Think of the people who came, or were brought to, Jesus. There was the woman who was termed a *“sinner”* who came to Jesus bringing an alabaster box of ointment (Lk 7:37-40). There was the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:4). There was Zacchaeus (Lk 19:2-5). There were also the woman with an issue of blood (Matt 9:20), the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:26), the

centurion (Matt 8:5), and a man with a demon possessed son (Matt 17:16). There were “*great multitudes*” (Matt 15:30), and people from Jerusalem, Idumaea, beyond Jordan, and those around Tyre and Sidon (Mk 3:8). We read that “*the people sought Him, and came unto Him*” (Lk 4:42), and of a host that came to Him upon the testimony of the woman at the well (John 4:30). The disciples of John “*came to Him*” (Matt 9:14), and multitudes followed Him even into a desert place (Matt 14:15). The “*blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple*” (Matt 21:14). Another time the people came to Him “*from every quarter*” (Mk 1:45). Even when Jesus came to the country of Gadarenes, the demoniac came to Him (Mk 5:1-3). When He came to Samaria, the woman came to Him at the well (John 4:4-7).

Jesus **did** go to the people – like He went to the pool of Bethesda where a multitude of impotent people lay. Even then, He healed only one man (John 5:2-9). He also told His disciples to go and “*preach the Gospel to every creature*” (Mk 16:15), and “*make disciples of all nations*” (Matt 28:18). But when you get to the core of the matter, Christ’s Kingdom is essentially one in which the people “*come*” to Him (Matt 11:28). That aspect of His ministry is seen in the text before us. It is sad that it is so rare in our time. Perhaps this condition exists because Jesus Himself is not prominent, or perhaps because of the heartedness of the people.

“ 34 And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him.”

HE HEALED MANY. Matthew says of this occasion, “*He healed all that were sick*” (Matt 8:16). Luke says, “*and He laid His hands on every one of them , and healed them*” (Luke 4:40). In saying “*many,*” Mark is by no means in conflict with Matthew and Luke, who say “*all*” and “*every one.*” Rather, “*many*” emphasizes a great number, and is not intended to equate with “*many of the sick.*” That is, the “*all that were diseased*” were a lot of people. The word “*many*” is often used in this way – to denote a great multitude, yet it is inclusive of all of them. Paul thus reasons in Romans that “*many*” are “*dead*” because of Adam’s disobedience (Rom 5:12). Jesus took upon Himself “*many offenses*” (Rom 5:16). Because of Adam’s transgression, “*many were made sinners*” (Rom 5:19). Actually, sin caused **everyone** to be dead. **All** of the sins of the world were laid upon Christ, and **everyone** was *made sinners*. When Paul says “*as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God,*” he means all of them (Rom 8:14). Thus Mark declares that very many people were healed by Jesus on this occasion. Jesus did this, according to Luke, by laying “*His hands on every one of them.*” I want to again emphasize that this was at the end of a very busy day.

SICK OF DIVERS DISEASES. The ramifications of sin were diverse, or in great variety. A single sin committed on a single occasion, spawned a great plethora of dreadful effects. Ponder the different categories of sin: fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispering, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, pride, boasting, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, idolatry, adulterers, effeminate, sodomy, stealing, drunkenness, reviling, extortion, uncleanness, lasciviousness, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresy, reveling, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, whoremonger, guile, hypocrisy, evil speaking, etc (Rom 1:29-31; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-4; 1 Pet 2:1).

Equally true, sickness (which is an aspect of death, or mortality) has taken a vast variety of forms. Matthew mentions “*all manner of sickness and all manner of disease . . . divers diseases and torments,*” “*lunatic (epileptic), and palsy (paralysis)*” (Matt 4:23-24). All of this vast variety of sin and disease, together with “*torments*” (“severe pain” NIV), and various kinds of demon possession (uncleanness, infirmity, deafness, dumbness, fits, madness, etc), sprang from a single

transgression – eating fruit. The Savior counteracted every effect of sin, confirming that “*where sin did abound, grace did much more abound*” (Rom 5:20).

CAST OUT MANY DEVILS. Jesus launched an invasion of Satan’s empire, expelling even strong and dominating spirits and demons. Matthew says, “*He cast out the spirits with His word*” (Matt 8:16). Christ’s power was so significant, that He even conferred the ability to expel demons on “*the twelve*” (Matt 10:8). There was no question that Jesus did, in fact, cast out these spirits, for even His enemies, acknowledged that He did (Matt 12:24). Our text says He “*cast out many devils.*” Later we are told that “*He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils*” (Mark 1:39). The powers of darkness were being shaken, being overcome in the very territory in which they dominated.

SUFFERED NOT THE DEVILS TO SPEAK. Jesus would not allow the devils to acknowledge Him, as demonstrated in the synagogue earlier (1:25). Later, when “*unclean spirits*” recognized Him and “*fell down before Him*” confessing “*Thou art the Son of God!*,” Jesus “*straitly charged them that they should not make Him known*” (3:12). Luke adds, “*for they knew He was Christ*” (Lk 4:41).

BECAUSE THEY KNEW HIM. Men “*knew Him not,*” even though they were “*made*” by Him (John 1:10). Even Christ’s own people, raised and cultured to know the Redeemer “*received Him not*” (John 1:11). However, the domain of darkness, ruled by the devil and aligned against Him, were not allowed to speak about Him, or acknowledge Him! Paul exhibited this same intolerance for such activity, commanding an evil spirit who was speaking of “*the way of salvation*” to come out of the one through whom it spoke (Acts 16:16-18).

Whatever you may think about those dominated by Satan speaking of Christ in a favorable way, heaven is not tolerant of such speech. **In this world, God and Christ are not honored by the confession of those who do not willingly serve them.** Paul spoke of such souls in these words, “*They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (Titus 1:16). There is no room in the kingdom of God for testimonies from such people! They are like unclean spirits confessing Christ, and in this world, that brings dishonor to Jesus, not honor. Prior to the judgment day, we have no desire for unclean people to speak of the Lord Jesus.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 16

“ Mark 1:35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36 And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. 37 And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee. 38 And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39 And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.”
(Mark 1:35-39)

INTRODUCTION

We are being exposed to a working Savior – one “*who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him*” (Acts 10:38). Because God was “*with Him,*” we are also being exposed to “*the wonderful works of God*” – what He was doing among men through His only begotten Son, for Jesus worked “*the works of Him that sent*” Him (John 9:4). These works were also introductory to His heavenly ministry, which would follow His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. **They confirm that Jesus concentrated on doing what no one else could do.** Even when He went to a wedding feast with His disciples, He did something that no one else could do, turning water into wine (John 2:9). Also, through the life of Christ we see how the servant of God is dependent upon the Father for power and support. God has never ordained a work or a ministry that could be thoroughly fully accomplished through men alone. Even under the Law, the work of the priests and High Priests was dependent upon God, His provision, acceptance, and guidance. Jesus lived out this kind of life, openly displaying the nature of living by faith, being acceptable to God, and “*approved of men*” (Rom 14:18). When we read the Gospels with a tender and understanding heart, we will behold the real nature of spiritual life. The “*strait*” gate and the “*narrow*” way will become more and more apparent.

“ 35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”

Our Lord has had a busy day – preaching in the synagogue, delivering a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and healing Peter’s mother-in-law. Then, after the sun had set, he was confronted with the “*whole city*” gathering at the door of Simon’s house. They had brought many with all kinds of diseases to Him, and He had laid His hands on every one of them, healing them all. Now, what will the Savior do?

IN THE MORNING. Early the next morning, before the sun had risen, the Savior “*got up, and left the house.*” NIV Referring to this same incident, Luke says “*And when it was day, He departed*” (Lk 4:42). The word “*day*” is considered to be the interval between sunrise and sunset. “*In the morning*” refers to the daybreak, very early in the morning, and a great while before light had

filled the skies. Generally speaking, this would be around 6:00 AM. In Jesus the Psalmist's words were brought to their apex: "*in the morning shall my prayer come before You*" NKJV (Psa 88:13).

A SOLITARY PLACE. Other versions read, "*a lonely place,*" NASB "*a deserted place,*" NRSV "*a quiet place,*" BBE "*a desolate place,*" ESV "*a secluded place,*" NAU and "*into the wilderness .*" NLT Luke says of this occasion, "*He departed and went into a desert place*" (Lk 4:42). It was place where no human activity could be found – a haven where the sights and sounds of the world were absent. Matthew speaks of another time when Jesus prayed similarly: "*And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain **apart** to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone*" (Mat 14:23). Luke says of yet another occasion, "*And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God*" (Luke 6:12).

Jesus had been among the multitudes for an extended time – first in the synagogue, and then in Simon's house. If "*virtue*" went "*out of Him*" when a single woman with an issue of blood was healed (Mk 5:30), who can dare to imagine the output of virtue on that memorable Sabbath day! There must have been a sort of depletion of His spiritual resources that required Divine refurbishment. This is part of the "*weakness*" of the flesh, and is a reason why Jesus was "*straitened*" while He was among men in the flesh (Lk 12:50).

There are certain distracting influences in the earth, so that the closer we are to it and its inhabitants, the more we need strength from heaven. Those who have an appetite for the things of God, and devote themselves to being built up upon their most holy faith, know very well that the world, even in its lawful involvement, erodes spiritual resources. There comes a time when we must withdraw from all worldly influences, retreating, as it were, to the heavenly sanctuary. Ideally speaking, this is one of the ministries of a godly assembly.

HE PRAYED. Mark mentions three occasions when Jesus prayed. All of these occurred at critical times. The one we are considering was at the threshold of His ministry, following extensive exposure to the people (1:35). The second was following the feeding of the five thousand, and just before He entered into "*the land of Gennesaret,*" where He confronted a vast multitude in "*villages,*" "*cities,*" and "*the country*" (Mk 6:46-56). The third was on the night of His betrayal, when He prayed in agony concerning the "*cup*" He had been given to drink (14:32-42). Luke also tells us Jesus "*continued all night in prayer to God*" prior to the choosing of the twelve Apostles (Lk 6:12-13).

There are periods of concentrated and extensive involvement in the work of the Lord – times that are extraordinary, requiring the exercise of godly discretion and choice. Jesus preceded such times with prayer, tuning His heart, as it were, to the heavenly frequency.

The work of God requires involvement with Him! At no point – not even with the King Himself – is labor for the Lord merely professional, or driven by a certain expertise that is acquired in the earth. Right here is a particularly weak point in the modern American church. Much of what is being done in the name of the Lord does not demand profound and extended fellowship with God and Christ. Outside of the circumference of the "*good pleasure of His will*" (Eph 1:5), there is no such valid work. **God has nothing to do with works that can be done without Him, His power, or faith in Him.** He has not purposed any work that can be accomplished independently of Himself.

If this appears too difficult to receive, it is actually lived out in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke only what He had been "*taught*" by the Father (John 8:28b). He declared,

“I do nothing on My own initiative” NASB (John 8:28a), affirming that He came to *“work the works of Him that sent Me”* (John 5:17). It was this circumstance that compelled Him to often withdraw from the multitudes, resorting to private prayer (John 18:2).

“ 36 And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. 37 And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee.”

SIMON AND THOSE WITH HIM. This would have been the holy conclave of Simon, Andrew, James, and John. These four had been *“called”* together, had journeyed with Jesus to Capernaum, went into the synagogue with Jesus, and were also with the Master in Simon’s house. We know from Luke’s Gospel that the number also included some of the multitude that had gathered at the door of the house: *“And when it was day, He departed and went into a desert place: and **the people sought Him**”* (Luke 4:42). It should not surprise us that those who are exposed to the working of the Lord, and take delight in it, are not content to be separated from the Lord.

FOLLOWED AFTER HIM. The people did not know where Jesus went, for He had apparently not told them. The words *“followed after Him”* do not suggest they knew precisely where He was, or that they followed close behind Him. We know that from the next clause. Additionally, the word *“followed”* actually means *“sought for.”* STRONG’S Other versions read *“sought for,”* NKJV *“hunted for,”* NASB *“went to look for,”* NIV and *“pursued.”* RSV

However, we are not confined to mere language for this view. Luke writes, *“and the people sought Him”* (Lk 4:42).

Here again we are being exposed to the very nature of God’s *“great salvation.”* **It is one in which the people earnestly seek the Lord.** If this occurred before Jesus was crucified, what will be the manner of drawing now that He has been exalted? As it is written, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw** all men unto Me. This he said, signifying what death He should die”* (John 12:32-33).

WHEN THEY HAD FOUND HIM. The diligence of Peter and those with Him was honored: *“they found Him.”* It is apparent that although Jesus had retreated to a solitary and lonely place, He had not made Himself totally inaccessible to the people. It is the Lord’s manner to *“wait, that He may be gracious”* (Isa 30:18), not withdrawing into total obscurity. Of old time, the Lord revealed this to be an aspect of His character: *“And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD”* (Jer 29:13-14). Although He spoke for a different reason, Hosea also declared this facet of Divine glory: *“I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early”* (Hosea 5:15). The people did not find Jesus because they were expert seekers, but because He was gracious!

ALL MEN SEEK FOR THEE. The unique and powerful nature of Christ’s ministry is revealed in this telling word: *“All men seek for Thee!”* Other versions read, *“Everyone is looking for you!”* NKJV I do not believe this was ever said of the scribes and Pharisees. Luke provides us an even further detailed account of their request: *“and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him, that He should not depart from them”* (Luke 4:42). Other versions read, *“and tried to keep Him from leaving them.”* NKJV The idea is that they tried to **force** Him to stay with them. Thus other versions read, *“and tried to **prevent Him** from leaving them,”* AMPLIFIED *“would have **kept Him** from going away,”* BBE and *“ **would have restrained Him** , that He should not depart from them.”* RWB

How the presence of Jesus jarred the religious community! On another occasion, John records, “*When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and **take Him by force, to make Him a king** , He departed again into a mountain Himself alone*” (John 6:15). Certain officers sent by the Pharisees to snare Jesus confessed, “*Never man spake like this Man!*” (John 7:46). Earlier, those in the Capernaum synagogue acknowledged, “*He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*” (Matt 7:29).

Light had “*sprung up*” in that “*region,*” formerly noted for being an area dominated by “*the shadow of death*” (Matt 4:16). It was a light with which no comparison could be made. No prophet had ever spoken with such power as Him! No worker of miracles had worked as extensively as He. If God could say of Ezekiel’s ministry, “*then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them*” (Ezek 33:33), what will be said of the ministry of Ezekiel’s Lord, Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory?

While it is not appropriate for us to develop an inordinate desire for the sensational and externally impressive, it seems to me that the Lord Jesus should be known for extraordinary deeds. If there is nothing ordinary about Him and His ministry, He should not be associated with such things now. **Should the day come in our environment when men earnestly seek after the Lord, or beseech Him not to leave them, it will be because they have seen something uncommon and beneficial in Him.** In my judgment, it is right to ask the Lord for such holy associations to be granted in this dry and thirsty time.

“ 38 And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39 And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.”

What will Jesus do in response to this plea to remain with the people? Will He set up a ministry in the solitary place in which He was praying, receiving the people and ministering to them? Here, we will be exposed to the very purpose of God, by which our Lord was strictly governed. He will proceed to fulfill the will of His Father.

GOING TO THE NEXT TOWNS. Mark’s text suggests these words were said to His disciples – Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Luke tells us what the Lord said to the mass of people who were trying to get Him to stay with them: “*And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also*” (Luke 4:43). This was in keeping with the agenda by which He operated: “*I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*” (John 9:4). A certain time had been allotted to the Son of God to “*finish*” the work He had been given to do. Prior to His betrayal, Jesus said to the Father, “*I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have **finished the work** which Thou gavest Me to do*” (John 17:4). That “*work*” is what compelled Jesus to say these words.

He would not be driven by the desires of the people, even though they appeared very commendable. Here the Lord was faced with a decision involving a choice between something appearing to be good, and the “*good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*” (Rom 12:2). In a day when “*preaching*” is considered a strictly secondary activity, and often impractical, we read of Jesus replying that He had to “*preach the kingdom of God to other cities also.*” He tells His disciples to come with Him, rather than stay with the multitudes, that He might “*preach*” in the “*next towns.*” He was filling that entire area with the good news of the Kingdom.

THEREFORE CAME I FORTH. Of preaching Jesus said, “*for that is what I came out for.*” NASB Luke writes that Jesus said, “*for therefore am I sent*” (Lk 4:43). On the night of His

betrayal, Jesus said to His disciples, “*I came forth **from the Father** , and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father*” (John 16:28). In our text, He connects His mission with preaching – with declaring in words the wonderful message that the heavenly rule was now being made known to those who would advantage from it.

The idea of the text appears to be this: “Since multitudes are desirous to hear the Word of God, let us go into the next towns also, for I have not been sent to Capernaum alone, but must preach throughout all Judea.”

When Jesus first began His ministry in His hometown synagogue, He declared He had been anointed to preach. “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to **preach** the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to **preach** deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to **preach** the acceptable year of the Lord*” (Luke 4:18-19). **Great works without a great word bring no real advantage to the people.** Moses worked some miracles of unequalled magnitude, but was primarily known for what He said. The prophets were also more noted for what they said. **Jesus Himself was noted for His words.** When He told His disciples of the soon coming of the Holy Spirit, He said the Spirit would “*bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have **said** unto you*” (John 14:26).

PREACHING IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES. Here again we see the focus of our Lord’s ministry. Reliable history tells us that Galilee was densely populated at the time of Jesus, with over two hundred villages, each having several thousand inhabitants. Conservative estimates approximate a million people. While all of this is not certain, it does confirm the magnitude of our Lord’s ministry. Luke says of this occasion, “*and He preached in the synagogues of Galilee*” (Lk 4:44).

Just as surely as countless multitudes meeting in the synagogues of the land of Judea were perishing for lack of knowledge, so myriad professing believers are experiencing spiritual starvation within many churches of our land. Just as the Jewish synagogues were found in the “*region of the shadow of death,*” so it is with many churches of our country.

AND CAST OUT DEVILS. What a commentary on the state of things in Judea! It was an area that was dominated by the wicked one and his hordes of demons. Christ’s preaching was accompanied by an assault on the kingdom of darkness. If the message of God is to be received by the people, there must be a commensurate struggle with, and overthrow, of “*the rulers of the darkness of this world*” (Eph 6:12). These powers seek to obscure truth. Insightful and powerful preaching illuminates the whole arena of life. This aspect of Kingdom labors – overthrowing despotic powers – must not be overlooked!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 17

“ Mark 1:40 And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42 And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.” (Mark 1:40-42)

INTRODUCTION

We are covering the grand interim between the Old and the New Covenants. The Law and the Prophets were “*until John*” (Matt 11:13; Lk 16:16). Beginning with John God began doing a new thing. The thrust of the message was not what men should do – as with Moses and the Prophets. Rather, John delivered a marvelous announcement: “*Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Mk 3:2). When Jesus began preaching, He said the same thing: “*Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Mk 4:17). Thus the works of God were heralded, versus the works of men. While the Jews were within the kingdom of the Romans, the announcement of a superior kingdom was delivered to the people. This was not a philosophical kingdom, but one which the people would confront. They would behold the King of that kingdom, and receive some undeniable impressions of its superiority. In the midst of a region of darkness and the shadow of death, the “*Kingdom,*” which is over all, was announced. It would come within reach of the people, and they would be given to see its magnificent power. They would thus become more fully acquainted with God Himself, who, through this kingdom, would accomplish the salvation of a fallen race.

True preaching declares the One that is governing this world, saving, bringing many sons to glory, and keeping them from falling through His mighty power. The man who is sent from God, like John, does not major on what men can do for God, but what God will do for helpless men. Not only will we see this in the message preached by both John and Jesus, we will see it in the mighty works of Jesus, which dwarfed all works before Him.

“ 40 And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.”

It is said of John the Baptist, who was not excelled by any person before him (Matt 11:11), “*John did no miracle*” (John 10:41). The people did not bring their sick to John. Rather, John prepared them to receive and benefit from the Lord Jesus. Now, at this time, John has disappeared from the scene, being imprisoned by Herod (Matt 4:12; Mk 1:14). The attention is upon the Lord Jesus. Already He has cast an unclean spirit out of a man (1:25-26, raised Peter’s mother-in-law from a feverish bed (1:31), healed “*many*” with diverse diseases (1:33-34), and preached

throughout the synagogues of Galilee, casting out demons (1:39). His reputation was growing as He “*went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil*” (Acts 10:38). Hope sprang up among the people, and conditions that could never before be resolved were being brought to Jesus in expectation.

THERE CAME A LEPER TO HIM. Luke says the man was “*full of leprosy*” who saw Jesus (Luke 5:12). The last mention of a leper during the Old Covenant relates to king Uzziah, who took upon himself to burn incense before the Lord. Leprosy “*rose up in his forehead,*” and he remained “*a leper*” until he died (2 Chron 26:23). That took place nearly 800 years before Jesus began preaching. Moses and the prophets record only two people who were ever healed of leprosy: Miriam, Moses sister (Num 12:13-14), and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5:8-14). Jesus said of those who were healed of leprosy, “*And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus (Elisha) the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian*” (Luke 4:27).

At the time of this text, Jesus had not yet healed a leper. No one of that time had heard of a leper being healed among them. There was no incident of a healed leper for hundreds of years – only a ceremony that was ordained for the handling of lepers (Lev 13-14). Yet, the report of this mighty prophet moved this leper to come to Jesus, persuaded that He could cleanse him from leprosy. Oh, I want you to see the faith of this man! He had no example to follow, no promise from God, and not the slightest hint that lepers could be so blessed. Yet he came to Jesus, and he will not be disappointed.

BESEECHING HIM. Other versions read “*imploving,*” NKJV “*begged,*” NIV and “*pleaded.*” NJB The word “*beseech*” means to call for help, to earnestly ask for something, and to do so **with persistence**. This frame of mind is reflected in Jesus’ parables of the importunate widow (Lk 18:3-8), and the man who earnestly sought “*three loaves*” from his friend at the midnight hour (Lk 11:5-8). This is precisely the spiritual posture of which Jesus spoke when He, following the latter parable, admonished, “*Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*” (Lk 11:9).

Many prayers and supplications lack a sense of urgency. They are too casual and too ordinary, lacking inner compulsion, fervent longing, and a conviction of Divine ability and will. We are living in a time when such prayers do not handily fit into religion. “*Beseeching*” is not harmonious with the thrust of contemporary religion.

KNEELING DOWN TO HIM. Matthew says the leper “*came and worshiped Him*” (Matt 8:2). Luke says he “*fell on his face*” (Lk 5:12). Thus we see the picture of a man perceiving Jesus, coming to Him, and worshiping him while on his knees with his face on the ground. Those in the East still assume this posture in their religion. This man knew he was not before any ordinary Man, and thus rendered Him due homage.

SAYING UNTO HIM. These are the words of his beseechment. This is how he articulated his implorement. This is the manner in which he begged. **How** we frame our petitions can have very much to do with whether they are honored or not. I am not speaking of a formulae in prayer, but of a holy recognition of, and acquaintance with, the Lord of glory. Jesus had not yet been revealed in full measure, but this man had drawn all of the right conclusions from what he had seen and heard.

IF THOU WILT, THOU CANST MAKE ME CLEAN. Other versions read, “*If you are willing,*” “*If it is your pleasure,*” BBE and “*If you want to.*” NLT **Here is a remarkable insight into the power, or authority, of the Lord.** This poor leper was not relying on a procedure provided

in the Law of Moses. He was not hoping for a miracle like wicked Herod did (Lk 23:8). **His brief exposure to the Savior had convinced him He could do anything He wanted.** He made no demand, but appealed to the will of the Savior, for he knew that all that is necessary for a work to be done, is for the Lord to **want** to do it. He knew what Nebuchadnezzar learned with great difficulty, that “*He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*” (Dan 4:35).

“ 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.”

JESUS, MOVED WITH COMPASSION. Other versions read, “*filled with compassion,*” NIV “*moved with pity,*” NRSV and “*being moved with pity and sympathy.*” AMPLIFIED Compassion is said to come from the “*bowels,*” which, to the soul, are depicted as the seat of love and pity. Thus John writes of “*bowels of compassion*” (1 John 3:17). Here we are not faced with a mere surface reaction – like seeing some poor soul in distress, yet beyond the ability of our help. Jesus was stirred deep within by this man. And, what is it that so moved him? Was it the sight of a man “*full of leprosy,*” ordinarily to be excluded from society (Lev 13:46; Num 5:2)? Or, was it the strong beseeching of the man? It was both, for Jesus is moved by both what He sees and what He hears! In ancient times, holy men and women knew this. David knew that if the Lord looked upon his “*affliction,*” He would do something about it (2 Sam 16:12). He cried out, “*Look Thou upon me and be merciful to me*” (Psa 119:132).

Jesus was not merely “*moved*” emotionally, but was “*moved,*” or provoked deep within, to **do** something. The expression “*moved with compassion*” comes from a single word that means to be compelled from deep within. This man’s condition and supplication touched the heart of Jesus. This is something of what is involved in the Savior’s present High Priestly ministry. He is able “*to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities*” (Heb 4:15). The Gospels record three occasions when Jesus was “*moved with compassion*” (Matt 9:36; 14:14; Mk 1:41). The first two have to do with multitudes, our text focuses on a single man. In the first, He was moved with compassion because the multitudes were without a shepherd. It was at that point that He urged His disciples to prayer that laborers would be sent into the harvest, then He sent them (Matt 9:36-10:1). In the second, He was moved with compassion and “*healed their sick*” (Matt 14:14). In all three cases, He **did** something about the condition. As you can see, **Jesus is primarily motivated by His own character** . This gives a special advantage to those who “*know Him,*” and is one of the reasons why Paul was so zealous to obtain that knowledge: “*That I may know Him*” (Phil 3:10).

PUT FORTH HIS HAND AND TOUCHED HIM. Under the Law, a leper was not to be touched. If such a person was touched, the one who touched the leper was unclean until the evening, when the sun had gone down: and then had to wash with water (Lev 22:4-7). Matthew and Luke also make a point of Jesus **touching** this man (Matt 8:3; Luke 5:13).

In commenting on Christ’s healing ministry, Matthew declares it fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah bearing our infirmities. “*and [He] healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*” (Matt 8:16-17). This indicates that Jesus did not heal by merely dismissing diseases, but that He Himself bare the sicknesses that He removed. This He did without becoming sick, just as surely as He bore our sins without becoming a sinner.

I WILL! Other versions say, “*I am willing,*” NKJV “*I do choose,*” NRSV “*it is My pleasure,*” BBE “*I do will it,*” NAB and “*I want to.*” NLT There is something inherent in this

expression that must be seen. **In this case, for the Savior to “will” something is all that is necessary for it to be accomplished.** There is a level of the Divine will that must be seen in this way. Well did the sweet Psalmist affirm, “*But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased*” (Psa 115:3). Thus did an enlightened Nebuchadnezzar say of Him, “*He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto him, What doest Thou?*” (Dan 4:35). **Faith needs a word like this.** It cannot rest upon mere possibilities, but must be convinced that nothing can contravene the settled will of God. Thus God says of Himself, “*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure*” (Isa 46:10). That truth will now be made known in this hopeless leper!

BE THOU CLEAN. For the leper, the **only** question was whether or not the Savior was willing to make him clean. The Savior confirms this is what He **wants** to do. Now, it only takes His word to bring it to pass, for “*His word was with power*” (Lk 4:32). A Savior who wills, but cannot bring it to pass, is of no comfort to helpless people. Under the Law, the cleansing of a leper required investigation (Lev 13:3), a pronouncement of uncleanness, not being clean (Lev 13:4), sequestering the leper for evaluation (Lev 13:5), the pronouncement of clean if the leprosy was gone (not healed, Lev 13:6), further pronouncing of uncleanness if the leprosy remained (Lev 13:7-8), etc. But this was not so with Jesus. **He was introducing a new era, and the time of the First Covenant was passing away.** He simply spoke the condition away – “*Be thou clean.*” Thus the people were being weaned from procedures, and being cultured for faith, the engine of the New Covenant.

“42 And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.”

How powerful is Christ? The effect of His **word** will tell the story. **A person who cannot effect, or bring to pass what he declares, has no power.** Just as surely, a personality who can want something, yet cannot bring it to pass, is without power. How will the Lord Jesus stand up under such criteria?

AS SOON AS HE HAD SPOKEN. “*And as He spoke,*” DARBY and “*having spoken.*” YLT The idea is that Divine power came with His word, accompanying the very sound of His voice. The Psalmist spoke of this kind of power: “*He sent His word, and healed them*” (Psa 107:20). On the one hand, all the Lord has to do is “*will*” it, and it will be brought to pass. On the other hand, all He has to do is “*speak*” it, and it is done.

The human condition demands that such a word be spoken – a word that can cause the desired condition to take place. Thus, when speaking of Israel’s sudden turnaround, the Lord said, “*And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live ; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live*” (Ezek 16:6). Speaking of this powerful word the Psalmist wrote, “*For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast*” (Psa 33:9).

IMMEDIATELY. Other versions read, “*straightway,*” ASV “*at once,*” NJB and “*instantly.*” NLT Although the leprosy had filled this man, doing its wretched work over a period of time, the response to Jesus’ word was immediate.

This aspect of the Divine nature – namely the power of His word – was revealed more fully in the Person of Christ Jesus. As He went about among men, they were exposed to Divine utterance – a word that does precisely what it is sent to do – nothing less! God spoke of this through Isaiah. Although it was veiled at that time, yet Jesus brought it into full view. “*So*

shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa 55:11). This should not surprise us, nor should we seek to mitigate it with some form of stilted theology. The days of creation are described in words that complement this doctrine. Upon the utterance of a word, we read of the sure response : "*And there was . . . And it was so . . .*" (Gen 1:3,7,9,11,15,24,30).

THE LEPROSY DEPARTED . We know from Matthew's account that the leprosy did not merely depart into the air. Rather, Jesus Himself "*carried,*" or "*bore,*" those "*diseases*" (Matt 8:17). This may introduce some doctrinal difficulties for some, but there is no need for this to happen. We only need to take God at His word, and the matter will be clear to the heart, even if our minds lag behind.

All of this was done **before** Jesus was "*highly exalted*" to the right hand of God, "*angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him*" (1 Pet 3:22).

HE WAS CLEANSED. Both Mark and Luke say the "*leprosy departed from him*" (Lk 5:13). Matthew reads, "*his leprosy was cleansed*" (Matt 8:3). The point is that the thing that caused the man to be unclean was removed from him, thereby making him clean. Just as the man in the synagogue was freed from uncleanness when the unclean spirit was cast out of him, so this leper was no longer a leper, and thus "*was cleansed.*" He was physically clean, and thus, according to the Law, was ceremonially clean as well. He did not have to be sequestered, as the Law specified, in order to see if the disease would take its course or not. This was not a mere case of human infirmity, but one in which the Creator of humanity was involved. His presence superceded the presence of the leprosy, and His will was superior to the power and tenacity of that leprosy.

This whole thing was driven by Christ's "*will.*" He willed it, then spoke it, and it came to pass immediately. This is another strong reason for appealing to the will of the Lord, as Jesus taught us: "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matt 6:10). **This is not an appeal for men to do God's will, although that is involved, but for Him to do it! Just as insight and devotion are the environ in which God's will is done "in heaven," so we are to pray that such an environment will be found upon earth.**

From this perspective, this leper came to Jesus within the framework in which God works. He saw something in Jesus to which He was attracted. He came to Him in full recognition of His superiority, worshiping before Him. He was convinced that what the Lord willed, He could do. He resigned Himself the will of the Lord. All of those are traits of faith, which causes one to be pleasing unto the Lord, and without which "*it is impossible to please Him*" (Heb 11:6). We too can be convinced of Christ's power, or ability.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 18

“ Mark 1:43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.” (Mark 1:43-45)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has just confronted a leper who has, through his persuasion of who Jesus was, drawn near to him and said He could heal him if He wanted to. In a grand display of mercy, and confirming that He Himself was greater than any human condition, Jesus touched the leper, healing him because He wanted, or willed to do so. Only Jesus can change conditions because He wills to do so. Man cannot, by taking thought, or exerting his will, add anything to his stature or the length of his life (Matt 6:27), or “*make one hair white or black*” (Matt 5:36)– much less dismiss conditions that have fastened upon him. Jesus terminated the dreaded leprosy with His word – “*Be clean!*” – just as He dismissed the fever of Peter’s mother-in-law with a “*rebuke.*” Now that the man is clean, how will Jesus speak to him? What will He tell him to do? Will the man’s new-found cleanness be the primary thing? Will his state of wholeness be the conclusion of the matter? Is God honored as He desires to be by merely dismissing the troubles that plague us, or eliminating the circumstances that vex and disturb us? Is man the center of Jesus’ attention? We are going to be exposed to the Divine nature in this text, and to the manner in which Jesus reasoned, together with the purpose for which He came. Jesus will pull back the curtain of obscurity, giving us a small glimpse of WHY God does what He does.

“ 43 And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away.”

It is imperative that we behold the nature of Jesus in the Gospels, not merely what He does. If Jesus was driven by the purpose of God, then we can learn something of that purpose in His words and works. Among other things, Jesus said He came 1 “*to bring a sword*” (Matt 10:34), to 2 “*call sinners to repentance*” (Mk 2:17), to 3 “*do the will of Him*” that sent Him (John 6:38), 4 that men might have life, and “*have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10), 5 to “*save the world*” (John 12:47), 6 to “*bear witness to the truth*” (John 18:37), and 7 to lay down His life (John 12:27). The Apostles further declared that Jesus was sent 8 “*to be the Propitiation for our sins*” (1 John 4:10), 9 to “*deliver us from this present evil world*” (Gal 1:4), 10 “*to save sinners*” (1 Tim 1:15), 11 “*to destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8), to be 12 “*the Savior of the world*” (1 John 4:14), 13 to lay down His life that He “*might take it again*” (John 10:17-18), and 14 “*destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Heb 2:14).

These are a sort of spiritual tapestry upon which Christ's works were wrought. At no point were any of His works intended to remove the attention from these higher and Divinely determined objectives. When His works are seen correctly, they will clarify all of these revealed objectives, causing them to become more uncluttered in our thinking.

HE STRAITLY CHARGED HIM. This is an unusually strong statement, and may, if not seen correctly, appear to be out of character for the Savior. The words "*straitly charged*" are translated from a single word, and mean "to charge with earnest admonition, sternly to charge, sternly warn, and to emphasize what is forbidden to do." STRONG'S Other versions read, "*strictly warned*," NKJV "*sternly warned*," NASB "*a strong warning*," NIV "*very sharply*," BBE and "*charged him sternly (sharply and threateningly, and with earnest admonition).*" AMPLIFIED

Some modern representations of Christ would leave men thinking He could never speak sternly, or with great sharpness. However, this is not the case, as the text before us confirms. Nor, indeed, is this the only time Jesus is depicted as speaking in this way. This is the manner in which Jesus spoke of demons, "*straitly*" charging them not to make Him known (Mk 3:12). When He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, Jesus "*charged them straitly*" not to make the matter known (Mk 5:43; Lk 8:56). When He healed two blind men, opening their eyes, He "*straitly charged*" them saying, "*See that no man know it*" (Matt 9:30).

Because we will deal with this kind of word in the next verse, I will limit myself here to the matter of Christ speaking "*straightly*," or sternly. It is not that Jesus is a harsh and inconsiderate Lord, and no person must allow himself to think in this manner. However, there are circumstances and surroundings in which the works of Jesus are not viewed properly. There are spiritual environments in which corruption is so pervading that even the legitimate and gracious works of Christ are seen in a perverted way. In such environments Jesus' words take on a certain character. A tone of warning can be heard in them at such times. To put it another way, when Jesus becomes popular with carnal people, He does not speak with the gracious and considerate tones that His disciples enjoy.

Secondly, this response of Jesus confirms there are obligations that follow blessing! We have not finished with our dealings with Jesus when our petitions are answered, and the desired blessings are obtained. This is obscured when the needs of men are exalted above the purpose of God and the glory of His Son.

HE FORTHWITH SENT HIM AWAY. Again, this is a strong expression. It does appear to the fleshly mind to be out of character for the Savior. Other versions read, "*sent him away at once*," NKJV "*immediately sent him away*," NASB and "*[acting with deep feeling thrust him forth and] sent him away at once.*" AMPLIFIED No sooner is the man healed, than Jesus sends him away. How must this have appeared to the man himself? And what of the people who witnessed this? Would they not think the Master was a bit harsh with the man? These are matters that did not shape the thinking or actions of the Lord. He always spoke and worked in view of the reason for which He was sent into the world.

Right here we learn something about the response of men to the works of the Lord.

There is something disarming about blessings in the body – even when they are brought by the Lord of glory Himself. Although it can be overcome, there is a marked tendency to lose interest in the Lord when only our bodies are effected by His work. This is seen in the multitudes that Jesus fed. Jesus said they now sought Him, "*not because*" they perceived the

miracles, but because they ate “*of the loaves and were filled*” (John 6:26). There were the ten lepers who did not return “*to give glory to God*” (Luke 17:17-18). The response of the disciples to seeing the risen Savior also confirms the tendency of the flesh: “*they yet believed not for joy*” (Luke 24:41). All of this is involved in Jesus sending the healed leper away.

“ 44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”

SAY NOTHING TO ANY MAN. As pointed out before, this is not the only time Jesus spoke in this manner. He told those who saw him raise Jairus’ daughter “*that no man should know it*” (Mk 5:43). When He healed a deaf man who had an “*impediment in his speech,*” He “*charged them that they should tell no man*” (Mk 7:36). To those two blind men to whom He gave sight, Jesus said “*See that no man know it*” (Matt 9:30). After great multitudes had followed Jesus, and He had “*healed them all,*” He “*charged them that they should not make Him known*” (Matt 12:16). When Jesus had been transfigured before Peter, James, and John, He told them, “*Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man is risen from the dead*” (Matt 17:9). This, then, was one of Christ’s characteristic manners throughout His ministry.

Although Jesus was a prodigious miracle worker, **that is not how He wanted to be known**, for His vicarious death, triumphant resurrection, and mediatorial work would extend far beyond the narrow confines of flesh and blood.

The particular idea here is that Christ’s time had not yet come. Once, at the feast of the tabernacles, Jesus’ brothers urged him to go into Judea, “*that Thy disciples may also see the works that Thou doest.*” They reasoned, “*For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world.*” John adds that Jesus’ brethren did not yet “*believe on Him.*” For them, they simply wanted their brother to be better known – as a great worker among the people. Jesus replied to them, “*My time is not yet come*” (John 7:2-6). In regard to our text, it was inappropriate for Jesus to become popular among the people at that time. Sufficient time had not yet been realized for Him to more fully expound His real mission to the world. Later Jesus said He did not go up to the feast “*for My time is not yet full come*” (John 7:8). Again, when His enemies sought to take Him, they could not do so because “*His hour was not yet come*” (John 7:29). The same thing happened later in the Temple, when no man could lay hands on Him “*for His hour had not yet come*” (John 8:20). Jesus knew the Father’s time-table, and operated within the strict confines of that agenda.

SHOW THYSELF TO THE PRIEST. The healed leper was to go immediately to the priest, and show himself, according to the Law (Lev 13:49). Later, Jesus told ten lepers who sought mercy from Him, “*Go show yourselves unto the priests.*” Those men were cleansed “*as they went*” (Lk 17:14). **In both cases, the cleansing of the lepers was to be confirmed according to the Law,** not taken for granted. According to the Law, the priest was to present the “*cleansed*” leper to the people (Lev 14:11).

OFFER FOR THY CLEANSING. According to the Law, the cleansed leper was to bring an appropriate offering “*for his cleansing to the priest*” on the “*eighth day.*” That offering was presented to the Lord to “*make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed before the Lord*” (Lev 14:23-32). Thus the person would be pronounced clean by the priest, thereby qualifying him to once again be among the people.

Although Moses and the Prophets were technically “*until John*” (Matt 11:13; Lk 16:16),

Jesus enjoined this law upon the man He had cleansed from leprosy. The reason for this is provided in the next phrase. This would lift the incident out of the arena of the seen and spectacular, and associate it with the Living God

FOR AS TESTIMONY UNTO THEM. Other versions read, “for a proof to the people,” RSV “that will be proof for them,” NAB “as evidence to them,” NJB “so everyone will have proof of your healing,” NLT and “as a proof (an evidence and witness) to the people [that you are really healed].” AMPLIFIED This confirms that Jesus did not intend for this miracle to remain obscure. He rather preferred that it be told by others who attested to its reality. This would also fulfill a word from Solomon: “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Prov 27:2).

Remember, all of this is within the context of this truth: **it was not yet Christ’s time to be well known, or famous.** From a practical point of view, Jesus must first become well known for both His words and works before His death would have the desired effect. This would provide time for His preaching to become even better known than His miracles, for that preaching would elucidate upon His death, resurrection, and the world to come. Jesus was preaching “the Kingdom of God,” which focuses on what God is doing. The clear implication of this text is that, in Jesus, **God was doing infinitely more than meeting man’s temporal needs.** Such a ministry did not require the death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus!

“45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter.”

HE PUBLISHED IT MUCH. Some have imagined the Lord’s direction that the leper not make this known, was intended to actually provoke the man to speak it out. But this is a foolish notion, and unworthy of the slightest consideration. It represents Jesus has using “guile” and trickery to get someone to speak, which is anything but proper. Craftiness is not a trait of the Lord Jesus, but of those who are aligned with the devil (Mk 14:1; Eph 4:14). Jesus meant what He said, and the man ought to have obeyed it, going straight to the priest as he was told. However, being unduly motivated by his own zeal rather than the word of Jesus, “he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.” NIV **However, this was not the “news” that Jesus was spreading** – which was the good news of “the Kingdom of God” (Lk 16:16).

When Jesus healed the Gadarene demoniac, He told him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mk 5:19). Luke says Jesus told the man to return to his “own house,” and show what great things had been done to him (Luke 8:39). What is the difference between these two accounts? First, the Law had no instructions for the healing of a mad-man, or the casting out of demons. Second, the man lived in a territory that was largely occupied by Gentiles, and thus Jewish priests were not readily available. Third, Jesus told the man to return to his own house and friends, to verify what had been done to him. This was much like the instruction given to the man in our text. However, in both cases, the healed person published the matter extensively, rather than first having the work confirmed by witnesses.

NO MORE. The outcome of the man’s indiscretion was that Jesus was no longer able to minister in the cities. Lest this be thought an inconsequential matter, ponder what the Lord had said of His ministry. “And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth” (Mark 1:38). And again, “And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent” (Luke 4:43). Thus his mission was hindered by the aggressive witness of a healed man.

It probably is not that Jesus was physically unable to enter the cities. Rather, now that the fame of His healing power was spread abroad, it would have hampered His ministry. It was His doctrine which so provoked the Jewish leaders, and would eventually lead to Christ's ordained death. He came primarily to "*preach*" (Luke 4:18-18-19), but now the people were rushing to see, not to hear. They sought experience, not learning.

It is important that Jesus be known for the right reason – that He be perceived in the capacity for which God sent Him into the world, raised Him to sit at His right hand, and gave Him "*all power in heaven and earth.*" It is wonderful that the Lord Jesus can help us in all of the difficulties and vicissitudes of life. But let us not be so naive as to think that our earthly circumstances are the reason for God sending His only begotten Son. Let us not imagine for a moment that the resolution of human difficulties required the staggering cost that Jesus paid, or that this is why He has been "*made higher than the heavens*" (Heb 7:26). While Jesus had compassion upon the multitudes, and extended mercy to them, He refused to have His attention moved from the purpose for which He was sent into the world.

IN DESERT PLACES. Jesus did not immediately retire into the desert places, but did so after multitudes of people began coming to him. Luke informs us that Jesus eventually retired into the desert places to get away from the multitudes and pray: "*But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed*" (Luke 5:15-16). The multitudes came to Him, but He went to God! Whatever we may think about the priority of people-problems, we must, in the integrity of our hearts, ponder this passage. It will assist us in obtaining a proper focus of the Lord Jesus – a focus that is essential if we are to receive the benefits that He has been exalted to give us.

THEY CAME TO HIM. The people came to Jesus "*from every direction,*" NKJV or "*from everywhere.*" NASB They did not come to obtain the forgiveness of sins, or the gift of eternal life, but because they were sick. Even when He went into desolate places, "*Yet the people still came to Him from everywhere.*" NIV They were unwittingly seeking to overwhelm His teaching by seeking their own satisfaction. They did not have a clear picture of Jesus, but saw Him merely as the answer to life's difficulties. This in no way suggests that the Lord was impervious to the needs of the people. It does confirm that He refused to be moved from His mission, even by a demanding and aggressive people who sought His help. He must still be seen in this way.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 19

“ Mark 2:1 And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them. 3 And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” (Mark 2:1-5)

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of Mark covers the first year of Jesus' ministry. It includes his introduction and the preparing of the people by John the Baptist, His baptism, and His temptation in the wilderness. He announced that the time had been fulfilled, the kingdom of God was near, and that men ought to repent and believe the Gospel. That was first mentioning of *“the Gospel”* being preached and the belief of it urged (Matt 4:23; Mk 1:15). Everything about Jesus was out-of-the-ordinary. People were *“astonished”* at His doctrine (1:22). The demonic world was shaken by His presence (1:24). The people were *“amazed”* at His authority (1:27). For the first time in the history of the world, the healing of masses occurred (1:32-34). For the first time in centuries, a leper was healed (1:40-45). Jesus had been introduced as totally and completely separate from everything that was before Him. Both His words and His works were superior. For the first time Satan was soundly defeated in an extended exposure, and the kingdom of darkness was shaken to its foundation. From henceforth, no man would associate Jesus with the ordinary or the mundane. This is what compelled people of good hearts to seek Him, run after Him, and press toward Him.

“ 2:1 And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them.”

CAPERNAUM AGAIN. Jesus has been preaching the Word throughout *“all Galilee”* (1:14,28,39), and His fame had spread *“throughout”* all of that region (1:28). Quoting from Isaiah, Matthew refers to that region as *“Galilee of the Gentiles”* (Isa 9:1; Matt 4:15). This is considered to have been upper Galilee, which was occupied chiefly by Gentiles. History identifies the chief occupants as Egyptians, Arabians, and Phoenicians. STRABO Thus Jesus began His ministry in a most unlikely place – in a part of Galilee, in Canaan, where the Jews were not the prominent citizens. Yet there were many synagogues in the land, although Jesus expelled many demons from them (Mk 1:39). It was a dark area!

Now Jesus returns to his base of operation, where He had moved from Nazareth (Matt 4:13). This was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and is known to have been one of the most prosperous and crowded districts in Palestine. It was more into the Jewish sector of the land. Matthew refers to Capernaum as Jesus' "own city" (Matt 9:1), where He had chosen to reside. Matthew says of this occasion, "And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city" (Matt 9:1). Luke says it occurred after Jesus had withdrawn to the wilderness "and prayed" (Lk 5:16).

IT WAS NOISED. Word quickly spread that Jesus was back. His Person permeated His ministry, thus drawing the attention of the people. It was the reputation of His word and works that caused the people to report His presence throughout that area. It is my persuasion that Christ still has such a nature as draws men to Himself. This is particularly true since He has offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin (John 12:32). Throughout history, when Jesus actually became prominent among the people, His fame spread among the citizenry. I have every confidence that it will be no different in our day.

GATHERED WITH NO MORE ROOM. Assuming that Jesus was again at the house of Simon, the same thing happened that had taken place before – the people crowded into the house and around the door (1:33). This time, however, it appears that the crowd increased. Luke provides some additional information on this event. This occurred "on a certain day, as He was teaching." There were also a number of "Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town in Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem" (Lk 5:17a). Thus the marvelous words and works of Jesus had caught the attention of even the religious leaders. Even though we will see they were mostly curious, and would even be critical of the Lord, yet His presence demanded their attention. They could not ignore Him. Jesus is still this kind of person. Oh, that He were more prominent in the professed church. There would then be no need for so many **humanly organized** efforts to reach the lost and penetrate the community.

Luke also mentions something about this occasion that is especially interesting: "and the power of the Lord was present to heal them" (Lk 5:17b). Other versions read, "and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing." NASB This confirms that Jesus did not simply work miracles according to His own will, but in strict accord with the Father's will and the presence of His power. It also assists in delivering us from a stereotyped view of the working of the Lord, which takes too much for granted, and involves too little of the heart and mind. It is interesting to observe that the power to heal is set within the context of Christ's teaching, and not visa-versa. I do not doubt that it is possible for the people to God to live close enough to the Lord to know when the power of the Lord is present. Those who perceive this to be the case do well to announce it to the others. We should strive to never allow such occasions to pass us by.

HE PREACHED THE WORD. The exercise of miraculous power was subordinate to the teaching ministry of the Lord Jesus. The essence of man's association with the Lord is, "And they shall all be **taught** by God" NKJV (John 6:45; Isa 54:13). This is at the heart of the matter, and all of the other benefits are found within that context. Once, when Jesus saw the multitudes, He was "moved with compassion toward them," seeing that they were "as sheep not having a shepherd." Touched by their condition, "He began to **teach** them many things" (Mk 6:34). Another time Jesus is declared to have gone throughout the villages and towns "preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Lk 8:1). It is imperative that we be able to bring this understanding into our own situation. Suffice it to say, **where people are not being taught in the ways of the Lord and the manner of God's Kingdom, Jesus is not present.** Mark is

acquainting us with the real Christ's character and ministry.

“3 And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.”

Luke tells us that this event took place **while** Jesus was “teaching” – not while He was working miracles (Lk 5:17). There is, then, a perfect harmony between what Jesus says and what He does – perfect accord between His miracles and His doctrine. **We ought to be skeptical about anyone who is purporting to work miracles whose doctrine is deficient.** Even Moses warned us of those who could do a mighty work while delivering a false message (Deut 13:1-3). The implications of a miracle from God will blend with sound doctrine.

FOUR BRING ONE THAT IS SICK. Matthew tells us the man was “lying on a bed” (Matt 9:2). Luke says the “men brought in a bed a man sick with a palsy” (Lk 5:18). Mark is the only man who tells us how many men brought the man: “four” – “who was carried by four men.” NKJV The “bed” was probably a sort of “mat” NIV – something like a cot, with each man holding a corner of it. Matthew gives us a brief outline of this event, and Mark and Luke fill in the details of it.

Here is a most vivid picture of multiple people bringing a cause to the Lord. On another occasion several people brought to Jesus “a dumb man possessed of a demon” (Matt 9:32). Jesus taught us, “That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven” (Mat 18:19). In this text, this principle is lived out as we see four men working together for the interest of one man.

THEY COULD NOT COME NIGH. The people were so crowded around Jesus that these four men could not get close to Him. They did not leave, supposing this was not an appropriate time. Neither did they consider their request an intrusion that conflicted with what Jesus was doing. Luke adds, “and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him” (Lk 5:18). There are some requests that require creative solutions – diligently seeking means through which the desires may be answered.

THEY UNCOVERED THE ROOF. Luke adds, “And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop” (Luke 5:19). They did not give up, even though the crowd around Jesus suggested this was not the proper time. Mark says they “uncovered the roof” where Jesus was. Other versions say, “they made an opening in the roof above.” NIV Mark also says “and when they had broken it up,” or had “dug an opening.” NASB Luke says the roof consisted of “tiling” (Lk 5:19).

It was customary (and still is) for those in that part of the world to have steps on the outside of the house leading up to the roof. Jesus alluded to this when He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, telling the people if they were on the “housetop,” not to come down to take anything out of their houses (Matt 24:17). When Peter was called to minister to the Gentiles, he was “upon the housetop to pray” (Acts 10:9).

Now these men carry the man on the bed up the stairs to the housetop, and disassemble a part of the roof, making an opening through which to let the man down. It is understood that the roof was constructed of a kind of tiling, so that a portion of it could be opened up without destroying the whole of it. This obviously required both time and effort, together with some consideration for, what we believe to be, Simon's house.

There are supplications that must be attended by blessed cooperation, diligently seeking, extended effort, and unusual activity. Those who shut themselves up to mediocrity, only approaching the Lord through ordinary means, exclude themselves from the unusual and especially God-glorifying workings of the Lord.

THEY LET HIM DOWN. This required consideration of the man himself, who was palsied, and therefore unable to move. He could not be let down clumsily, else he would fall off of the pallet, or mat. Luke provides some of his characteristic details: “*they let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus*” (Lk 5:19). Notice with what carefulness they brought the man before Jesus. They did not lower him into a corner of the room, counting on someone else to take the “*ministry*” from there. They lowered him into the heart of the activity, placing him squarely before the Lord Jesus. I do not doubt that this took some thoughtful cooperation, and a very focused attention.

There is something else to be seen here. It seems evident that these men knew that if they could get Jesus’ attention, He would work in their behalf. That, of course, is an aspect of faith – believing that Jesus is impacted by what He sees. They knew by sensitivity what we know by revelation – that Jesus is “*touched by the feeling of our infirmities*” (Heb 4:16).

“ 5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

JESUS SAW THEIR FAITH. Matthew says, “*Jesus seeing their faith,*” Matt 9:2). Luke says, “*and when He saw their faith*” (Lk 5:20). Jesus was not deceived by appearance, for He “*knew what was in man*” (John 2:25). Note – it does not say that He saw what they **did**, but He “*saw their faith.*” Their faith motivated and validated what they did, and therefore it was “*their faith*” that got the Lord’s attention. This is the only place in the Bible where this precise statement is made, even though it is frequently implied.

Also notice that it was not only the faith of the man “*sick of the palsy*” that Jesus saw, but the faith of the men who brought him. **Here were four men who had faith that became the basis for what another man received!** John reminds us that the Lord still operates on this basis. “*If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it*” (1 John 5:16). Such a prayer has certain boundaries. (1) The petitioner has been prompted by what he sees – a brother sin. (2) It is for a “*brother*” – someone who is identified with Christ. (3) It is for a sin that is “*not unto death.*” (4) The petition is for “*life.*” Where these conditions are met, “*life*” will be given to the individual who has **not** sinned unto death, thus enabling his recovery.

There are things to be “*seen*” that are beyond all natural aptitude. Jesus “*saw the faith*” of these men. Barnabas “*saw the grace of God*” in certain brethren (Acts 11:23). Upon seeing a certain man, Paul “*perceived he had faith to be healed*” (Acts 14:9). Peter “*perceived*” that a man named Simon was “*in the gall of bitterness*” (Acts 8:23). Paul perceived the people in Athens were “*too superstitious*” (Acts 17:22). James, Cephas, and John “*perceived the grace*” that had been given to Paul (Gal 2:9).

This is the kind of insight that moves men to pray properly and touch the heart of the Lord.

HE SAID TO THE SICK OF THE PALSY. Upon seeing “*their faith,*” Jesus spoke to “*the sick of the palsy.*” Perhaps it might be surmised that the “*faith*” that he saw was in the sick man as well as in the four. The sick man may very well have had faith, but that is not the point of this account.

It was the four men who brought the man to Jesus. It was the four men who sought means by which to present him to Jesus. It was the four men who carried the man to the roof. It was the four men who broke up the roof. It was the four men who lowered the man to the feet of Jesus. Beholding all of that, Jesus “*saw their faith and said to the sick of the palsy.*” He will honor their labors by answering their desire. This does not suggest the palsied man lacked faith. It does show that Jesus was moved into action by the faith of the four men. The palsied man must have heartily consented to the deeds of the four.

THY SINS BE FORGIVEN THEE. Most other versions read “*are forgiven.*” Others read “*you have forgiveness,*” BBE and “*have been forgiven.*” YLT The reading “*be forgiven thee,*” means forgiveness was at that time being enjoyed. Matthew says, “*Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*” (Matt 9:2). Luke says, “*Man, thy sins are forgiven thee*” (Lk 5:20). This is the first time in the Gospels that Jesus is record as saying these words.

It seems to me that the words of Jesus confirm that all suffering is ultimately owing to sin – not necessarily the sin of the one who is infirm, but the condition of sin that dominates the human race. At this point, the Lord gives no hint that He is going to heal this man, although it is apparent that the men who carried him there believed He would.

The paramount blessing is the forgiveness of sin, for sin alone separates a person from God (Isa 59:2; Jer 5:25). Notice the difference between this incident and the directions of James concerning the sick. James writes that those who are sick should call for the elders of the church, who pray for him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The promise is, “*the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.*” It is then added, “*and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him*” (James 5:13-15). In the case before us, however, the forgiveness comes first. The difference is that Jesus can **speak** forgiveness, and men cannot.

Just as surely as Jesus could dispel evil spirits with His Word, so He can forgive sins with His word. Jesus said this one other time – to the woman who washed His feet with her tears and “*wiped them with the hairs of her head.*” He said to her, “*Thy sins are forgiven.*” For us, this speaks of the purging of the conscience, when our transgressions no longer plague us because there is no more record of them. It is to be understood that the forgiveness of this palsied man was ultimately based upon the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 20

“Mark 2:6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?” (Mark 2:6-9)

INTRODUCTION

While he was teaching in a house, presumably that of Simon, a palsied, or paralytic, man has been lowered through the ceiling right before Him. Perceiving the faith of the four men who lowered him, Jesus has spoken directly to the infirm man, announcing that his sins were forgiven: *“Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee”* (Matt 9:2). Among other things, this incident will clarify the **basic** reason for Christ coming into the world. While He did heal many of the sick, drive demons from people, and feed the multitudes, these things were not His **primary** mission. Yet, those deeds of mercy were in harmony with that purpose, and would provide a context in which His mission could be more thoroughly and profitably comprehended. The good things the Lord did for people was driven by His great compassion and tender mercy – both of which are unwavering Divine qualities. Unlike men, however, Jesus would not be turned from the mission on which His Father sent Him by even kind and considerate deeds. These undeniably confirmed that the Kingdom of God was *“at hand”* (Mk 1:14-15). God was intervening in the affairs of men, disrupting the powers of darkness, and causing men to become aware of both the greatness of God and His *“eternal purpose”* that was being worked out in their very midst.

“2:6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?” Luke informs us that, at this time, *“there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town in Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem”* (Lk 5:17). He also relates that *“the power of the Lord was present to heal them.”* Although scholars, and much learned in matters of erudition, we will see that this *“power”* was not evident to many who were present. It appears that the *“four”* who carried the palsied man to Jesus had some sense of the presence of Divine power, but there were also those who were ignorant of it.

CERTAIN SCRIBES. I understand these to be the *“doctors of the law”* to which Luke refers. Luke also says *“the scribes and Pharisees began to reason”* (Lk 5:21). Matthew says, *“certain of the scribes said within themselves”* (Matt 9:3). Originally, scribes were copyists of Scripture, who hand-wrote, or copied, the Law. By virtue of their familiarity with the text of Scripture, they eventually became teachers of the Law. Their teaching, however, was totally unimpressive when compared to that of Jesus. The people noted this difference when they observed Jesus

“taught them as one that had authority, and **not** as the scribes” (Mk 1:22).

Notable scribes include Ezra (Ezra 7:11,21; Neh 8:1), and Baruch (who wrote Jeremiah’s sayings, Jer 36:32). There was also a scribe who asked Jesus concerning “*the first commandment of all.*” Upon hearing Jesus’ answer, the scribe replied, “*Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth.*” Jesus responded by saying, “*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*” (Mk 12:28-34). Not all scribes, therefore, were of a debased spiritual nature. That is why our text singles out “*certain scribes,*” therefore allowing for exceptions among the whole of them. As a body of scholars, “*scribes*” were corrupt (Matt 23:13-34), and stood in the way of the door of entrance into the kingdom (Matt 23:13). The remarkable thing about this is that they were experts in the text of Scripture, yet, as a rule, fell miserably short in their apprehension of that text. Among other things, this confirms that mere exposure to the text of Scripture is not sufficient to produce an understanding of it. The Word must be “*mixed with faith*” if it is to be comprehended and men profit from it (Heb 4:2).

REASONING IN THEIR HEARTS. This was not a verbal discussion among themselves – a sort of scribal caucus. When they heard what Jesus said, they began thinking about it – “*thinking to themselves,*” NIV and “*questioning in their hearts.*” NRSV Throughout human history, there have been relatively few men who have provoked extended thought among their listeners – whether profitable or unprofitable. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ, also provoked profound thoughts: “*and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not*” (Lk 3:15).

One of the contemptible conditions of our time is that much of the preaching and teaching provokes little or no sober thought. The messages and lessons of the day are too easily forgotten, even though they are often draped with attempted eloquence and buttressed with quotations from peers.

SCHOLASTIC QUESTIONS. These men – parading themselves as scholars – thought that Jesus spoke “*blasphemies.*” Matthew identified their thoughts in an even more strong manner: “*This man blasphemeth*” (Matt 9:3). Luke points out that they inquired into who this was that so spoke: “**Who** is this which speaketh blasphemies?” (Lk 5:21). They had apparently never heard a man speak such things.

To blaspheme is to slander, speak against, and reproach the holy name of the Lord. **The idea here is that they saw Jesus was taking upon Himself a Divine attribute.** In their minds, it was a reproach to God for Jesus of Nazareth to so speak. They saw **no** similarities between this Man and the God of heaven. How little they knew, for this was “*God with us*” (Matt 1:23), “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16), and “*the fulness of the Godhead bodily*” (Col 2:9). They had no idea that the one who had seen Jesus had also “*seen the Father*” (John 14:9). Thus we see that their Bible reading had actually blinded their minds, just as Isaiah prophesied (Isa 29:10-11).

These scribes theoretically knew about the forgiveness of sins, but they could not associate it with the Prophet from Nazareth. Thinking within themselves, they reasoned, “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” It is therefore evident that they made no association between Jesus and God – even though Jesus said “*the Father is in Me*” (John 10:38). He later told His disciples, the Father “*dwelleth in Me*” (John 14:10). And again, “*I am in the Father, and the Father in Me*” (John 14:11). **This, however, was by no means apparent to the flesh** – even educated flesh – even flesh that was expert in the Scriptural text. We learn from this that the human mind and heart are impotent apart from faith.

“ **8** And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within

themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?"

There is a certain dulness of both heart and mind that has resulted from sin – particularly regarding unseen things. There have been, and continue to be, those who are “*slow of heart to believe*” (Lk 24:25). The phrase “*dull of hearing*” (“*slow to learn*” NIV) denotes the same delayed response (Matt 13:15; Heb 5:11). This condition has provoked the worldly saying, “repetition is the mother of all learning”– which saying is not at all applicable to “*the hearing of faith*” (Gal 3:2,5). Jesus was not content with this human trait, even though He confronted it in His own disciples. Therefore He responded to that condition by saying, “*How long shall I be with you?*” (Matt 17:17), and “*Have I been so long time with you, and yet Thou hast not known Me*” (John 14:9). Paul also expressed a certain intolerance of the slowness to apprehend: “*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers , ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat*” (Heb 5:12). **You will find no such response in the Lord Jesus!** He sets before us the standard of God’s Kingdom.

IMMEDIATELY. No sooner had these scribes began reasoning in their hearts than Jesus was aware of their thoughts. Instantly Jesus responds to the situation. That is how He responded to Peter when He was sinking beneath the stormy wave (Matt 14:31). His response to the woman who touched the hem of His garment was immediate (Mk 5:30). When He came to the disciples walking on the water, He “*immediately*” responded to their fear (Mk 6:50). While Jesus Himself spoke of the Father bearing long with “*His elect*” (Lk 18:7), that does not suggest that He “*seeth not*” (Ezek 9:9). This often moves men to conduct their lives foolishly “*because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*” (Eccl 8:11). However, there are also immediate responses – like the sentence against Nebuchadnezzar “*the same hour*” (Dan 4:33), the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10, and the immediate judgment of Herod (Acts 12:23). The saints must not be ignorant of this fact.

PERCEIVED IN HIS SPIRIT. Matthew says of this occasion, “*And Jesus knowing their thoughts*” (Matt 9:4). Luke says, “*when Jesus perceived their thoughts*” (Lk 5:22). Our Lord was not only aware of their reasonings, or thoughts, but had an understanding of them – of their nature and direction.

The Lord’s Spirit had access to the spirits of others – it probed and searched out what was “*within man.*” Thus it is written that Jesus “*needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man*” (John 2:25). Although it was applied to another matter, the statement concerning the searching nature of the Holy Spirit applies to this text: “*the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*” (1 Cor 2:10). This is one of the aspects of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. He could not convince men of sin, righteousness, and judgment, if He did not know their thoughts as well as those of the Lord (John 16:8-11).

Everything was “*naked and opened*” unto Jesus (Heb 4:13). This was largely owing to Him having the fulness of the Spirit, “*for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him*” (John 3:34). Even when He was in the flesh, “*straightened*” by a body (Luke 12:50), and in a humbled state (Phil 2:8), He “*knew their thoughts*” (Matt 12:25; Lk 6:8).

Jesus was the supreme example of **not** living according to the flesh. Of old time David spoke of true introspection: “*I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search*” (Psa 77:6). This experience was brought to its apex in Christ Jesus. He did not live close to the surface of life, but was constrained from deep within – in His essential person, and not according to fleshly appetites. On one occasion, when the Pharisees were seeking “*a sign from heaven*” from Him, He “*sighed deeply in His spirit*” (Mk 8:12).

WHY REASON YE? Reasoning speaks of considering, the process of thinking, deliberating, contemplating, and pondering. In this case, it included the idea of inward debating – comparing what they heard Jesus say with what they thought Scripture said. To them, there was a conflict between Jesus and God – between what He said and Scripture.

This kind of reasoning is at the root of all division among professing Christians. It is a form of thought that proceeds from a failure to apprehend the truth, which is never at a variance with itself. This way of thinking is still very prominent in the Christian community – thinking that sees Divine statements to be at a variance with one another.

The details of this are most arresting to ponder. When we consider that the Lord knows our words, it often brings a deep conviction. However, here He is shown to be keenly aware of our reasoning, or thought processes – of the **way** we think, the subjects concerning which we choose to think, and of the inferences and conclusions that we draw.

“ 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?”

In this saying, Jesus is exposing the foolishness of worldly wisdom. He is showing that the mind of the flesh cannot take the truth as a whole into the thought processes, and reason upon it. It must rather deal with bits and pieces, ascribing to each piece independence from the rest of the Revelation. When approaching Divine utterances in this way, priority is given to a saying that best suits the overall view of the individual. If, for example, a person conceives of salvation as being the result of what men do, all references to the election of men, drawing men, being justified by grace, etc. are taken to be wholly dependent on what man, in his own strength, chooses. Others, taking an opposite view, consider that all human response is nothing more than a robotic reaction to the overpowering will of the Lord. In both cases, truth in its entirety was not considered.

Now Jesus will cast the whole matter into the lap of His hearers. As it is written, *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”* (Prov 16:33). Since they are so willing to reason, He will force them to reason within certain boundaries. It is not God’s manner to let reasoning go on endlessly in the wrong direction. In due time, He will ask some questions of wayward thinkers. That is His manner. Thus the Lord said to Job, *“Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou Me”* (Job 38:3). To wayward Israel He asked, *“What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”* (Isa 5:4). To those who object to God’s dealings with men the question is asked, *“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”* (Rom 9:20).

WHETHER IS IT EASIER TO SAY? This is a rhetorical question. Actually, a profound God does not say anything that is *“easy.”* **Men who theorize about what the Lord is and is not able to do or say are treading on thin ice, and their souls are at stake.** If they insist upon wandering like lost people in the field of thought, God will soon face them with certain sobering facts, and demand some answers of them.

By asking *“Whether is it easier to say?”* Jesus is asking, *“Which takes the most power?”* *“Which saying is empty, or without any apparent effectiveness.”* *“Which saying requires the least effort, or can be said without any attending proof?”*

TO SAY, “THY SINS BE FORGIVEN THEE.” This is what Jesus has already said – not to the people, but to the palsied man. Notwithstanding, He said it so that all could hear, for *“this thing*

was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). To men, it looks as though saying “*Thy sins be forgiven thee*” cannot be proved. But they have overlooked one key factor – **the man to whom the words were spoken**. Great works are not always intended to be confirmed outwardly. For example, the woman who was healed of a twelve-year issue of blood, did not necessarily show outward signs of the healing. Yet it is written, “*she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague*” (Mk 5:29). Do not doubt that the paralytic man had a consciousness of the reality of being forgiven. Jesus’ word was, after all, “*with power*” (Lk 4:32).

TO SAY, “ARISE, AND TAKE UP THY BED, AND WALK.” At once the skeptic will say that it is easier to say “*Thy sins be forgiven thee.*” With the exception of the forgiven man, that statement, they thought, could not be supported. First, these men should not have reasoned so foolishly. Already, Jesus had dismissed a fever with His word – a rebuke (Lk 4:39). He had cleansed a leper with His word (Mk 1:41-42). He had dismissed demons “*with His word*” (Matt 8:16). For those with honest and good hearts, there had been a perfect and consistent correlation between what Jesus said and what He did.

Actually, **both** the forgiveness of sins and the command for a paralytic to take up his bed and walk, demand omnipotence. Neither can be accomplished by a mere man. This is the point of the twenty-ninth Psalm, which is an ode to “*the voice of the Lord.*” Breaking cedars, dividing the flames, shaking the wilderness, and making the hinds to calve, are the accomplishments of Divine utterance – and salvation is even more detailed than that.

Right here, a word ought to be said about the current phenomenon of being “angry with God,” or “mad at” Him. Those who respond in this manner to the hardships of life have seen, what they believe to be, a contradiction of what God does and who He is and what He says. But they are as foolish as the scribes of our text, even if they only entertain such thoughts without speaking them. To such we might very well say, “Which is it easier to say, ‘Have no trouble,’ or ‘Stand in the midst of trouble?’” I will leave the answer to your own conscience, but it certainly ought to be apparent that neither one is really “*easier.*”

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 21

“ Mark 2:10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. ”
(Mark 2:10-12)

INTRODUCTION

While Jesus is teaching, and the people are listening to His words, the stage has been set for another wonderful work of God. Because of Jesus' reputation, four men have brought a palsied man to Jesus. Using determination and ingenuity, they have overcome the hindrances confronting them, and the impotent man is laying at the feet of Jesus. Jesus has already spoken directly to the man, telling him that his sins are forgiven. This is the first time of record when Jesus declared a person's sins were forgiven. It has provoked many thoughts among the doctors of the Law. They have not been able to make any association of Jesus of Nazareth with the God of heaven, and thus remonstrate at His saying, reasoning that only God can forgive sin. Because their thoughts struck at the very foundation of Christ's mission, He will answer their thoughts. No one is ever represented as questioning the reality of Christ's miracles. His foes even admitted that He did *“many miracles”* (John 11:47), and they made no effort to discredit their validity. However, brushing aside His great works, these balked at the idea that He could forgive sin. How will the Master deal with their vain thoughts? He has already informed them that He was fully aware of their reasoning, having *“perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned with themselves.”* How will *“the Wisdom of God”* incarnate (1 Cor 1:24) deal with their groundless manner of thinking?

“ 2:10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy).”

THAT YOU MAY KNOW. In order for men to make progress toward the Lord, or properly perceive the Christ, there are things that must be *“known.”* Sin left a wake of ignorance, thereby alienating men from God (Eph 4:18). Among other things, Jesus came to dissipate that ignorance and induct an era of spiritual light. Isaiah was given to see this aspect of the Messiah and was moved to write, *“by His knowledge shall My Righteous Servant justify many”* (Isa 53:11). The *“knowledge”* of reference is Christ's own understanding of the Father, taught effectually to men. By this means He acquaints men with the Father, showing Him and His ways to them (Matt 11:27). This refers to the *“understanding”* that He ministers to the people, that they might know God (1 John 5:20).

This is not academic knowledge, or a lifeless acquaintance with certain facts and

verities. Rather, it is the awareness of things that are otherwise hidden from men. In this case, Jesus will bring the fact of His power within the range of their understanding. He will confirm an unseen reality by doing an impossible work before their very eyes. Those who are inclined to Him will find great comfort and hope in what He does. Those who are not so inclined will become even harder and more obstinate in their opposition to Him.

THE SON OF MAN HATH POWER ON EARTH. As used here, the word “*power*” does not mean “ability,” as used in Romans 1:16: “*power of God unto salvation.*” In Romans a different word is used that means strength, might, or the ability to do supernatural things. It includes the idea of capability and strength to neutralize all opposing forces, and cause a thing to happen in spite of hindrances. Jesus **displayed** this kind of “*power*” in His “*mighty works*” – works that were apparent to men’s eyes.

This, however, is not the kind of “*power*” that is intended here – even though it is apparent that Jesus surely had this kind of “*power on earth*” – as when He calmed the storm, stilled the sea, and cursed a fig tree. Here, the word “*power*” means authority, the liberty of doing what one pleases. It is authority over something, as compared to superior strength – and Jesus has both. This is the kind of “*power*” Jesus gave the disciples when He sent them out – “*power against unclean spirits*” (Matt 10:1). It was “*authority.*” NIV

When the people heard Jesus speak, they observed that He “*taught them as one having authority*” (Mk 1:22). They noted, “*with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him*” (Mk 1:27). The opponents of Christ challenged Him, “*By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?*” (Mark 11:28). In all of these instance, the word “*authority*” is identical with the word “*power*” in our text. Here Jesus is speaking of the “*power*” or “*authority*” that had been given to Him as a Man. Peter referred to this when He said the Father had “*anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*” (Acts 10:38). **When Jesus spoke, He was, in fact, speaking for God as His official and exclusive Representative.** He had been given “*power over all flesh,*” or “*authority over all mankind*” NASB (John 17:2). He had the **right** to speak as He did, because He had been given the authority to do so. That is why His word “*was with power.*” It was invested with all of the power and authority of God the Father Himself. His word was not, as some represent it, a “creative force.” Rather, it was the very word of God whose word cannot be contested, neutralized, or made ineffective by men.

TO FORGIVE SINS. The words that struck the hearts of these men was that Jesus had authority to forgive sins “*on earth.*” Whether it was a woman taken in the act of adultery (John 8:11), a thief on a cross (Lk 23:43), a sinful woman who anointed his feet (Lk 7:48), or this palsied man, Jesus had the authority and right to forgive their sins. He could do it **before** He died, in prospect of His death. He could do it **before** the New Covenant was ratified, in prospect of its ratification. He was, in fact, “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16) , and therefore could do what God Himself does. He was “*God with us*” (Matt 1:23), and therefore spoke as God alone can speak.

To “*forgive sins*” is to lay them aside, remit them, and cause them to no longer be associated with the one who committed them. It is to take away their record, and remove them from the sinner as far as the East is from the West (Psa 103:12). This forgiveness was based on the fact that He, as the Lamb of God, would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

TO THE SICK OF THE PALSY. Jesus does not linger long with His critics. He now focuses on the poor man before Him, and speaks before the multitude. He will say a word that

will confirm whether or not He has the power to do what He has said. He will, by this word, cast down the imaginations of those who had reasoned erroneously.

“ 11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.”

Keep in mind the reason for this saying. It is **not** so the people will know He can work miracles. It is not so they will be convinced He can heal an impotent man. It is not in order to persuade them that He can change outward circumstances, and speak their infirmities away – although He could surely do all of that. Jesus is drawing attention to the reason for His incarnation: *“He shall save His people from their sins”* (Matt 1:21). In this work, He will confirm His chief mission: to *“take away the sins of the world”* (John 1:29). He will declare the greater weight, which was not bearing our sicknesses (Matt 8:17), but bearing our *“sins in His body on the tree”* (1 Pet 2:24). This does not demean the miracle He will do, but rather sets it in the proper context. This will not only assure the multitude that He can forgive sin, but will confirm to the man before him that his sins were really forgiven.

ARISE. Other versions read, *“Get up,”* NIV and *“stand up.”* NRSV This word is not spoken to a sluggard, but to a paralytic – a disabled man who could not move his limbs. If this word is not accompanied with Divine authority, there is no possible way this man will be able to *“get up.”* Jesus is not awakening some form of latent strength that is already resident in him – an erroneous view that is gaining popularity. There is no strength in this man, either within or without. **Jesus is calling upon him to do the impossible** – to *“stand up.”* From the man’s point of view, only faith can take hold of this word.

TAKE UP THY BED. This is the bed upon which he is laying – the bed to which he has been confined, and which had taken hold of him. He has been conquered by this bed, and it, so to speak, is carrying him. This is precisely the same word Jesus spoke to another impotent man who had been in that condition for thirty-eight years: *“Rise, take up thy bed,”* with a slightly different word, *“and walk”* (John 5:8).

Peter said something similar to a man named *“Aeneas,”* who was also *“sick of the palsy,”* and had been bedridden for eight years. *“Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed”* (Acts 9:34). Here *“make your bed”* meant to *“take care of your mat,”* or *“tidy up your mat.”* NIB The idea is, *“You can do this for yourself now.”* IE This incident reminds me of something Jesus did when He rose from the dead. When entering into the empty tomb, it is said of Simon Peter, he *“went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself”* (John 20:7). Jesus had taken the thing that was about His head, and *“folded it up by itself,”* NIV confirming that He had taken charge of things.

In our text, *“Take up thy bed”* means to *“pick up your bed.”* He was not to leave it, cluttering the house of Simon. Nor, indeed, was he to cast it aside, having no further need for it – at least not like he did before. He was to take charge of what had formerly had charge over him, carrying it in the presence of the people.

GO THY WAY INTO THINE HOUSE. While carrying his former place of confinement, he was to go to his own house, from which he had been carried away on this mat. The leper Jesus healed was to show himself **to the priest** for a testimony (Mk 1:44). When he cast a legion of demons out of the possessed man of Gadera, he told him, *“Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee”* (Lk 8:30). Now this former paralytic is told to return, **with** his bed in hand, to his own house. Thus, through one who had experienced the power and

authority of the Lord, He was becoming better more fully known. People were becoming acquainted with the Savior through those in whom He had worked.

APPLICATION. The Lord's words to this man conveyed the very nature of true spiritual life – when the things that formerly dominated us are now controlled by us through the power of the Lord. Thus *“the flesh,”* which once ruled us, is *“crucified, together with its affections and lusts”* (Gal 5:24). That is like taking up your bed and going home to glory. Our various *“members,”* or human capacities of expression, though once yielded *“unto sin”* (Rom 6:13a), which were *“servants to uncleanness and iniquity”* (Rom 6:19a), are now yielded *“as instruments of righteousness unto God”* (Rom 6:13b). Now those very same *“members”* are yielded *“servants to righteousness unto holiness”* (Rom 6:19b).

When the voice of Jesus penetrated the thick darkness in which we remained, and the domain of death that held us fast, we were *“quickened”* (Eph 2:1), and rose *“from the dead”* (Rom 6:4). Now, our *“mortal bodies,”* that once dictated our whole course of life, are quickened *“by His Holy Spirit that dwells”* in us (Rom 8:11). Instead of our bodies carrying us, we carry them, keeping under them, and bringing them into subjection (1 Cor 9:27). This is the very essence of *“newness of life”* – when people gain the dominance over the beds of iniquity and self-will to which they were formerly confined.

“ 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.”

IMMEDIATELY HE ROSE. This is the manner of the kingdom – *“immediately.”*

It is seen in the record of creation: *“and it was so”* (Gen 1:7,9,11,15,24,30). It is seen in the response of James and John to Jesus' call: *“immediately”* (Mk 4:22). It is seen in the response of Simon and Andrew: *“straightway”* (Matt 4:20). It is seen in the response of Matthew to the call of Jesus: *“And he rose, and followed Him”* (Matt 9:9).

Repeatedly we read of *“immediate”* responses in the record of Jesus' great miracles. Healing the leper (Matt 8:3); healing two blind men (Matt 20:34); healing Peter's mother-in-law (Mk 1:31); healing a dumb man (Lk 1:64); healing the woman with an issue of blood (Lk 8:44); healing the woman with the bowed back (Lk 13:13); healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:9). In all of these, the response was *“immediate.”*

And what are we to learn from this circumstance – the reality of immediate responses? This is a confirmation of Christ's authority and absolute supremacy. His Word demolishes all opposition, for it is like a sword that proceeds from His mouth (Rev 19:15). It is still true, *“For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast ”* (Psa 33:9). Nothing can countermand the word of the Lord! All the starry hosts of the heavens were made *“by the breath of His mouth”* (Psa 33:6). It is written that *“He commanded, and they were created”* (Psa 148:5). This will also be the means of removing and destroying the most wicked of all opponents among men – *“that Wicked,”* or *“Lawless one.”* It is written of his demise, *“whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming”* (2 Thess 2:8). Just as surely as the wind *“ceased”* when Jesus said, *“Peace, be still,”* so the seeming success of all spiritual tyrants, including the devil himself and all of his hosts, will come to a grinding halt when the Lord simply says, ***“STOP!”***

TOOK UP HIS BED. In keeping with the nature of the Kingdom, and in confirmation that Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins, this former paralytic picked up his bed. Although he had been paralyzed, he needed no time to gain strength, or to stretch his muscles to ensure that he could

carry his bed. The word of the Lord was “*with power.*” It was like an eagle’s wing on which came strength, ability, and everything that was required to do precisely and thoroughly what Jesus told him to do, **when** he told him to do it.

WENT FORTH BEFORE THEM ALL. It is not God’s manner to work in corners and do things privately. Well did Paul testify to Festus concerning the raising of Jesus and the flood of light that followed, “*this thing was not done in a corner*” (Acts 26:26).

Remember, the people had crowded into the house so that “*there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door*” (Mk 2:2). The people had seen the man lowered to the feet of Jesus. They heard what Jesus said to him about his sins being forgiven. They heard the Lord upbraid the doctors of the law who reasoned that Jesus could really not forgive sin. They heard Jesus say to the man on the bed, “*Stand up, take your mat and go to your home*” NRSV How fitting, therefore, that they, with their own eyes, should witness this man do what Jesus commanded. His action also confirmed that he had believed the word of Jesus, for only faith takes hold of such a saying.

It ought to be noted that now is a time when those who hear the Word of the Lord should also respond instantly as a testimony to an evil and adulterous generation. Such words include, “*Sin not*” (1 Cor 15:34), “*Be ye holy*” (1 Pet 1:15), “*Quench not the Spirit*” (1 Thess 5:19), “*Be not weary in well doing*” (2 Thess 3:13), “*Be strong*” (1 Cor 16:13), “*Lay hold on eternal life*” (1 Tim 6:12), “*Mortify your members that are upon the earth*” (Col 3:5), “*abstain from fleshly lusts*” (1 Pet 2:11), and “*be ye separate*” (2 Cor 6:17). These words are accompanied with no less power than Christ’s word to the impotent man. Do you believe this?

THEY WERE ALL AMAZED. To be “*amazed*” is to be astonished, dumbfounded, stunned, flabbergasted and astounded. It is when “*flesh*” is silenced, and nothing can be added to the circumstance by the words of men. Here, something had happened that was beyond the circumference of all human wisdom and power. Thus the flesh was silenced.

THEY GLORIFIED GOD SAYING. What a way to glorify God: “*We never saw it on this fashion!*” or “*We have never seen anything like this.*” NASB In other words, only God could have done this! In my judgment, one of the condemning things about contemporary religion is its normality. It generally presents nothing more than cunning men can do, and rises no higher than the domain of flesh and blood. Let it be clear, **God does not receive glory from mediocrity, or from things that anyone other than Himself can do.**

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The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 22

“ Mark 2:13 And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed him. 15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him.” (Mark 2:13-15)

INTRODUCTION

The views of Jesus and His activities, that are provided in the Gospels, accent His commitment to doing God’s will, or being about His *“Father’s business.”* Where He went, and what He did, were always related to His mission – to lay down His life, and take it up again (John 10:17-18). His marvelous works would come to light upon the completion of that mission. They would assist us in understanding His Person and the *“great salvation”* He accomplished, and is presently administrating. When, for example, He called people, it was always in view of what He was doing, and never in view of what they were doing. Jesus did not come to assist men in their various projects, but to call them into involvement with Himself. This perception is essential to the understanding of redemption. There remains in men the inveterate tendency to view their own objectives as primary – but they are not. From the heavenly point of view there is only one valid will – *“that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”* (Rom 12:2). It is only as man’s will is in synch with that will that it has any validity before God. It is only in this context that grace and faith have any effectiveness. *“Grace through faith”* only works within the perimeter of God’s will.

“ 2:13 And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them.”

HE WENT FORTH AGAIN. Upon the healing of the palsied man, the people remarked, *“We never saw it on this fashion”* (2:13). Matthew says *“the multitude saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men”* (Matt 9:8). Luke says they *“glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today”* (Lk 5:26). Jesus was anything but ordinary, and both His words and His works attested to this. Among a deeply religious people, here was a Man that broke the ranks of the customary, setting before the people both words and works to which they had never before been subjected. The people He helped were unable to help themselves. He never became a part of what anyone else was doing. Of even **more** interest, is the fact that He **never** capitalized upon men’s attraction to Himself. Our text is a case in point.

Jesus did not set up shop, so to speak, in the house of Simon, making it His headquarters.

Instead, He leaves the house and once again goes by the sea side. Matthew says, “*He passed on from there,*” as though perceiving the locus for God’s works was moving to another place. This Divine mobility was revealed to Ezekiel in a vision. He saw the throne of God positioned on wheels that freely moved in all directions. The wheels moved wherever the Spirit “*was to go,*” freely and without restraint (Ezek 1:16-21). The Throne of God, or the manner of Divine rule, is revealed in the earthly ministry of Jesus – moving about wherever He desired, fulfilling the will of God, and with the Spirit of God on Him.

The Lord one again walks along the “*sea side.*” That is where He called Simon and Andrew (1:17) and James and John (1:20). Later, from a ship, He will teach a multitude that stood upon the shore, delivering the parable of the Sower (4:1-3). It seems appropriate that He who brought the “*living water*” (John 4:10-11) should often speak near a body of water.

THE RESORTING MULTITUDE. “*All the multitude came to Him,*” NKJV pressing to see and hear Him. What a glorious picture of the drawing power of Jesus! The people were being introduced to the manner of the New Covenant. Speaking of “*the day of salvation,*” Isaiah said, “*all nations shall flow into it*” (Isa 2:2). He also said of Jesus, the Lord’s Ensign, “*to Him shall the Gentiles seek*” (Isa 11:10). Jeremiah said the people would “*come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together*” (Jer 31:12). Speaking of “*the throne of the Lord,*” as revealed in redemption, Jeremiah also said, “*all nations shall be gathered unto it*” (Jer 3:17). Micah prophesied, “*and people shall flow into it*” (Mic 4:1). Zechariah foretold, “*many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day*” (Zech 2:11). Jacob declared, “*and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*” (Gen 49:10). David foretold, “*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord*” (Psa 22:27). And again, “*Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God*” (Psa 68:31).

Of old time, the people of God were summoned by a trumpet (Num 10:4; Jer 4:5; 6:1). A sound pierced the air, interrupting the people, and alerting them to the need to come together. However, this is not the manner of the New Covenant. Now, it is the Savior Himself who draws the people by what He says and does. This kind of drawing began with John the Baptist, who was preparing the way of the Lord. The people came to him from every quarter – a phenomenon among men, indeed (Matt 3:5; Mk 1:5). When Jesus began His ministry, this kind of activity picked up, with “*multitudes*” following Him (Mk 1:45; 3:7,20,32; Matt 4:25; 8:1,18; 12:15; 13:2; 15:13; 19:2; 20:29; John 6:2).

Today religious marketing and promotion are in vogue. Men are taught to conduct surveys, study statistics, and tailor their gatherings to be appealing to supposed seekers. But you will find no such direction from the Lord or His Apostles. It is Jesus Himself that is the “drawing card.” **The gathering of the people is to Him**, not to an institution, not to entertainment, and not to some form of amusement or pleasure. Jesus did not teach His disciples to “*catch men*” (Lk 5:10) by a technique or a promotional campaign. It is Jesus’ separateness from the world order and obvious connection with the God of heaven that draws sensitive and discerning hearts. This is being lived out in our text.

HE TAUGHT THEM. Jesus did not conduct a praise service – although that was an area of expertise for Him (Heb 2:12). He did not entertain them with slight of hand, or set them to laughing with humorous anecdotes. He “*taught them*” of God, His purpose, and the coming salvation. The Spirit frequently makes a point of Christ’s teaching (Matt 4:23; 5:2; 7:29; 9:35; 13:54; 21:23; Mk 1:21-22; 2:13; 4:2; 6:6; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17). Make no mistake about this, those who come to Jesus **will** be “*taught by Him*” (Eph 4:21). They will “*learn from Him*” (Matt 11:29). Those who have no

love for truth will **not** come to Jesus!

“ 14 And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.”

AS HE PASSED BY. As Jesus is walking along the sea side, He will observe the people that are in that vicinity – as He did when He called Simon, Andrew, James, and John. We will never be submitted to a Jesus who is unaware of what and who is around Him! He is ever alert, beholding and discerning the people who have been brought within His reach. For those with tender hearts, this is a comforting thought.

HE SAW LEVI. This is Matthew, and he is so called in the gospel account written by himself (Matt 9:9). Luke also refers to him as “*Levi*” (Lk 5:27). Mark and Luke are the only ones who refer to him by the name “*Levi*” – and then, only in regard to this text. Otherwise he is consistently known as “*Matthew*” (Matt 9:9; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13), one of the twelve Apostles. The name “*Levi*” means “joined,” and “*Matthew*” means “*gift of Jehovah.*”

We are told he was “*the son of Alphaeus.*” This is not the “*Alphaeus*” who is consistently said to be the father of James the Less, one of the twelve (Matt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15). The mother of James was Mary, sister to the mother of the Lord. She is said to have been married to “*Cleophas,*” which is the Hebrew form of “*Alphaeus*” McCLINTOK (Lk 24:10; John 19:25). Elsewhere Matthew is distinguished by being called “*Matthew the publican*” (Matt 10:3), and “*a publican named Levi*” (Lk 5:27).

SITTING AT THE RECEIPT. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all refer to “*the seat of custom*” (Matt 9:9; Lk 5:27). This is understood to be a small house on the shore, near the port of entry for shipments to and from shipping ports that were in Damascus through Accho. He was a tax-gatherer, receiving custom duties for the shipments. Thus Matthew was at work when he was called, just as Simon, Andrew, James, and John.

Publicans, or revenue collectors, were not held in high regard. Jesus said they loved and saluted those who loved and saluted them (Matt 5:46,47). He said a person who was expelled from the church was to be treated “*as a heathen man and a publican*” (Matt 18:17). Yet, some from their number came to be baptized by John, and asked him what they should do (Lk 3:12-13). We are told that they “*justified God being baptized with the baptism of John*” (Lk 7:29). Another “*publican*” of note was Zacchaeus (Lk 19:2).

How quickly can a man with this kind of background respond to Jesus? Will he require more time to follow the Lord than those of more acceptable professions, like Simon, Andrew, James, and John?

FOLLOW ME. What does it mean to “*follow*” Jesus? Does it mean to tag along after, or merely to travel behind someone? That is involved, to be sure, but the word “*follow*” involves much more than that. This word means “to join him as his attendant, accompany him,” or “join him as a disciple, or learner.” THAYER To “*follow*” Jesus is to accompany, or travel along with him. It assumes the abandonment of competing pursuits, and a commitment to be taught by the Lord. There were some to whom following Jesus meant letting “*the dead bury their dead*” (Matt 8:22). To a rich man, following Jesus required selling all that he had and giving it to the poor (Matt 19:21). Following Jesus is preceded by the denial of self, and taking up the cross of self-crucifixion (Matt 16:24). Following Jesus requires taking up the cross every day (Lk 9:23). This is something that Christ’s true disciples do – upon hearing His “*voice,*” they “*follow*” Him.

No person can serve Jesus who does not “follow” Him, or stay with Him. Jesus Himself said, “If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be” (John 12:26). No one truly serves Jesus who does not prefer being with Him, walking where He is walking, and doing His will.

HE ROSE AND FOLLOWED. The response was immediate: “Levi got up and followed Him.” NIV One version reads, “And he got up, and went with Him.” BBE Luke adds, “And **he left everything behind**, and rose and began to follow Him” NIV (Lk 5:28). Upon hearing the call of Jesus, Matthew’s whole life changed. He ceased being a tax collector, and started being a learner – one who accompanies, and is taught by, the Lord Jesus Christ. He left one realm in preference for another. He abandoned one occupation in the quest of another. He embarked on a life that required him to be with Jesus. Later, when the office of Judas was filled, we learn what it meant to “follow” Jesus. They were required to be with Jesus and His disciples “all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us” (Acts 1:21-22). In this text, Levi, or Matthew, begins doing precisely that “going in and out” with Jesus and His disciples. To do that, he had to leave “the tax office.” NKJV What have you left?

“ 15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him.”

JESUS SAT AT MEAT. “Sat at meat” means Jesus was “dining.” NKJV or “having dinner.” NIV Here was an ordinary activity, but it was transformed by the presence of the Christ. Luke provides us with more information regarding this circumstance. Upon following Jesus, Levi invited the Lord and His disciples to his own house, preparing a great feast for them. “And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house” (Luke 5:29). Other versions read, “a big reception,” NASB and “a great banquet.” NIV Note, it was in Matthew’s own house, and it was at his own expense. It was not for Jesus only, but for “His disciples” as well. Martha also prepared a supper in Jesus’ honor (John 12:2). Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully into his house (Lk 19:6). It goes without saying, that those who truly follow Jesus are forward to invite Him into their house, thereby sanctifying its normalities.

PUBLICANS AND SINNERS. Apparently, Matthew invited these people from his past life, and there were “many” of them. The “publicans” were tax collectors working for the Roman government, which certainly did not endear them to the people. The “sinners” were unusually profligate – “notorious sinners,” LIVING “sinful people,” IE and “persons [definitely stained] with sin.” AMPLIFIED There was no question about their manner of life. As used here, the word “sinners” means “devoted to sin, preeminently sinful, especially wicked, and stained with certain definite vices or crimes.” THAYER This is not “sinners” in the sense of “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23), or “were the servants of sin,” (Rom 6:17), or being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). Elsewhere Jesus spoke of “publicans and harlots,” accenting those who had plummeted to especially low moral depths (Matt 21:31-32).

SAT TOGETHER WITH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES. “Publicans and sinners” are frequently associated with each other, being descriptive of those whose sin was more obvious (Matt 9:10-11; 11:19; Lk 5:30; 7:34; 15:1). Here, we find them sitting “with Jesus and His disciples.” We assume Matthew invited this entourage of sinners – doubtless people with whom he had been associated. Behold what a response Matthew had to the calling of Jesus. He prepares “a great feast in his own house,” inviting Jesus, His disciples, and a multitude of “publicans and sinners.”

Jesus did not require this of Matthew, but Matthew's love for Jesus demanded that he do so. That is the manner of life that is spawned when men willingly accompany Jesus. This is involved in Jesus' saying, "*and where I am, there shall also My servant be*" (John 12:26). Also, note the order here: first Jesus, then His disciples. **Jesus and His disciples did not sit with the publicans and sinners; the publicans and sinners "*sat down with them.*"** Also, the feast was made for Jesus, not the others – they were invited to come and honor Jesus, also being able to hear His gracious words. Mark says this with even more precision. "*Many publicans and sinners sat also together **with** Jesus and His disciples.*"

THERE WERE MANY, AND THEY FOLLOWED HIM. The "*many*" who "*followed*" Jesus were His disciples. The number was far greater than Andrew, Simon, James, John, and Matthew. There were, at the first of Christ's ministry, multitudes who followed Him wherever He went. Matthew says there were "*great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from Jordan*" that followed the Christ (Matt 4:25). Often it is written that "*great multitudes followed Him*" (Matt 8:1; 12:15; 19:2; 21:9). You get the picture of people wanting to get close to Jesus and to stay with him, whether or not they were invited to do so.

Most of these disciples would eventually leave Jesus, unable to handle the more direct teachings that He gave (John 6:60,66). However, their beginnings reveal the nature of Christ's ministry among men. There seems to be an inward sense that following Jesus is not subsidiary activity – something to be merely added to our lives. The extent of this is not seen at first, but becomes more clear as we walk with the Lord.

Jesus does not allow people to "*follow*" Him without teaching them, showing them the truth, and expounding that truth to them. He is ever a teaching Jesus, acquainting us with God (1 John 5:20), and the requirement to put off "*the old man*" and "put on the new man" (Eph 4: 20-24). However, none of this teaching – not so much as a word of it – can be heard by those who are not **with** Jesus, following Him, and devoting themselves to Him. **His teaching is the appointed means of sifting out real disciples from pretentious ones, just as it did during His earthly ministry.** Truly, Jesus violently disrupted the normal tone of religion, drawing people to Himself, and confirming the superiority of His Person and teaching.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 23

“ Mark 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? 17 When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Mark 2:16-17)

INTRODUCTION

Levi (Matthew) has made a great feast, or banquet, for the Lord, and has invited Jesus, His disciples, and, we assume, his former associates. It appears as though Matthew desired for these people to be exposed to the Lord Jesus, and therefore brought them all together. He provided a sumptuous feast for the occasion. This was in keeping with what he perceived he had received from the Lord – an abundance. This action from Matthew was like the response of the woman who washed Jesus feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Jesus said of her extravagant action, “*for she loved much*” (Lk 7:47). The fact that Jesus called Matthew had deeply impacted the man, moving him to prepare this great banquet. This is the manner of the Kingdom, and it differs significantly from the manner in which Law motivates people. Jesus did not command Matthew to prepare a feast, yet He did. Jesus received what Matthew did, attending the gathering with His disciples, just as He did at the wedding feast of Cana. For those with eyes to see, there is a refreshing lesson to be learned here. If we will receive this “*great salvation*” that is brought to us by Jesus, and use the gifts and abilities that He has given to us, they will have a marvelously compelling effect upon us. If we choose to search the Scriptures with DOING instead of RECEIVING in mind, we will find ourselves actually doing less and less for the Savior.

“ 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”

THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES. There is no indication that Matthew had invited these religious leaders to his banquet. Neither, indeed, does our text suggest that they were sitting at the table with those who were invited. Rather, as self-appointed judges, they were monitoring the whole event.

These were the religious dignitaries of the day. “*Scribes and Pharisees*” are mentioned fourteen times in the Gospels (Matt 5:20; 15:1; 23:-29; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:30; 6:7; 11:44; John 8:3). Nothing good is said of them. Jesus said peoples’ righteousness must “*exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*” if they were to “*enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 5:20). Eight times the Lord Jesus called them “*hypocrites.*” They “*murmured against*” Christ’s disciples (Lk 5:30). They were the ones who brought a woman “*taken in adultery*” to Jesus, seeking to snare Him (John 8:3). They were certainly not a group of men highly regarded by God!

These men had taken the office of leadership unto themselves. While there were “*scribes*” under the Law, they did not occupy an official place in the Jewish economy. As a group, they were never sanctified, or presented as having special authority under the Law and the Prophets. The “*Pharisees*” had their origin sometime after the Babylonian captivity. They were originally noted for their separateness, seeking to maintain moral and ceremonial purity according to the Levitical law. Their position in the Jewish economy, however, was the result of human judgment, not Divine ordinance. God ordained the spiritual leadership in the High Priest’s office, the priests, and the Prophets. Occasionally He would raise up special servants to lead His people, like Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. These were always endued with wisdom and power, and also employed the ordained servants of the Lord, both priests and prophets.

Here, however, was a group of men who were religious leaders by their own appointment. Jesus said they sat “*in Moses’ seat*,” but that position was not by Divine appointment. It was because they knew what Moses had said. However, Jesus’ word’s about that circumstance suggests that they had placed themselves in Moses’ seat. In fact, one version reads, “*The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses*” NASB (Matt 23:2). The word translated “*sit*” suggests that the scribes and Pharisees seated themselves in “*Moses’ seat*” – thus it is defined, “to have fixed one’s abode,” THAYER referring to the action of the seated ones.

We have a similar situation within the church today. God has placed certain gifts within the Christ’s body. Valid gifts include, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers (Eph 4:11; Rom 12:6-7). There are also those gifted to speak words of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 12:8). Additionally, there are those with the gift of exhortation (Rom 12:8), and those given grace to “*speak*” (1 Pet 4:10-11). These are the Divinely appointed resources within the body of Christ, even as high priests, priests, and prophets were under the Old Covenant. However, in our time, there is a group of self-appointed leaders who have assumed the leadership of the Christian community. They are shaping the ideas of believers, and sitting in judgment on those who do not concur with them. These come from the academic community, the psychological community, and religious institutionalism.

SAW HIM EATING. These “*scribes and Pharisees*” did not join in the festivities, but were monitoring them as religious authorities. They saw with a critical eye, seeking to justify or condemn what they saw on the basis of their tradition.

THEY SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES. Luke says they “*murmured against His disciples*,” for to question what Jesus does is to deride those who follow Him (Lk 5:30). They address Christ’s disciples with full confidence that they can speak of their Leader with some understanding. Jesus has said, “*It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord*” (Matt 10:25). Who better to ask concerning the mind of the Lord than those who are following Him? This perspective casts a fresh light upon being a follower of Jesus. Rather than merely becoming an expert in rule-keeping, **the disciple becomes an expert in the Master Himself**. Paul referred to this as knowing “*Him*” (Phil 3:10), winning Christ (Phil 3:8), and “*the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*” (Phil 3:8a). May the Lord grant that you may be able to speak intelligently and accurately concerning Christ’s Person and ways.

HOW IS IT? Their question had nothing whatsoever to do with either the moral or ceremonial Law. It was a question driven by their own view of things and the “*traditions*” to which they held. This was not an honest question. They saw Him “*eating*” with the people in question, but asked why He was “*eating AND DRINKING*” with them. They saw no possible reason for being with such a motley group of people. How will Jesus respond?

“ 17 When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

WHEN JESUS HEARD IT. Jesus was always aware of the environment around Him, and therefore He heard the question put to His disciples. Luke says, *“And Jesus answering said unto them”* (Lk 5:31). I suppose they did not expect an answer from the Master Himself. They had already experienced a confrontation with Him when they, upon hearing Jesus declare a man’s sins were forgiven, reasoned, *“Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”* (Lk 5:21). It must have chafed them deeply as the forgiven man, formerly impotent, got up before their very eyes, picked up the bed upon which he had been confined, and *“went forth before them all”* (Mk 2:12; Lk 5:25). Still, unbelief blinds the hearts of men, moving them to speak foolishly.

There is something else about Jesus that ought to here be noted. Jesus **does** respond to what He hears – whether it is good or bad. When Jesus **“heard”** a certain ruler from the synagogue say to Jairus, *“Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master?”*, He graciously responded, *“Be not afraid, only believe”* (Mk 5:35-36). When He **“heard”** words of faith coming from the mouth of a Gentile centurion He marveled and said, *“I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”* (Lk 7:9). It is best to consider that He hears our words also, and to consider that before we speak them.

THEY THAT ARE WHOLE. *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.”* NIV There are at least two things made known in this saying. **First**, the concept of a Messiah had totally eluded these men. **Secondly**, they did not see themselves as standing in need of such an one. They had made a division in the human race that God had not made, seeing some as *“whole”* and some as *“sick.”* Of course, they considered themselves as *“whole.”*

If it is true that Jesus *“died for all”* (2 Cor 5:14), and that He was *“the true Light which lighteth every man”* (John 1:9), then there is really no such thing as a category of *“whole”* people among Adam’s race. God did not provide a *“Physician”* for some of mankind. Nor, indeed, were there only some among our race who required a heavenly *“Physician.”* When sin *“entered”* into the world, it pervaded the entire race, leaving no one untouched, *“for that all have sinned”* (Rom 5:12).

Actually, those *“scribes and Pharisees”* were also among those who stood in sore need of a *“Physician.”* Jesus was by no means suggesting they were *“whole,”* or that His ministry had nothing to offer them. They should be been like one of their peers, Nicodemus, who made diligent inquiry of Jesus, seeking for more of the precious balm He had to offer (John 3). **I CAME NOT TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS.** *“I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* NKJV Again, Jesus is not suggesting there were some righteous people who really did not need to repent. As it is written, *“There is none righteous, no not one”* (Rom 3:10). In another place Jesus said to the Pharisees and scribes, *“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7). Do you imagine that Jesus was saying there are really *“ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance?”* Was His intention to teach men that there are really two categories of people that exist apart from Him – those who need to repent, and those who do not need to repent?

Some have taught that the most important work for the church is saving sinners – getting outside the *“walls of the church,”* so to speak. Is that what Jesus is saying? Where it is ever remotely suggested that Jesus is intended for only a part of the human race? Where are Adam’s offspring ever said to consist of the righteous and the unrighteous? Did Jesus mean

to tell us that there is more joy in heaven when a sinner repents than when a person keeps the faith? Are we to believe that entering the race brings more heavenly joy than finishing it? Are the rewards really dispensed at the beginning of newness of life, or when the course of that life is completed?

The point Jesus is making is that the scribes and Pharisees saw themselves as “*righteous*,” with no requirement for a Savior. As such, they had no need for Jesus, and therefore He was not sitting with them. If, in fact, they were what they professed themselves to be, Jesus would have contradicted His mission to choose their company.

This word is a word of rebuke, not a doctrinal definition. **Jesus is saying He has nothing to offer those who do not see their need of Him, or who look at Him as being anything but a Savior and a Physician.** He is not primarily a mere Helper of human dilemmas, but the Resolver of the alienation and enmity caused by sin.

“ 15 They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

In this saying, we see something of the manner of Christ’s speech and ways. He would often reason with men upon the basis of what they thought of Him. In this, we will see that those who do not see Jesus as He truly is, cannot possibly live consistently with the flawed view they have chosen to embrace. Some examples of this are in order.

EXAMPLE 1. In the parable of the talents, Jesus spoke of an unfaithful steward, and of the manner in which he thought. When faced with his own unfaithfulness, that wicked steward said, “*Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine*” (Mat 25:24-25). The lord of that steward replied, “*Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury*” (Mat 25:26-27).

Was Jesus saying the Lord is, in fact, “*a hard*” master? Is it true that He reaps where He does not sow, and gathers where He has not “*strowed*,” or scattered seed? Indeed not! Rather than being “*hard*,” the Lord is “*meek and lowly in heart*.” His yoke is “*easy*,” and His burden is “*light*” (Matt 11:29-30). It is His “*gentleness*” that makes men great (Psa 18:35), and He is “*abundant in goodness and truth*” (Ex 34:6). That servant could not possibly have been more wrong. However, the Lord used his own reasoning against him, showing how just his punishment was. If, in fact, that is how this wicked servant had considered his lord, he would logically have worked the harder to please him. But he had uttered a lie, and it is not possible to favorably shape one’s life by a lie.

EXAMPLE 2. In the parable of the pounds, Jesus also spoke of an unfaithful steward. That wicked servant also buried his stewardship, reasoning much like the man who mishandled his “*talent*.” After hearing his miserable defense of the deed, the master replied, “***Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow***” (Luke 19:22). Again, the idea is not that the master was really “*austere*,” or difficult to please. Nor, indeed, did he go about robbing various fields of what others had planted. Nevertheless, the lord of that servant spent no time explaining his real nature. Instead he judged the man by his own words – “*out of thine own mouth will I judge thee*.” The man’s own reasoning became the basis for his condemnation, for it was a wicked and dishonest way of thinking.

EXAMPLE 3. In His well known sermon on the mount Jesus said, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged*” (Matt 7:1). Many have supposed that this saying forbids any form of human assessment. This, however, it not at all the case. Jesus does forbid men to judge “*according to appearance,*” but also demands that they “*judge righteous judgment*” (John 7:24). Transgressors within the body of Christ are to “*judged*” by others (1 Cor 5:12). There are also times when judgment is to be made “*between brethren*” (1 Cor 6:5). Paul encouraged the Corinthians to “*judge*” what He said (1 Cor 10:15). Jesus is not, therefore, demanding that no discretionary judgments be made by His people.

The Lord elaborates on judgment, appealing to the very principle I am now expounding. “*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*” (Matt 7:2). Thus a person will be judged in precisely the way he judged others – out of his own mouth. This is further declared elsewhere. “*With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful, and with the upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright. With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself unsavory*” (2 Sam 22:25-27). Jesus said, “*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy*” (Matt 5:7). Again He said, “*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*” (Luke 6:37-38). Again Jesus said, “*But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*” (Matt 6:15).

This, then, is a Divine manner – to deal with men in strict accord with their assessments of Him, and the manner in which they conducted themselves among men. It is this manner that moved Jesus to speak to the scribes and Pharisees as He did. He used their own flawed reasoning against them, showing that the repository of their minds was nothing more than a bag filled with holes, and a cistern that could hold no water.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 24

“ Mark 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? 19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the Bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the Bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.” (Mark 2:18-20)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has moved from the relative obscurity of Nazareth into public life. He is exposing men from every stratum of society to Divine life – to the thoughts and ways of God with which they were at a fundamental variance (Isa 55:7-8). We must take care to see the ministry of Christ in the proper light. In going about and doing good, healing all who were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38), the Son of God was primarily exhibiting God. Divine light was “*shining in darkness*” (John 1:5), and all men were either coming to that light, being drawn by God (John 6:44), or shrinking back from it “*because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:20-21). Christ’s life was in such stark contrast to natural life that it provoked all manners of observations and inquiries. Never had anyone spoken like Him (John 7:46). Never had such authority been witnessed among men (Lk 4:36). His words and teaching were viewed as “*new doctrine*” (Mk 1:27), and were totally unlike the scribes – scholars of the day (Mk 1:22). No person who was knowingly subjected to Christ viewed Him as an ordinary man! They did not ask Him ordinary questions, and they did not respond to Him in ordinary ways. It is still that way. **Wherever the “ordinary” rules religious men, they are, without exception, unaware of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and are abiding in the darkness.**

“ 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?”

THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN AND OF THE PHARISEES. “*Disciples*” are learners or pupils – those who follow a particular teacher or “*Master.*” Jesus said of disciples and masters, “*It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master*” (Matt 10:25). And again, “*The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master*” (Luke 6:40). Here is a relationship that is deliberate. It involves embracing the teaching and direction of a particular person. A “*disciple*” follows someone who is **saying** something – teaching something. Strictly speaking, the “*disciple*” does not merely follow an example, but a teacher – someone with a message. The Scriptures refer to “*Moses’ disciples*” (John 9:28), “*John’s disciples*” (John 3:25), “*disciples of the Pharisees*” (Lk 5:33), and “*the disciples of the Lord*” (Acts 9:1). In every case, these were people who embraced the teaching of the one or ones they followed – the message for which that individual was noted.

Synonyms for “disciple” are “scholar,” “learner,” “pupil,” and “student.” They are “scholars” in the sense of being expert in what the teacher says. They are “learners” in the sense of absorbing what the teacher proclaims. They are “pupils” in the sense of sitting at the feet of the teacher, subjecting themselves to his tutelage. They are “students” in the sense of devoting themselves to the teaching of the teacher, probing what he says and taking hold of it with their understanding. Strictly speaking, a “disciple” is a follower of a teacher or teachers. Being a “disciple” is not an impersonal movement.

“*The disciples of John*” (Lk 7:48) were followers of John the Baptist, who embraced his fresh and anointed teaching. He was primarily a teacher – a man noted for what he said. He was, in the language of the prophet “*The voice him that crieth in the wilderness*” (Isa 40:3). John said of himself, “*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness*” (John 1:23). He was noted for his declarations – his “preaching” (Matt 3:1).

“*The disciples of the Pharisees*” followed their teaching, which was fundamentally corrupt. Jesus told His disciples to “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*” (Matt 16:6), declaring that the “doctrine” was like a growing and corrupting influence (Matt 16:12). He also affirmed they were hypocritical in their teaching (Lk 12:1). It seems apparent from this passage that the Pharisees were attempting to influence John’s disciples, for I cannot conceive of them being otherwise associated.

I draw attention to these things to confirm the sharp contrast of contemporary religion with that of former times. There has been a degeneracy in our day that has nearly removed the concept of a teacher and his disciples – of someone with a message and those who are embracing that message and becoming expert in it.

THEY COME UNTO HIM. Matthew says “*the disciples of John*” came to Jesus (Matt 9:14). Luke has “*the scribes and the Pharisees*” posing the question (Lk 5:30-33). **It is interesting to note that Jesus “disciples” did not ask questions of the “disciples” of John and the Pharisees.** It appears clear to me that there was such a superiority in the teaching of the Lord Jesus that all other teaching was reduced to being secondary, and even inferior. You may rest assured that the persons who truly learn from Jesus (Matt 11:29) and are “taught” by Jesus (Eph 4:21), will lose interest in inferior teaching. If there is not some connection between the teaching of question and the Person of Jesus, it will not be seen as critical, or the subject of extended and prolonged inquiry.

WHY? Both the disciples of John and the Pharisees were noted for their fasting. In one of His sayings, Jesus spoke of them as fasting “*twice a week*” (Lk 18:12). It is probable that both sets of disciples were fasting during the feast Matthew had prepared. The conduct of Christ’s disciples was in sharp contrast with that of the inquiring disciples. Why were Christ’s disciples breaking their tradition? Why was their conduct so different? How could they be feasting at a time when other religious people were fasting?

At once we see that following Jesus and being His disciple causes one to be at variance with routine religion. In the case of the disciples of the Pharisees, it was lifeless and hypocritical; religion. In the case of the disciples of John the Baptist, the message was introductory, and thus allowed for some connection with former and inferior things. However, as soon as men began to follow Jesus, a certain freshness and newness of life began to evidence itself that static religion could not explain. What these men were witnessing was “noise” in a valley of dry bones – a “shaking,” and a gathering of the bones (Ezek 37:7). To them, it was a difference that cried out for an explanation from the Master.

“ 19 And Jesus said unto them, *Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the*

Bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the Bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

THE CHILDREN OF THE BRIDECHAMBER. Other versions read, “*friends of the bridegroom,*” NKJV “*attendants of the bridegroom,*” NASB “*guests of the bridegroom,*” NIV and “*the wedding guests.*” NRSV John’s disciples would be able to digest this teaching. John himself had said to his followers, “*Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:28-30).

This is Christ’s reference to His “*disciples,*” for those were the objects of inquiry. He classes them as “*friends,*” just as John had classified himself. Also, Jesus later referred to His disciples as His “*friends*” (John 15:15). Technically, this referred to the period of time between the beginning of Christ’s earthly ministry and His death. It was a time of joyful exposure to the unprecedented working of the Lord, together with a hitherto unknown degree of Divine favor. Those who were accompanying Jesus were “*the children of the bridechamber.*” They were not the “*bride of Christ,*” but were His “*friends.*” They were close to Jesus, but not as close as the “*bride*” would be. They enjoyed His presence, but not to the degree that would be experienced following His enthronement in glory.

HOW CAN THEY FAST? Fasting is not associated with joy and gladness. Zechariah, speaking of the time of the Messiah, declared that fasts would be turned into “*cheerful feasts,*” no longer being noted for affliction and sorrow. “*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts ; therefore love the truth and peace*” (Zech 8:19). I do not doubt that Jesus was referring to this very text, declaring that the One promised by the prophets was now among them.

Jesus asks if the children “*can*” fast while He is with them. The question is a rhetorical one that strongly suggests such a thing is **not** possible. There is an exhilarating joy associated with the perceived presence of the Lord that forbids fasting.

AS LONG AS THE BRIDEGROOM IS WITH THEM. Jesus is revealing the manner of the kingdom – the nature of spiritual life. Remember, this is only introductory to what was to be experienced **after** Jesus was exalted and took up His abode within His people. The Bridegroom being with “*the children of the bridechamber*” was preliminary to the time when men would be “*joined to the Lord,*” becoming “*one spirit*” with Him (1 Cor 6:17). Throughout God’s dealings with men, there was an introduction to good things to come. The original accord that Adam had with the Lord was introductory to what was to come. Enoch and Noah “*walked with God*” (Gen 5:22; 6:9), but not to the degree that would be realized by Abraham, who was “*the friend of God*” (2 Chron 20:7; James 2:23). Abraham heard from and was directed by the Lord, but not to the extent of Moses, with whom God spoke “*mouth to mouth*” (Num 12:8). Although Moses was close to God, He was not given to see the coming Christ with the clarity revealed to the Prophets, who “*prophesied of the grace that should come*” to us (1 Pet 1:10). The prophets received insights into the “*sufferings*” of the coming savior, and “*the glory that should follow.*” Yet, they did not see the fulness of it, which was reserved for those living in the time of Christ’s exaltation (1 Pet 1:11-12).

Now, in our text, “the Bridegroom” is with His “*friends*” – “*the children of the bridechamber.*” It is a time of transition, during which “*the old*” is beginning to fade, and “*new things*” are beginning to spring forth (Isa 42:9). There is a spiritual freshness that is like springtime, that has brought expectation, joy, and wonder. The crust of religious mediocrity and dulness has been

broken, and springs of living water are beginning to flow among men. They are pressing into the kingdom (Lk 16:16), and taking it by force (Matt 11:12).

“The Bridegroom” is among men, and those who are journeying with Him – His *“friends”* – are witnessing a disruption of the kingdom of darkness. Those who sat in darkness are seeing a great light (Isa 9:2), captives are being loosed, and the poor are having the Gospel preached to them (Lk 4:18-19).

This is no time for fasting, tears of sadness, and the affliction of the soul! Those who know what is happening *“cannot fast.”* Wise men from the East *“rejoiced”* at the sight of Christ’s *“star”* (Matt 2:10). What will *“the children”* do, now that they are walking with Him as He goes about *“doing good and healing all who are oppressed of the devil?”* Jesus did not outline fasting procedures to His disciples, but told them to wash their faces and anoint their heads when they fasted, so that they did not appear to fast (Matt 6:16-18).

“20 But the days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”

THE DAYS WILL COME. The excitement and exhilaration that *“the children”* were enjoying were going to come to a temporary end. A woman at Jacob’s well asked, *“is not this the Christ?”* (John 4:29). When seeing and hearing Him for themselves, those from Samaria said, *“this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world”* (John 4:42). Upon seeing the wondrous works, and hearing the refreshing words, of the Lord, many of the Jewish people said, *“Of a truth this is the Prophet,”* and *“This is the Christ”* (John 7:40-41). Martha said, *“I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world”* (John 11:27). Speaking of the time the disciples spent with Jesus, Cleopas would later confess, *“we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel”* (Luke 24:20).

All of this would change. The days were coming *“when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them.”* Jesus was speaking of His death, when all would seem but loss for them. When He was arrested in the garden, it is said of His disciples, *“they all forsook Him and fled”* (Mk 14:50). **The Bridegroom was being taken away!** That night marked the only time in history when one of His twelve disciples, Peter, thrice denied Him (Matt 26:69-75). **The Bridegroom was being taken away.** After Jesus had died, Peter said, *“I go a fishing,”* and the other disciples said they would go back with him (John 21:3). **The Bridegroom had been taken from them!** Following Christ’s resurrection, and before His appearance to them, the disciples were assembled behind closed doors *“for fear of the Jews”* (John 20:19). **The Bridegroom had been taken from them.**

Zechariah spoke of the taking away of the Bridegroom, associating it with Christ’s death. *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones”* (Zech 13:7). Jesus said that was fulfilled the night He was betrayed to be crucified (Matt 26:31). Once, speaking of His presence in the flesh, Jesus spoke to His disciples, *“For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have **not** always”* (John 12:8). He would be *“taken away from them.”* On the night of His betrayal, Jesus reminded His disciples that He had said to the Jews, *“Whither **I** go ye cannot come”* (John 13:33). He was going to be *“taken away from them.”* He spoke of this as Him going away, and departing – beyond the reach of human senses – telling them it was *“expedient”* for Him to do so (John 16:7). He also said, *“I leave the world, and go to the Father”* (John 16:28). He was going to be *“taken away from them.”* This would alter their whole perspective.

THEN SHALL THEY FAST. Later Jesus would prepare His disciples for this time – when He would be “*taken away from them.*” There would be a time when they would nearly be overcome with sorrow. As soon as He began to speak about going away, sorrow took hold of them. “*But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart*” (John 16:6). “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful . . .*” (John 16:20).

Those who had grown accustomed to walking with Jesus could not return to life as usual. Now there was room for sorrow, grief, and fasting. There was a sense in which their sorrow was “*turned into joy*” when the risen Christ met with them (John 16:20). Even when He returned back to heaven in the presence of the twelve, they returned to enter into uninterrupted prayer (Acts 1:12-13). It was not until the day Pentecost that any of Christ’s disciples are said to have rejoiced: “*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*” (Acts 2:46). That is when Jesus’ word was fulfilled, “*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*” (John 14:18).

There are some few instances recorded when, following Christ’s ascension, His disciples fasted (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23). The Epistles refer to fasting time, and that regards the married abstaining from intimacy for a season: “*Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to **fasting** and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency*” (1 Cor 7:5). Forced abstinence from food and water – a form of suffering – is mentioned twice (2 Cor 6:5; 11:27). Fasting is mentioned in the Prophets over sixty times (Joshua thru Malachi). Moses mentioned fasting four times.

Why is it that fasting is so rarely mentioned, and **never** taught as a procedure, to those who are in Christ Jesus? It is because the Bridegroom is with them, dwelling in their hearts by faith. It is only when we are not aware of this Presence that fasting becomes appropriate. Otherwise it is still true, “*as long as they have the Bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.*”

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 25

“ Mark 2:21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. 22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.” (Mark 2:21-22 ; Matt 9:16-17; Lk 5:36-37).

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has been asked concerning the matter of fasting – fasting as a regular procedure, or form of religious discipline. He has candidly told His inquirers that fasting is not even possible when the Bridegroom is with His friends. His presence is not conducive to fasting, while His absence is. The Lord is going to elaborate on this matter with two very pungent observations. Both of them have to do with trying to blend the new with the old. This is an especially critical area of thought, and we do well to endeavor to take hold of it with both hands. One of the grand distinctions between the Old and New Covenants is found in their emphasis. The Old emphasizes DOING: *“Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them : I am the LORD”* (Lev 18:5; Neh 9:29; Ezek 20:11,13,21). Jesus and the Apostles also draw attention to this basic requirement of the Law (Luke 10:28; Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12). The New, however, emphasizes RECEIVING. Things *“received”* include the Word (Matt 13:20), the kingdom of God (Mk 10:15), honor from God (John 5:44), the Holy Spirit (John 7:39), remission of sins (Acts 10:43), abundance of grace (Rom 5:17a), righteousness (Rom 5:17b), the things of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14), and the adoption of sons (Gal 4:5). The New Covenant is an economy driven by the grace of God, which is realized through the faith of men – *“by grace through faith.”* We will see that when we are walking in faith, and grace is discerningly operative, it casts a new and refreshing light upon all doing – including fasting.

“ 2:21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.”

Jesus is still answering the question regarding fasting – still explaining why His disciples are not fasting as were the disciples of John and the Pharisees. Nor, indeed, did Jesus teach His disciples that they ought to fast. He did assume there would be times when they would fast, but told them, *“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly”* (Mat 6:18). That is quite different than outlining a fasting-procedure, or declaring the necessity of fasting. Luke refers to our text as *“a parable”* (Lk 5:36).

“NO MAN.” By saying “*no man*,” the Lord is introducing a totally unreasonable scenario. What He is going to say will be readily recognized as the truth, and will not be contradicted by any person of sound mind. This is what Paul would call being “*approved of men*” (Rom 14:18), or things that are “*honest . . . in the sight of all men*” (2 Cor 8:21).

There is a dimension of spiritual reasoning that appeals to things that are generally understood by men. These are ordinarily areas of practicality that parallel “*the things of the Spirit of God*.” Thus Peter, on the day of Pentecost, appealed to the consciences of the people, referring to the miracles Jesus did among them, when, said he, “*ye yourselves also know*” (Acts 2:21). It is important to note that the things of God at no point contradict sound thought or good reasoning.

A PIECE OF NEW CLOTH. Both Mark and Matthew refer to “*a piece of new cloth*.” Luke refers to “*a piece of a new garment*” (Lk 5:36). In this case, a “*new cloth*,” or a piece of cloth from a “*new garment*,” refers to a piece of cloth that was newly woven. It had not yet been processed by the “*fuller*,” who washed and prepared the cloth for use. The word “*new*” literally means “*rude, undressed, not full*.” The idea is that “*new cloth*” had not yet been made wet, which process would cause a natural shrinkage in the fabric.

Luke adds yet another dimension to this “*parable*,” saying that the “*piece*” of cloth used to mend the old garment was actually taken from a “*new garment*.” In that scenario, the “*new garment*” was spoiled in favor of maintaining an “*old*” one.

ON AN OLD GARMENT. The picture is of an old piece of clothing that needed to be patched. “*No man*” would take a piece of unshrunk cloth, and stitch it on to an old piece of clothing that had already been shrunk, even being washed multiple times.

THE RENT IS MADE WORSE. The first time the “*old garment*” was once again washed, the piece of new cloth would shrink, pulling the threads apart, and making the garment worse than it was in the first place. Matthew says, “*it taketh from the garment*” (Matt 9:16). Mark says, it “*takes away from the old*.” Luke says the first garment was spoiled, and the piece taken from it “*agreeth not with the old*” (Lk 5:36). Now, therefore, neither garment can be used – both have lost their utility.

PATCHING THE OLD WITH THE NEW. The point Jesus is making is that He did not come to refurbish the Old Covenant, or to add some secret spiritual ingredients that would assist men in fortifying their weak points. He did not come to add some new rules, and to merely elevate the matter of obtaining life by doing.

What Jesus came to give did not blend with the Old Covenant manner: “*This do and live*” (Lk 10:28). He did not come to extend the ancient agreement, “*but the doers of the Law shall be justified*” (Rom 2:13). The Law clearly affirmed, “*Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD*” (Lev 18:5). Jesus did not come to patch that system, which was “*weak through the flesh*” (Rom 8:3).

To attempt to superimpose “*newness of life*” on the Adamic nature would only make the human situation worse. What is required by those who are in Christ Jesus far transcends the requirements of the Law. Love, for example, must of the same kind as that of Jesus Himself (John 13:34). Whoever is angry with his brother “*without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment*” (Matt 5:22). Forgiveness of one who has sinned against us extends to “*seventy times seven*” (Matt 18:22).

Also, to attempt to put “*new life*” into old procedures, and “*newness of life*” into fleshly

regimens would only diminish new life, and total wreck the old procedures. An “old garment” can only be repaired with an “old” piece of cloth, and even that cannot be permanent. **In Christ, the very concept of “newness” demands the ultimate abandonment of “oldness.”** This is because “*the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life*” (2 Cor 3:6).

“ 22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.”

The first parallel – attempting to repair an old garment with a new piece of cloth – dealt with **trying to maintain the old way** . This parallel shows a slightly different picture – **trying to maintain a new way within an old framework** . In the first, only a fragment of the new was taken and used to patch the old. In this example, the **whole** of the new is taken, and an attempt is made to maintain it within an “old” setting. It is like exchanging an old Law for a new one; or, exchanging an old discipline for a new one. “*Newness of life*” is thus viewed as merely a different “*way of life*” – life that is lived out in much the same way as before.

NEW WINE INTO OLD BOTTLES. The “*bottles*” here described were not containers of glass or clay, but were “*wineskins,*” leather bags that were used as bottles, and is so translated in most other versions. When “*new,*” the skins were supple and able to expand. When old, they became brittle and were easily broken.

Here the **nature** of “*new life*” is seen. Like fresh fruit of the vine, rather than waning in strength, it grows greater, becoming more potent with time. Here, “*new wine*” is the fruit of the vine **in the process of fermentation** . It is fresh and sweet at the first, but becomes more potent with time – like something being “*sweet as honey*” in the mouth, but “*bitter*” in the belly (Rev 10:9-10; Ezek 3:1– 14). Unlike a procedural religion, true spiritual life becomes stronger and stronger, going “*from strength to strength*” (Psa 84:7), and changing “*from glory to glory*” (2 Cor 3:18). **The question now becomes whether or not this life can be adapted to lifeless manners and apathetic procedures.** Can you, for example, take “*newness of life*” and pour it into the mold of “*fasting?*” Is it possible to advance spiritual life by this means, moving into higher plateaus of Divine fellowship? **Is it possible to reform dead religion by pouring new life into it?** Can a body of people take a dead routine, renewing and empowering it with life from God? Is such a thing possible? Can flesh be made the better by making it spiritual? Can alienation from God be resolved by pouring spirituality over it? Is it possible for New Covenant life to be maintained in old religious procedures and ways?

Jesus answers by saying “*no man putteth new wine into old bottles.*” This is even against good common sense, to say nothing of being contrary to the mind of the Lord and the nature of the New Covenant itself.

BOTH THE NEW AND THE OLD WILL BE LOST. “*New wine*” eventually ferments, causing an expansion within the “*old bottles*” that they are not able to withstand. The result is twofold: first, the old bottles break, and they can no longer be used. Second, all of the new wine is lost, spilling from the ruptured bottles.

Mingling spiritual freedom with the ceremonies of the Law, and disciplines created by mere men, will yield no good. The old procedures will not be able to contain newness of life, and they will break, causing confusion and losing all of their meaning. In addition, fresh life will be lost, and a lapse into religious tradition and other lifeless procedures will take place. New “systems” will be invented that will be considered capable of maintaining new life – but they will not be able to do so.

This was the reason for the direction given to early Gentile converts. “*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell*” NKJV (Acts 15:28-29). They refused to pour new wine into old bottles – to put newness of life into the old procedures of the Law.

When Paul asked the Colossians, “*Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances*” (Col 2:20), he was asking why they were attempting to pour new wine into old bottles – new life into lifeless procedures? They were not the last ones to struggle with such a tendency.

NEW BOTTLES ARE A MUST. New wine demands new bottles. It cannot be preserved unless new bottles are provided. Here is one of the primary reasons for the new birth: new life requires a “*new man,*” “*a new heart,*” “*a new spirit,*” and a “*renewed*” mind (Col 3:10; Ezek 36:26; Rom 12:2). It is not possible to live a spiritual life “*in the flesh,*” or to fellowship with Christ within the framework of heartless procedure. That is why Jesus affirmed, “*Ye must be born again*” (John 3:7). New wine demands new bottles, and both are the Lord’s doing. He creates the “*newness of life,*” and the “*new man*” that contains it.

“*No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better*” (Luke 5:39).

In their narratives of this parable, both Matthew and Luke make a note of the preservation of both the new wine and the new bottles: “*and both are preserved*” (Matt 9:17; Lk 5:36). Both the life and what contains the life are preserved. That compares with the attempt to put the new wine in old containers, which results in both the wine and the bottles perishing. At no point can the “*new*” be mingled with the “*old.*” The Old Covenant and the New Covenant can in no way be blended. That is, a system of doing and an economy of grace cannot be put together. The “*old man*” and the “*new man*” cannot be joined together, for one is dying, and the other is increasing in both life and strength. “*Flesh*” and “*Spirit*” cannot work together. They cannot be joined together, for they are “*contrary the one to the other*” (Gal 5:17).

Without further elaborating on this total incongruity, it is phenomenal how much religious activity attempts to do the impossible – put new wine into old bottles. When men try to pour spiritual life into the uncrucified life, politics, education, dead religion, and the likes, they are attempting to pour “*new wine into old bottles.*” It cannot be done. At no point is Jesus represented as coming and effecting a salvation designed to make society better, sanctify the flesh, or dignify the offspring of Adam. All of that may sound good to the unlearned, but it cannot be true. One order is temporal, the other is eternal. One is cursed, and the other is blessed. One is rejected, and the other accepted.

The answer to productive life is clearly stated, and it covers every facet of life in this world. “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him*” (Col 3:17). And again, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor 10:31). That is putting “*new wine into new bottles.*” To state it another way, it is “*walking in newness of life*” (Rom 6:4). That is, in order to “*walk*” in the newness of life, we must “*put on the new man,*” dying to the old ways in which we formerly lived, and of which we are “*now ashamed*” (Rom 6:21).

SOME SAY THE OLD IS BETTER. Luke adds a word that is not included by either

Matthew or Mark. *“No one who has been drinking old wine wants new wine, for he says, ‘The old is excellent!’”* ISV This is a word delivered to the *“scribes and Pharisees”* who first raised the question about fasting (Lk 5:30-33). This word reveals the nature of *“the flesh,”* which cannot enjoy the *“new things”* that were being declared by Jesus (Isa 42:9).

Among *those* who have not actually *“tasted that the Lord is gracious”* (1 Pet 2:3), there is a propensity to Law – to rules, regulations, procedures, and the likes. Lifeless ceremonies are perceived as having a value before the Lord, and bring great satisfaction to these poor and uninformed souls. They perceive the shackling of the flesh to be of superior value, knowing nothing of the *“liberty by which Christ has made us free”* NKJV (Gal 5:1). They equate *“liberty,”* or *“freedom,”* with being lawless, and free to commit all manner of sin. They cannot see that men must be made *“free”* in order to come to the Lord, receive from Him, and engage in heavenly commerce in the *“heavenly places”* where Christ has placed us (Eph 1:3; 2:6).

“The old is better,” they say, for it has a sharper bite to it. They see more value in rebuke than in comfort, and in restraint than constraint. Their question is not *“What wilt Thou have me to do?”* (Acts 9:6), but *“What do I absolutely have to do?”* They will actually assign more value to human tradition than to the grace of God. To them, *“grace”* is too weak, like a frail old woman that can accomplish nothing before the Lord. They prefer religious ceremonies and spectating to walking *“in the light as He is in the light”* (1 John 1:7), or enjoying the *“fellowship”* of God’s Son, into which He has called them (1 Cor 1:9).

Invariably, those who have been steeped in a *“works-oriented”* religion find the grace of God and *“newness of life”* difficult to receive. They reason, *“the old is better.”* That is the invariable effect of an Old Covenant approach to life in Christ Jesus. They are like some of the ancient men who wept at the recollection of the old Temple when the foundations had been restored by Zerubbael (Ezra 3:11-13). They could not rejoice in new things!

The truth of the matter is that Christ has inducted an age of *“better things.”* Now we have a hope of something that is *“far better”* (Phil 1:23). We have a Leader who is *“so much better than the angels”* (Heb 1:4). We have a *“better hope”* (Heb 7:19), a *“better testament”* (Heb 7:22), and a *“better covenant which is established upon better promises”* (Heb 8:6). We now know of a *“better country”* (Heb 11:16), and a *“better resurrection”* (Heb 11:35). But when you try to pour it all into the *“old bottles”* of Law, you lose it all, for *“new wine must be put into new bottles.”* Blessed is the person who makes sense of these things!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

Lesson 26

By; Given O. Blakely

“ Mark 2:23 And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24 And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25 And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? 26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?” (Mark 2:23-26)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has affirmed the presence of the Bridegroom, announced by John the Baptist (John 3:29), declaring that His presence brought such joy His friends could not fast. Now we will see how the Pharisees, held in bondage to elemental religion, were not able to understand what He had said. They will confirm that they could not consider religion without placing it within the context of mere human interpretation. Because they were devoid of faith, they could not properly evaluate the conduct of those who were walking with Jesus. His very presence brought a certain joyful liberty that is unknown among those with a propensity to Law. Those who remain under bondage through fear of death cannot conceive of spiritual liberty. To them, liberty is nothing more than license, and men are free to do only what they are told to do. Apart from Christ, this is a true assessment. However, even then, there is no merit in doing what one is told to do (Lk 17:10). Even though meticulous procedures are followed with great care, yet no Divine favor is obtained. There is no doubt that the disciples themselves were not fully aware of the impact Christ's presence had upon them, and how their joy and satisfaction with Him shaped what they did and how they did it. Now, we are confronted with a situation that is most unusual, yet which provides us with an index to the kind of life Jesus came to give.

“ 2:23 And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24 And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?”

THROUGH THE CORN FIELDS ON THE SABBATH. Matthew tells us that this event took place right after Jesus had confronted Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum with their unbelief. These are described as *“the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done”* – yet they had not repented (Matt 12:20-24). It was after this that Jesus thanked His Father that He had hidden these things from the wise and prudent, but revealed them unto babes. This was the very occasion when Jesus called for all who labored and were heavy laden to come to Him, and He would give them rest (Matt 11:28-29). *“At that time,”* Matthew adds, *“Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn”* (Matt 12:1). How His heart must have been heavy because of the wall

of unbelief He had confronted in those three wicked cities!

Luke tells us this took place *“on the second Sabbath after the first, that He went through the corn fields”* (Lk 6:1). This could have been one of the special Sabbaths associated with the Jewish feasts. There are a variety of differing views on this. Some feel it was the Sabbath of the second feast, which was *“the feast of the firstfruits.”* The first feast was *“the feast of unleavened bread,”* and the third *“the feast of ingathering”* (Ex 23:15-16). Others consider it to be the second Sabbath of the Passover, as outlined in Exodus 12:16. This could also have been the regular seventh-day Sabbath of Exodus 20:10. If that is the case, this would have been the *“second Sabbath”* from the Passover, from which they were to number seven Sabbath’s until Pentecost, which was the 50 th day (Lev 23:15-16). The instruction Jesus gave on this matter suggests this was an ordinary Sabbath, the second one after the Passover, counting toward Pentecost.

HIS DISCIPLES PLUCKED THE CORN. In the Scriptures *“corn”* does not refer to *“maize,”* or *“Indian corn,”* but to grain, like wheat or barely. Thus oxen are said to *“tread,”* or thresh the corn, separating the grain from the chaff (Deut 25:4). Jesus also referred to a *“corn of wheat,”* a phrase denoting the kernel within the wheat husk (John 12:24). Amos referred to the sifting of corn, in which the *“grains”* were salvaged (Amos 9:9).

Mark says the disciples *“plucked the ears of corn.”* Matthews says they *“began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat”* (Matt 12:1). Luke says they *“plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands”* (Lk 6:1). Other versions say they ate the *“kernels”* after rubbing them in their hands. NIV Another version says they *“took the heads of the grain for food, rubbing them in their hands.”* BBE

This was lawful. It might be objected that this field did not belong to them, and thus they should not have taken the liberty to eat the fruit of it. However, the Law of Moses allowed for this action, forbidding only putting a sickly to the field of another, reaping in quantity. *“When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand ; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn”* (Deut 23:25). Moses makes no distinction of any days on which this action was unlawful. It has a gracious provision for those who were poor, or had no immediate access to food. Thus, the disciples had done nothing unlawful, else the Lord Himself would have corrected them.

WHY ARE THEY DOING WHAT IS UNLAWFUL? Apparently, these Pharisees were continuing with Jesus, even though He had soundly rebuffed their inquiry about fasting. As we will see, however, they were **not** seeking truth from Him, but were still confounded with the difference between His disciples and their own. Now they charge His disciples with doing something that is unlawful: *“Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”* (Mark 2:24).

The Sabbath commandment enjoined, *“in it thou shalt not do any work”* (Ex 20:10; 31:15; 35:2). This was a prohibition of productive work that was of a personal nature. Sacrifices were offered on the Sabbath (Num 28:9; 2 Chron 2:4). Children were circumcised on the Sabbath (Lev 12:3; John 7:23). If a man’s donkey or ox had fallen into a pit, it could be removed on the Sabbath (Lk 14:5). Men were to apply their minds to the commandment, not seeking gain on the Sabbath (Neh 10:31). It was a personal matter to be applied with discretion and in the fear of the Lord.

However, the Pharisees set out to define *“work,”* developing a whole network of binding traditions upon the people. Although never specified by Moses, a *“Sabbath’s day’s journey”* was observed during times of Jesus, considered to be about 3/4 of a mile (Acts 1:12). Thus, the Pharisees were judging Jesus’ disciples by their own traditions – a practice that remains

prominent in our day as well. Jesus said the Pharisees transgressed the commandment of God “*for the sake of your tradition*” NASB (Matt 15:3). They also made the “*commandment of God of none effect*” by their tradition (Matt 15:5). Now these men are no longer content to ask about the disciples, but choose to say they are acting against the Law.

“ 25 And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?”

HAVE YE NEVER READ? Whether Jesus was confronting the devil himself, or those who were under his dominion, He framed His answers within the context of Scripture. He does not set out to argue with the Pharisees about what was and was not proper on the Sabbath day, for they really had no interest in knowing such things. As all who choose to shape their own religion, these men had already determined what was right and what was wrong, and it had nothing whatsoever to do with Scripture. Jesus, however, will not allow them to drag him into the arena of human opinion.

Although these men sat “*in Moses’ seat*” (Matt 23:2), and thought they had life because the “*oracles of God*” had been committed into their care (John 5:39; Rom 3:2), yet they were abysmally ignorant of the Scriptures. Jesus told some of their messengers, “*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*” (Mat 22:29). The Scriptures were nothing more than an adjunct to their religion – a sort of spiritual accessory. The sum and substance of their religion was their tradition, which they preferred over the very Word that had been committed into their care.

When Jesus says, “*Have ye never read,*” He is not suggesting they had not actually read the text that He will now set before them. They had no doubt read it many times, but not with discernment. Their traditions had blocked out the significance of the Scriptures to them. From yet another point of view, their minds were “*blinded*” because of the hardness of their hearts. God had “*poured out upon*” them a “*spirit of deep sleep,*” so that they could not associate the Scriptures with the circumstances they confronted. If they could have seen the significance of Scripture, they would never have asked their question.

WHAT DAVID DID WHEN HE HAD NEED. The incident to which Jesus refers is recorded in the twenty-first chapter of First Samuel. In flight from king Saul, David and his men come to Nob and to Ahimelech the priest. He informs the priest that they have need of food, requesting “*five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present*” (1 Sam 21:3).

Jesus says of this occasion that David “*was in need and hungry, he and those with him.*” NKJV The circumstance, therefore, did not fall under the category of ordinary work, just as what the disciples had done was not “*work,*” as stipulated in the commandment concerning the Sabbath.

THE TIME OF NEED. We will learn from this instance that during the time of “*need,*” ordinary rules can be suspended. When the Law makes no provision for a given situation, a plea can be made upon the basis of “*need.*” This is an area in which the value of faith and supplication rise to the surface. It also parallels our text, for the disciples “*were hungry.*” In Scripture, the word “*hungry*” is not a casual word. “*Hungry*” means “*to suffer want, to be needy, to crave ardently, to seek with eager desire.*” STRONG’S You may recall that after Jesus had “*fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an **hungred***” (Matt 4:2). When Jesus cursed the fig tree, it was because He sought fruit from it when “*He hungered*” (Matt 21:18). A promise of being “*filled*” is extended to those who “*hunger and thirst after righteousness*” (Matt 5:6). This speaks, therefore, of an usual time – a time of need.

On one occasion, a “*woman*” who “*was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation,*” came to

Jesus with a special request. It is written that “*she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter*” (Mark 7:26). Jesus not only ignored the woman at the first, but eventually told her that she should, “*Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs*” (Mark 7:27). Earlier, when He had sent out His disciples, He told them, “*Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not*” (Matt 10:5). This was not the ordinary direction of Christ’s earthly ministry. No law could be cited that would justify answering the woman’s request. However, this was a time of need – a time during which ordinary ministries were not in place. It was an occasion like that of a thief pleading to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom (Lk 23:42), or a Centurion, himself a Gentile, who confessed he was not worthy of having Jesus in his house. Yet, his need compelled him to ask Jesus to speak a word, believing God would honor it (Lk 7:6-9). Although Jesus went with Zacheus to his house, and blessed Simon’s mother-in-law in his house, He did not go to this man’s house. The ordinary was suspended because of the nature of the need, and the quality of the faith that sought His aid. How we should all take heart that we are promised if we approach the throne of grace boldly, we can “*obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need*” (Heb 4:16). Now, let us behold how need changed the circumstance for David.

“ 26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?”

The incident that Jesus references is one in which much of the nature of the Kingdom is made known. It occurred during unusual circumstances, so we should not be surprised at the unusual things that took place at this time.

HE WENT INTO THE HOUSE OF GOD. The text in Samuel says David came “*to Ahimelech the priest.*” It is understood that he was in “*the house of God,*” which was the place of his service. When Ahimelech answered David’s request for bread he said, “*There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women*” (1 Sam 21:4). It is evident that the priest was in the tabernacle, about his service, for that is where the “*hallowed bread*” was kept.

HE DID EAT THE SHOWBREAD. The bread of reference was the “*showbread*” that was placed upon the “*table of showbread*” in the holy place (Ex 25:30). Each Sabbath day, fresh bread was baked, and the old loaves were replaced with it (Lev 24:5-8). The ordinary rule was that only the priests were to eat this bread. The loaves that were replaced were for the priests, and were to be eaten by them alone (Lev 24:9). No other Israelite was to eat these loaves (Ex 29:33).

The record of the incident further states that the bread given to David was **not** the fresh bread newly placed upon the table, but the bread that was removed, which belonged exclusively to the priests: “*So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before the LORD , to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away*” (1 Sam 21:6).

Ahimelech makes a point of this, saying, “*the bread is in a manner common , yea, though it were sanctified this day in a vessel*” (1 Sam 21:5). This bread was sanctified in a vessel for the exclusive consumption of the priests (Lev 8:26). Yet, Ahimelech gave David the bread because of the need, being careful to give him the bread that had been replaced by fresh loaves. Even then,

however, the priest insisted that David and his men have kept themselves “*from women*” – something God also required when He gave the Law at Sinai (Ex 19:15). Davis assured Ahimelech they had done this, and that the vessels, or bodies, of the young men were “*holy*” (1 Sam 21:4-5).

HE GAVE ALSO TO THOSE WITH HIM. Not only did David eat the bread, but gave of it also to the men who were with him. Matthew makes a point of Jesus saying, “*which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him*” (Matt 12:4).

There was no text of Scripture that could have been cited that sanctioned what Ahimelech did. It could rather have been proved from the Scripture that this was not proper, but was unlawful. Yet, because this was a ceremonial law, it was set aside in order that a genuine need might be met. It ought to be noted that the moral law could not be set aside under unique circumstance. Idolatry, lying, stealing, murder, coveting, and the likes, could not be ignored in order to meet some personal need. This is a distinction that requires the wisdom that is from above.

THE PRIEST’S PROFANE THE SABBATH. Matthew points out one more word that Jesus said on this matter. He also pointed out that the priests, in fulfilling God-ordained procedures, profaned, or violated, the Sabbath. “*Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?*” (Matt 12:5). On the evening and morning of **every** Sabbath day, an extensive offering was made to the Lord. One lamb was offered in the morning as a “*burnt offering.*” At that time, about two liters of grain was also mixed with about one quart of pure olive oil, and was offered as a “*meat*” (meal) offering. Additionally, a quart of “*strong wine*” was poured out “*unto the Lord*” in the holy place, for a “*drink offering.*” In the evening, another lamb was offered as a “*burnt offering,*” together with another meat offering, and another drink offering (Num 28:1-9). This was offered “*every Sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering and its drink offering*” (Num 28:10). That represented a phenomenal amount of “*work,*” done on a day of which God Himself said, “*ye shall do **no work** therein*” (Lev 23:3).

When Jesus went to the house of a Pharisee, Simon by name, to “*eat bread on the Sabbath day*” (Lk 14:1), the Pharisees did not criticize Him and His disciples for eating what another person had prepared. Now, however, they have criticized Jesus’ disciples for doing the very same thing – eating for their own sustenance on the Sabbath day.

The “*work*” that was forbidden on the Sabbath day did not include efforts involved in serving the Lord. Nor, indeed, was the commandment intended to exclude necessities, such as eating. The prohibition was against ordinary labor that was related to the curse – the “*toil*” that was bound upon men as the result the curse brought in by sin (Gen 3:19).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 27

by Given O. Blakely

“ Mark 2:27 And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: 28 therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27-28)

INTRODUCTION

From the early times of Israel until this very day, considerable controversy has existed concerning the Sabbath day. When the manna fell in the wilderness, those who went out on the Sabbath day to gather it found that none was there (Ex 16:27). Once a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. The Lord ordered that he be put to death by all of the congregation stoning him with stones (Num 15:32). Nehemiah once contended with men from Tyre who sold fish to in Jerusalem on the Sabbath day (Neh 13:16). Jeremiah had to remind the inhabitants of Jerusalem not to bear burdens on the Sabbath day, nor bring it into Jerusalem on that day. They did not obey, but *“made their neck stiff”* (Jer 17_21-23). Paul instructed the Colossians to not allow any person to bind Sabbath day observance upon them (Col 2:16). There remain major divisions among professed followers of Christ over this very matter – which day is the Sabbath, and how should it be observed? In order to negate the view that the seventh day is still the day to be honored by Christians, some have developed a theology that conveniently gets rid of the fourth commandment. They say God has erased the Law – the Ten Commandments – and has restated the commands that are to be kept by those in Christ. They imagine that this resolves the problems related to the Sabbath day. Still others say that the first day of the week replaced the seventh-day Sabbath, and that it is the new Sabbath day. Many have simply chosen to ignore the whole subject, finding it too difficult to address. In this text, Jesus will make two key statements regarding the Sabbath day. He will give us a Divine perspective of the case, and therefore provide some insight into this matter, in order that we can think soundly about it. It is possible to be delivered from the scribes and Pharisees way of thinking.

“ 2:27 And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Only Mark provides this pungent saying. It is omitted in the other Gospels. Other versions read, *“The Sabbath was made on account of man, not man on account of the Sabbath,”* DARBY *“The Sabbath was made to benefit people, and not people to benefit the Sabbath.”* NLT

THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN. This does not refer to mankind in general, but particularly to the Jews. While the principle of the Sabbath applies to all men, it had special significance to Israel, and was part of the covenant that God made with them. Thus it is written in Exodus, *“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day*

He rested, and was refreshed” (Ex 31:16-17). And again, “*Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you*” (Ex 31:13).

This is a most arresting statement. It confirms that man was not made to fulfill a routine – that humanity itself is the point. The point here – “*the Sabbath was made for man*” – means that it yields to fundamental human necessities. Whether those are the extensive sacrifices offered on the Sabbath (Num 28:9-10), satisfying human hunger (Lk 14:1), or healing the oppressed (Lk 13:14), **the Sabbath yields to the genuine needs of humanity**. It is to be understood that these not needs established by human wisdom. The women who were intent upon anointing the body of Jesus with “*spices and ointments,*” prepared them, then “*rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment*” (Lk 23:56). In their case, there were very strong sentiments associated with their objective to anoint the body of Jesus. However, sentiment and preference are not the same as “*need.*”

Refreshment. The Sabbath was a provision for man – given in consideration his frail spiritual and physical constitution. Physically, there was a need for rest from the rigorous toils of life. Therefore, God is said to have been “*refreshed*” when He ceased from his labors on the seventh day (Ex 31:17). It is not that God was wearied by the work of creation, for “*God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary*” (Isa 40:28). With Him, refreshment had to do with realizing profound satisfaction with the creation, of which He said, “*And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good . And the evening and the morning were the sixth day*” (Gen 1:31). All of this was His “*handiwork,*” and it was gratifying for Him to behold it (Psa 19:1-3).

For man, refreshment has to do with the rejuvenation of the inward and outward man. The outward man is renewed by refraining from the toil imposed upon him because of sin (Gen 3:19). How gracious of God to lift the curse for the seventh part of the week! It was certainly not because man deserved it. “*The Sabbath was made for man.*” Inwardly, this was a time for Israel “*afflict*” their souls. As it is written, “*It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever,*” or “*humble,*” NASB and “*deny*” themselves NIV (Lev 16:31). It was a day to be kept “*holy,*” or dedicated to the Lord for holy remembrances and involvements (Ex 20:8). This was a time when they were particularly were brought to “*know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you*” (Ex 31:13). The day was to be regarded as a “*holy unto you*” (Ex 31:14), “*holy to the Lord*” (Ex 31:15), and “*a Sabbath of rest to the Lord*” (Ex 35:2).

Without this day, Israel would quickly have forgotten the Lord altogether, for they were fundamentally corrupt within – a “*stiffnecked people*” (Ex 32:9). They had to be forced to recall the Lord. The Sabbath was made for them. Jesus sanctified the Sabbath, bringing it to its highest profit when He regularly taught in the synagogues on that day (Lk 4:31).

MAN NOT MADE FOR THE SABBATH. Man was not made to keep rules – even the most ancient of day of, sanctified by God Himself on the day following the creation – the seventh day (Gen 2:3). There was a more lofty purpose for the creation of man – it was to “*have dominion*” (Gen 1:26,28; Psa 8:6; Heb 2:7). In his infancy and weakness, the Sabbath was given to man – but he was not given to the Sabbath. The pinnacle of spiritual life is not the fulfillment of obligations, which is nothing more than our duty (Luke 17:10). This is not a license to sin, or to engage in self-will, for even the Sabbath did not allow that. **Jesus is speaking with the coming freedom in mind, not man’s natural state.** The purpose for man’s creation is realized **ONLY** in Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that Jesus will now turn the spotlight upon “*the Son of Man.*” He is the ultimate man – “*THE Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 2:5). If man is made for the Sabbath, then that rule will apply to

Jesus also.

“ **28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.**” Other versions read, “Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath,” NASB “Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath,” NIV and “And I, the Son of Man, am master even of the Sabbath!” NLT

THEREFORE. That is, **because** the Sabbath was made for man, and man was not made for the Sabbath, the following conclusion is made known.

THE SON OF MAN. This is Jesus most common reference to Himself, used eighty-two times in the Gospels. It refers to Jesus as the chief Man, and is equated with “the Second Man” (1 Cor 15:47), and “*the last Adam.*” Jesus is the true “*Seed*” of the woman, of the chief representative of the human race. He is the Inheritor of all things, and is therefore called “*the Firstborn among many brethren*” (Rom 8:29), the “*Firstborn over all creation,*” NASB (Col 1:15), the “*Firstborn from the dead,*” Col 1:18), and God’s “*Firstborn*” NKJV (Heb 1:6).

The “*Son of Man*” refers to Jesus in His vicarious, or substitutionary, role. “*The Son of God*” refers to Him in His commissioned role. Here, the emphasis is on His Manhood – “*the Word . . . made flesh*” (John 1:14), “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16), and “*Jesus Christ . . . come in the flesh*” (1 John 4:2).

Now, before He is glorified, and while He was yet “*dwelt among*” humanity, He declares that He is still “*Lord.*” While, at that time, He had not yet been “*exalted*” (Phil 2:9), and “*angels and authorities and powers*” had not yet been “*made subject to Him*” as they are now (1 Pet 3:22), He was still in charge!

While He remained in the body, and prior to His crucifixion, Jesus said, “*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand*” (John 3:35). Even then, He had “*power over all flesh*” (John 17:2), so that none could effectively oppose Him until He was ready to “*lay down His life,*” that He might “*take it up again*” (John 10:17-18). As He walked among men Jesus said, “*All things are delivered unto Me of My Father*” (Lk 10:22). He could dismiss demons with His Word (Matt 8:16). Nature yielded to His authority, whether winds (Mk 4:39), waves (Matt 8:24-27), trees (Mk 11:20-21), fish (Matt 17:27), or water in purification vessels (John 2:7-10). Even in His humbled state (Phil 2:8), He was in command.

LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH. By saying this, the Lord points out that the Sabbath was, in some way, distinct from all other commandments. Jesus could dispense with the ordinary rules of the Sabbath, and even abrogate the commandment as binding upon men, if He so willed. He did not say this of any other of the Ten Commandments. In this very saying Jesus points to a time when the Sabbath day would no longer be an issue. This is **not** true of not having “*other gods,*” not making “*graven images,*” not bowing down and serving idols, not taking the name of the Lord in vain, honoring father and mother, not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not bearing false witness, or not coveting (Ex 20:3-17). Jesus never left the most vague notion that He was introducing economy in which such things would be allowed – a time when those prohibitions could be violated with impunity.

Jesus was pointing to the time when the Temple veil would be violently torn in two from the top to the bottom – a time when the way into the very presence of God would be opened (Matt 27:51). There would no more be a seasonal remembrance of God, or the smaller part of life given to Him. Men would be brought to so know the Lord that we would

consciously and joyfully “live, and move, and have our being in Him” (Acts 17:28). No longer would men, “through fear of death,” be “all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:15). The “redeemed of the Lord” (Isa 62:12) would be prone to remember the Lord, and not to forget Him.

Here, the proof that Jesus was from God, with all power, is confirmed in His right to direct the affairs of the Sabbath day. He will care nothing for the traditions and interpretations of men, but will “do good” on the Sabbath day, where men agree with it or not (Lk 6:9). During the time of Moses, a man was stoned according to the commandment of God, for picking up “sticks upon the Sabbath day” (Num 15:32-36). When Jesus arrived on the scene, He commanded a lame man to take up his bed and carry it about on the Sabbath day (John 5:8-10). He was “*Lord of the Sabbath.*”

The scribes and Pharisees had criticized Christ’s disciples for picking grains, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them as they walked through the fields on the Sabbath day. Jesus had reminded them that the priests profaned the Sabbath, and that David violated the law by eating the showbread. But now He rises even higher, pointing to Himself. He is inducting an era that cannot be contained within the framework of a Law, or within the confined of rules and regulations – and that even included the Sabbath day. I realize this can be abused by carnally minded people. However the spiritually minded will not do so.

As for the Sabbath day, Israel, who received the commandment, never really entered into God's rest, or Sabbath. That is a matter of record. In fact God Himself said of them, “As I have sworn in My wrath, they shall **not** enter into My rest” NKJV (Heb 4:1-9).

There is a greater rest that was typified by the Law's Sabbath day, but never was fulfilled by it. That is the rest of faith, and is discussed at length in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. There, a parallel is made between the fourth commandment Sabbath and the “rest” of faith. “For we which have believed do enter into rest . . . Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached **entered not in** because of unbelief” (Heb 4:3,6). He is speaking of the seventh day as confirmed in verse 4: “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works” (Heb 4:4).

The Sabbath day was bound upon Israel because their hearts were hard. They would have forgotten God altogether if He did not demand they remember Him on that day, dedicating it exclusively to Him. In Christ, however, our nature is changed, so that we actually know, and delight in knowing, the Lord. Now every day becomes a Sabbath so far as sanctifying the Lord in our memory. Faith causes us to “enter” into the “rest” of God.

This does not mean keeping the Colossians 2:16-17 forbids us to judge one another on this matter. The recollection of God as the Creator of the universe is wonderful. **Intimate fellowship with Him by faith is more wonderful.** That is why Scripture affirms, “We which believe do enter into rest” (Heb 4:3), even though Israel did not. The word used in that text is “sabbaton,” or Sabbath. It is a higher and more extensive rest which overshadows, but does not obliterate, the former Sabbath. The greater glory removes the lesser one (2 Cor 3:7,11).

The fourth chapter of Hebrews deals extensively with the Sabbath, showing it has been overshadowed by a greater Sabbath – one of spiritual rest. The passage is Hebrews 4:1-11, and speaks rather plainly. Under the Law, the Sabbath day was imposed upon the people because of their hard hearts. They would have forgotten God altogether if a day had not been commanded from which to rest from ordinary labors and concentrate upon the Lord. In Christ, we are simply told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb 10:25) – we are

not told not to work. There is something in the renewed heart that senses the need for focusing on a gathering of kindred spirits, and building one another up in the most holy faith. That is why an exhortation, or reminder, is given for them to do this, not a commandment like the Sabbath day commandment.

We also have records of early believers meeting on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). This was doubtless done because of our Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9), and, after His resurrection, he appeared two times to the disciples on a first day of the week (John 20:19,26). The day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week, being the 50th day after the first Passover Sabbath (Lev 23:15-16). This is an area of sharp controversy among believers in Christ. However, the fact that neither Jesus nor the Apostles ever bound the Sabbath day upon people makes it wrong for others to do so. It is in the area of conscience. Jesus said of the Sabbath, "*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath*" (Mark 2:28).

You do not have to prove the Sabbath has passed. The Adventists have to prove Jesus has bound it upon us. It will do no good to infer that such a thing is binding. We must have a word from Jesus or his Apostles on the matter. It cannot be affirmed that every one knew the fourth commandment, and therefore it was not necessary to affirm it, for that was not the case with the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not keep the Sabbath day. Although God's law was written upon their conscience (Rom 2:15), yet no Gentile nation advocated the seventh day as the Sabbath. If it was not a key issue for them, it cannot be for us. To me, that is a more powerful argument than one based upon research and inference.

The first day of the week is held before us as a central time for believers.

1. Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9).
2. He appeared to Mary Magdalene on the first day of the week (Mk 16:9).
3. Following His resurrection, He twice appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:19,6).
4. The day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week (50 days after the Passover Sabbath).
5. The disciples at Troaz met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
6. The Corinthians were instructed to lay aside their offerings on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2).

This is sufficient evidence to confirm the Sabbath day is not binding upon those in Christ Jesus. It has been overshadowed by a greater glory. There is a greater "*rest*" realized in Christ, and it fulfills the Sabbath commandment.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 28

by Given O. Blakely

“ Mark 3:1 And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse Him. 3 And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. 5 And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.” (Mark 3:1-5)

INTRODUCTION

The stage has been set for the ministry of Jesus – the ministry that preceded His betrayal, death, resurrection, and enthronement. That ministry is both introductory and preparatory. It introduces men to God and His ways, and prepares Jesus for the giving of Himself as a ransom for a fallen race. In Christ’s introduction of God and His ways, we will be exposed to three kinds of people, all of whom react to Christ’s revelation of God and His ways. One group will vigorously oppose the Lord, seeing Him as nothing more than a competitor to the persons and manners. Another will see Him as the answer to their temporal needs, yet will not be able to perceive His association with the Father, of with things beyond this world. Still others will perceive Him as the promised Savior, and will be drawn to Him, and follow Him with determination and consistency. There are also a variety of subclasses in these groups that confirm Jesus Himself is the cause of a remarkable degree of division among men. As the “*light of the world*” (John 9:5), the Savior not only revealed the nature and purpose of God, His Father. He also revealed the nature of man, and the extent of his fall into sin. Basking in the revealing light of Jesus everything is made more clear. Things that were otherwise concealed and unexpressed are made plain.

“ 3:1 And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse Him.”

HE ENTERED AGAIN INTO THE SYNAGOGUE. Christ’s frequency of the synagogues is significant. Although, with the possible exception of Psalm 74:8, synagogues are never mentioned in Moses and the prophets, they had become a prominent part of Jewish life. There are forty-one references to synagogues in the Gospels. Jesus is said to have “*taught*” in the synagogues (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 13:54; Mk 1:21; 6:2; Lk 4:15; 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59; 18:20). He “*preached in their synagogues*” (Mk 1:39; Lk 4:44) He “*went*” into synagogues (Matt 12:9; Mk 3:1; Lk 4:16). You would find Jesus where people gathered in the name of the Lord – places where the name of the Lord was embraced,

the Scriptures were read, and a general interest in the things of God was common.

Here Jesus lived out something He promised to His disciples: “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt 18:20). As we will see in this text, Jesus does not come “*amidst*” His people to merely observe. In our time, a sensitivity to the presence of Jesus in the assembly has nearly been lost. Sometimes there are petitions for the Lord to join the people, even after He has affirmed that He is present when people “*are gathered together*” in His name – because of Him, and in honor of Him. Throughout history, holy gatherings have always accompanied great revivals or renewals. I know of no revival, in either the Scriptures or in church history, that was realized independently of the gathering together of the people.

A MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND. Previously, Jesus confronted a man with an “*unclean spirit*” in a synagogue (Mk 1:23). Now, in the presence of Jesus, and within a synagogue, there stands a man with “*a withered hand.*” A “*withered hand*” a “*shriveled hand*” NIV – a hand that was useless, with no feeling or life in it. Other versions read, “*whose hand was dead,*” BBE “*having his hand dried up,*” DARBY and “*with one arm shriveled up.*” WEYMOUTH Luke tells us that it was his “*right hand*” that was “*withered*” (Lk 6:6). The word used here (“*withered*”) indicates that the man was not born with this defect, but that it was the result of either an accident or a disease. That is, it had become “*withered*” subsequent to his birth.

With was a man with a bodily member, intended for productive use, that had become useless. He had a hand, but it was no functionally no different than if he had no “*right hand*” at all. A “*withered*” hand cannot take hold of anything. It can engage in no work, or take hold of someone to support or lift them. It ought to be apparent that many have spiritual capacities that have, for some reason, withered and died, and can no longer be used. This account offers hope for the restoration of such parts.

THEY WATCHED HIM. Matthew says the people asked Jesus if it was lawful to “*heal on the Sabbath days, that they might accuse Him*” (Matt 12:10). Luke says it was “*the scribes and Pharisees*” who watched Jesus “*that they might find an accusation against Him*” (Lk 6:7). These people had no interest in the truth, which was standing before them in the very Person of Christ (John 14:6). He was “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14), yet they only perceived Him as a contradiction to their stilted and lifeless traditions. He had already soundly rebuffed them for their perspective of the Sabbath day (Mk 1:25-28), but their devotion to tradition had blinded their minds and hardened their hearts so that “*they could not believe*” (John 12:39).

It is the manner of those who have nothing more than religious tradition and a love for self to look for some failing in the people of God. Job cried out, “*All my inward friends abhorred me*” (Job 20:10). David said “*false witnesses*” rose up against him (Psa 27:12), and that they would “*daily swallow*” him up (Psa 56:2). Jeremiah said of his enemies, “*All my familiars (friends) watched for my halting*” (Jer 20:10). That is the manner of those who walk in the flesh – they set themselves against those who walk in the Spirit, and look for some point upon which they may condemn the righteous.

Matthew says these people “*asked*” Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath days. Luke opens the matter further by saying Jesus “*knew their thoughts.*” That is, even though they asked question as though it was an honest inquiry, Jesus answered them according to the corruption of their “*thoughts.*” He did not answer them “*according to*” their outward “*folly*” (Prov 26:4), addressing them as though they were intellectually honest. He rather answered them “*according to*” their inward “*folly,*” lest His answer lead them to imagine they were anything but utterly corrupt (Prov 26:5). One thing about the Savior, one may fasten his eyes upon Him, carefully

watching for some error, but he will find none!

“ 3 And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.”

STAND FORTH! With the eyes of His critics upon Him, corrupt thoughts within their hearts, and a trick question thrown at Him, Jesus turns His attention to the afflicted man in the congregation. Indicating that the man was seated among the people, Luke writes, Jesus “*said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst . And he arose and stood forth*” (Luke 6:8). The NIV reads, “*Get up and stand in front of everyone.*” Infirmary or not, the man was to stand before all of the people, with his infirmity being seen of all. In this manner, Jesus would bring due glory to God, and Festus: “*for this thing was not done in a corner*” (Acts 26:26).

WHAT IS LAWFUL? Jesus now hurls the question of his critics in their faces. He will not gravel about in their dirt of their tradition, but will force them to either think on a higher plain, or drop their inquiry altogether. They had asked, “*Is it lawful heal on the Sabbath days?*” However, this was not the right question. It was rather one of those “*foolish and unlearned questions*” which the people of God are told to “*avoid*” (2 Tim 2:23). No such question is to be dignified with an answer or extensive discussion. Thus Jesus phrases the question as it ought to have been asked.

“*Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil?*” Luke phrases Jesus retort even more precisely, “*I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?*” (Luke 6:9). Is there really any time when doing good is out of order, or doing evil is in order? Is it ever wrong to save a life, and is it ever right to destroy one? This question is as relevant today as it was then!

Notice, Jesus classifies healing as **doing good** . By insinuation, He is suggesting that to ignore this man would, in fact, be doing evil, and more related to destroying life than saving it. James reminded us that the person who knew “*to do good,*” and did it not, was actually sinning – Sabbath or not (James 4:17).

Behold how Jesus shifts the thinking of the people into the proper area. Rather than thinking of an obligation to keep religious tradition, Jesus reminds them of the obligation of doing good “*unto all men*” (Gal 6:10). By inference, He suggests that God has not provided a time during which men may rest from doing good. There is no time when saving life can put on hold in deference to a humanly conceived notion of being religious. He also confirms that the time to “*do good*” and “*save life*” is when we are confronted with the opportunity to do so.

Jesus asked if it was “*lawful*” to do good on the Sabbath day. This was the same as saying, If God did not say, “*Do not heal on the Sabbath day,*” what man dares to affirm such a thing – much less bind it upon other men, and judge those who do not honor their carnal view of things?

Jesus also knew that this was a work that God had ordained – it was a time in which He was to “*show*” the people “*good works*” that were “*from the Father*” (John 10:32). This was a work through which it would be confirmed that the Father was in Him, and He as in the Father (John 10:38). Those who opposed such works were making known their own hatred of God, for He declared, “*He that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me*” (Luke 10:16).

THEY HELD THEIR PEACE. Only Mark records this response. Other versions read, “*But they kept silence,*” NKJV “*they remained silent,*” NIV “*they were silent,*” NRSV “*They said nothing,*” BBE and “*they wouldn’t answer Him.*” LIVING

What happened here? The wisdom of Christ's critics dried up. Their minds were unable to respond to words of the Christ. His words, like a sword proceeding from His mouth, cut their reasoning into ribbons, and they could not recover from His assault. On another occasion, when healing a man with dropsy, Jesus asked these same critics, "*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?*" At that time, having engaged in several skirmishes with the Lord, they "*held their peace*" (Lk 14:3-4). On another occasion, when they asked Jesus a foolish question, and after hearing His answer, it is written, "*For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything*" NASB (Luke 20:40).

Here is an aspect of spiritual life that could well be restored in our time. As it is written, "*For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped*" (Tit 1:10-11). And again, "*For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*" (1 Pet 2:15). It brings no glory to God when foolish feel free to keep on talking.

"5 And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."

HE LOOKED ON THEM WITH ANGER. Luke when Jesus told the man to strength forth His hand, He was "*looking round about on them all*" (Lk 6:8). How do people like those Jesus confronted in this text effect Him? Does He simply brush the matter aside, and speak with gentleness of such individuals? He looked upon these people just as He looks upon the devil himself, who was animating them – "*with anger.*" The word "*anger*" is properly defined as agitation of the soul, violent emotion, wrath, and indignation. STRONG'S It Contains the idea of opposition and punishment that comes from being against the person. On one occasion Jesus saw multitudes of people as wandering sheep "*having no shepherd,*" and "*was moved with compassion*" (Matt 9:36). On another occasion, He also "*saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion*" (Matt 14:14). However, when Jesus looked upon those who sought an occasion against Him, and questioned the validity of His works (which were of the Father), He did not look with compassion upon them. Their presence and thoughts stirred up His anger, and caused His wrath to rise to the surface. They had no appeal to His mercy, grace, kindness, or pity – but to His anger.

Those who imagine that wayward human emotions and thoughts have no impact upon the Lord of glory ought to peruse this passage with much deliberation. On one occasion when a certain "*ruler of the synagogue*" told the people not to come on the Sabbath day to be healed, Jesus responded, "*Thou hypocrite!*" (Lk 13:15). Sin registers this kind of impact upon Christ Jesus. He is in no way tolerant of it. This is why sin had to be taken out of the way before men could experience the grace and kindness of God.

BEING GRIEVED. It was Jesus' grief that provoked His anger – "*being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.*" One version reads, "*deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts.*" NIV The idea is that He was greatly disturbed or agitated at the awareness of their stony hearts. This is the very thing that moved God to "*bring evil*" upon the city of His people, which He Himself had blessed (Jer 19:15). It is what moved the Lord to depose Nebuchadnezzar from the throne upon which He had paced him (Dan 5:20).

You may rest assured that when Christ is "*grieved*" with the hearts of men, He will not be disposed to bless them. Care must be taken to avoid a view of the Lord that has Him tolerant of sin, indifferent toward obstinance, and gracious toward stubbornness. Here, we are being exposed to the real Jesus, and He is angry at foolishness, and grieved by hardheartedness – even when it is found in

the synagogue!

STRETCH FORTH THINE HAND. All three Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) report this word: “*Stretch forth thine hand!*” Other versions read, “*Put out your hand,*” BBE “*Reach out your hand,*” NLT “*Hold out your hand.*” ISV How will the man respond to this command? Would he not be justified in saying, “I cannot do it; my hand is dead?” Technically, according to the flesh, he has no more capacity to do this than a paralyzed man has to get up, pick up his bed, and walk (Matt 9:6). However, Christ’s “*word was with power*” (Lk 4:32). If faith will take hold of this word, the ability to put forth his hand will be realized. It might appear to the flesh that this was an open door for unspeakable embarrassment. The man was standing before them all. How will he react?

HIS HAND WAS RESTORED. It is written, “*And he stretched it out!*” Matthew reads, “*And he stretched it forth*” (Matt 12:13). Luke reads, “*And he did so*” (Lk 6:10). His hearing was “*mixed with faith,*” and this He was profited by the word of the Lord (Heb 4:2). Those who respond in faith to the word of the Lord will not be disappointed. Responding to the word of mere men, however, is not marked with such benefit.

Immediately, the man’s hand was “*restored whole as the other,*” so that it was fully functional. All three accounts read the same. Other versions read, “*was made well,*” BBE “*Completely restored,*” NIB and “*became normal again.*” NLT He now had two good hands (“whole as the other”), and could resume normal activities.

There are still people who have “*withered*” spiritual hands – capacities granted at their new birth that have dwindled away, and are no longer working. It may be their understanding, their zeal, or their ability to communicate. It could be their hearing ear, the speaking mouth, or the working hand. Their “*members*” are not operating as they should. Such souls must stretch them out to the Lord, yielding their members as “*instruments of righteousness unto God*” (Rom 6:13). When they gave them to the world, they withered, and became useless. But when they stretch them forth to God in faith, they will be restored.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By Given O. Blakely

Lesson 29

By; Given O. Blakely

“Mark 3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. 7 But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judaea, 8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him.” (Mark 3:6-8)

INTRODUCTION

In our text, Jesus has come as a “light” into the world, and the promise of Isaiah is being fulfilled. *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined”* (Isa 9:1-2; Matt 4:16-17). Satan had seized this territory, and under his domination, the shadow of death and thick darkness hovered over the people. With the entrance of Jesus a great light penetrated that darkness, awakening faith and hope in the people. He introduced a new kind of teaching that was *“with power”* and *“authority.”* He invaded Satan’s domain, causing great disruption and thrusting professed religious leaders into the background. That is the Lord’s manner. When Christ rises to prominence before the people, all religious sham and deficiency are exposed, and a quest for better things becomes prominent. Those who hear Him are no longer content with spiritual dullness and empty routine. With Jesus comes a sense of *“better things”* and of *“help in the time of need.”* Our text will confirm the effects of this newness upon the religious leaders. At this point, a plan was set in motion that consummated in the death of Christ. God would use this means to fulfill His own counsel, and these men would only do what He had determined beforehand (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).

“3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him . . .”

After another encounter with the Lord of glory, and after being put to silence by His challenge and another healing on the Sabbath day, the tide turns. The Pharisees are no longer content to merely try to catch Jesus in some technical error – something they were never able to do. They will now move their opposition to a higher level.

THE PHARISEES WENT FORTH. Immediately following the healing of the man with the withered hand, the Pharisees left the synagogue. For them, that was the conclusion of the gathering. What was a very glorious occasion for the formerly impaired man, became a terrible assault on their tradition. Luke says of this occasion, *“And they were filled with madness”* – *“filled with rage,”* NKJV and *“were furious”* NIV (Lk 6:11).

The word *“madness”* means *“want of understanding, folly.”* THAYER The idea is that they

became insane with rage, losing all capability of reasoning soundly. Another version reads, “*they were filled with lack of understanding and senseless rage.*” AMPLIFIED This is an example of the mind being “*blinded.*” From one point of view, the devil himself “*blinded their minds*” so they could not see Jesus (2 Cor 4:4). From an even higher view, God “*poured out the spirit of deep sleep*” upon them and “*closed their eyes*” (Isa 29:10). As Isaiah also said, God took their wisdom from them, so they could not think properly: “*Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid*” (Isa 29:14).

Putting these things together, when they rejected Jesus, God lowered the gate for the devil to enter. Seizing the opportunity, Satan, ignorant of the purpose of God, began working through the minds of these men to get rid of Jesus. If ever they had free will, they certainly did not have it now. God had removed, or deprived them of, wisdom, and Satan had blinded their eyes. That is the liability that faces every person who refuses Christ.

THEY TOOK COUNSEL WITH THE HERODIANS. The “*Herodians*” are mentioned three times in Scripture. This is the first. The second occurs some time later, when Jewish leaders sent “*certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch Him in His words*” (Mk 12:13). The third is Matthew’s recounting of the event in Mark 12:43.

The “*Herodians*” were not a religious sect, but, as the name suggests, a political party that supported the dynasty of Herod. Little is known of them beyond what is stated in the Gospels. We do not know of their specific political ambitions. However, we do know that it became apparent to them that the teaching of Jesus concerning “*the kingdom of God*” jeopardized their plans. Jesus may have had reference to this party when He warned His disciples, “*Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod*” (Mark 8:15). The “*leaven of Herod,*” in such a case, would be his way of thinking – a way that was embraced by the Herodians.

There was a conflict with the way Herod thought, and with the Law of Moses. Moses strictly forbade setting a stranger, or Gentile, as king over the Israelites. He wrote, “*one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother*” (Deut 17:15). History tells us that Herod, being set over the people by the Romans, took exception to Moses, saying the people were obliged to obey and pay tribute to the king set over them by their captors.

Under ordinary circumstances, the Herodians were no friends of the Jews. Now, however, they were quite willing to conspire with the Jewish leaders against Jesus, who was a common enemy. The Pharisees and the Herodians were much like Pilate and Herod, of whom, during Christ’s trials, it is written, “*And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves*” (Luke 23:12). Many a wicked alliance has been constituted between former enemies who were brought together by their common hatred of the Lord Jesus and His people.

Although it has become quite common in our day, we have here an example of an attempted merger between religion and the politics of the day. Excluding the unusual case of Cyrus, raised up by God to ensure the rebuilding of the Temple (2 Chron 36:23), little, if any, good has every come from such alliances. The people of God must guard themselves carefully to ensure that a political way of thinking does not permeate their ranks. **If it is true that the Kingdom of God is going to throw down all of the kingdoms of the world, bringing them to extinction (Dan 2:44; Rev 11:15) , it is not likely that any of their principles and thoughts will bring advantages to the household of faith.**

“ 6b . . . how they might destroy Him. 7a But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea . . . ”

HOW THEY MIGHT DESTROY HIM. This is the first mentioning of such a purpose. Until this time, the Pharisees were content to merely oppose Jesus, and attempt to catch Him in a violation of the Law, or their tradition. Now, however, Christ’s work and influence have become completely intolerable to them. They seem to sense that if He succeeds, they will surely fail. In every way, they are diametrically opposed to each other. Christ and the world cannot work together, and even the wicked sense this.

Matthew says the Pharisees and Herodians “*held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him*” (Matt 12:14) – a special gathering where they pooled their diabolical ideas. Luke writes, they “*communed one with another what they might do to Jesus*” (Lk 6:11). This evil caucus was held early in Christ’s ministry, during the first year of it, or, at the very latest, very early in the second year. Before less than one third (3-1/2 yrs) of Christ’s early ministry was completed, His incompatibility with dead religion and worldly politics became apparent to the chief leaders of both groups.

Their wicked plans, however, would not be culminated until God brought them into synch with His own purpose. Although they were both shrewd and influential, the Pharisees and Herodians could not lay a hand on Jesus until the appointed time, when He would lay down His life. Thus, when He was arrested in the Garden, Jesus said to the soldiers, “*When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness*” (Luke 22:53). Until that time, the plans of this wicked conclave were frustrated again and again. However, all of those frustrations did not cause their desires to wane, for they were wicked men under the domination of the wicked one. For the next two years they continually, through the alliance of religion and politics, sought to rid themselves of Christ Jesus. Their efforts were totally without success.

In our time, there is also an effort to rid the people of Jesus. It can be no more effective than the efforts of those early Pharisees and Herodians. No child of God should reason as though the enemy was invincible. Far better to side with the King of glory. The saints of God do not do well to live in fear of those who oppose the Lord Jesus, to whom all power in heaven and earth belongs. Nor, indeed, should we be surprised at carnal opposition, whether it comes from the professed church, the government, or some other quarter.

BUT JESUS WITHDREW HIMSELF. Jesus did not press the issue, accenting the conflict with the Pharisees and Herodians. He did not take time out to argue with them, or to seek to persuade them, or to further, and publically, expose them. At one time He announced His purpose for coming into the world was not to render judgment. “*And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world*” (John 12:47). This is why Jesus was never diverted into endless arguments with scribes, Pharisees, sadducees, lawyers, and Herodians. Christ’s withdrawal is obvious: His time had not yet come. In His Gospel, John refers to Christ’s hour not yet coming four times (John 2:4; 7:6,30; 8:20). Two times He accounts for the inability of His enemies to lay hands on Him, “*because His hour was not yet come*” (John 7:30; 8:20). Jesus walked wisely among men, not purposely provoking aggressive opposition until His hour had arrived.

Notwithstanding this irritating circumstance, Jesus did not provoke the situation, but withdrew from that agitating environment. He did what Solomon said, “*A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself*” (Prov 22:3; 27:12). Solomon was speaking of danger, Jesus

was thinking of Divine purpose. He was not only introducing the people to light, and to God Himself, but was preparing Himself to lay down His life a ransom for many, and teaching His disciples as well. He would not be diverted from those involvements.

WITH HIS DISCIPLES. Jesus did not retire to a place of solitude at this time, but took His disciples with Him, for He was going to choose them *“that they should be with Him”* (Mk 3:14). Ten times we read of Jesus being *“with His disciples”* (Mk 3:7; 8:10,34; 10:46; Lk 8:22; John 6:3,22; 11:54; 18:1). They were His preferred company. Our text says He took them *“to the sea”* – of Galilee. Right here we see one of the distinctions of Christ’s disciples. **They follow Jesus wherever He goes, while His enemies are the ones who leave Him.** Jesus alluded to this consistent trait when He said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”* (John 10:27). His sheep *“know not the voice of strangers”* (John 10:8), and *“know,”* or recognize, the voice of Jesus (John 10:4). As simplistic as it may appear, Christ has no disciples who do not follow Him. There is no such thing as a *“sheep”* that is **not** inclined to Jesus, does **not** recognize Him, or does **not** pursue Him.

“ 7b . . . and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judaea. 8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him.”

The earthly ministry of Jesus introduced the manner of the Kingdom, and the nature of the New Covenant. Jesus did not come to introduce an era of Law, in which men would be directed by the bit and bridle of rules and regulations. *“The day of salvation”* is a time when real disciples are **inclined** to Jesus – drawn to Him by the Father (John 6:44), and compelled by their perception of the One who was *“raised”* on a redemptive cross (John 12:32). John the Baptist introduced this mode of operation. During his ministry the people flocked to him (Matt 3:5-6; Mk 1:5). Here was *“a man sent from God”* (John 1:6), and the people came to him. In this regard, he foreshadowed the ministry of the Savior, to whom men would also come, and whom, they would willingly and eagerly follow. Where this trait is not found, Jesus has not been properly declared or seen.

A GREAT MULTITUDE FROM GALILEE FOLLOWED HIM. Galilee is the place where the people who *“sat in darkness”* saw a *“great light”* (Matt 4:15-16). It is where Jesus had *“went about . . . teaching in their synagogues”* (Matt 4:23). Now, having witnessed His works and heard His word, a vast throng followed Him. They were drawn by what He said and what He did, and they pursued Him without regard to convenience.

AND FROM SURROUNDING AREAS. The areas from which a vast multitude came included *“Jerusalem,” “Idumea,” “beyond Jordan,”* and *“about Tyre and Sidon.”* At the time, Palestine (Joel 3:4) was divided into three parts: Galilee on the North, Samaria in the middle, and Judea in the South. *“Jerusalem”* was the capital city, and was in Judea. *“Idumea”* was formerly inhabited by the Edomites, and was South of Judea. The word *“Idumea”* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *“Edom.”* *“Beyond Jordan”* refers to the East side of Jordan, while the writers of Scripture lived on the West side of Jordan. *“Tyre and Sidon”* were situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, in the Western part of Judea. These cities were approximately twenty miles apart.

Approximate distances to the sea of Galilee from these various locations are as follows: From Idumea – 100 miles; from Tyre and Sidon – 50 miles; from Jerusalem – 85 miles; from beyond Jordan – 50-150 miles. People, therefore, came to Jesus from an area approximately 135 miles from North to South (Tulsa OK to Mt Vernon MO), by 75 miles East to West

(Joplin MO to Fayetteville AR). Within about one year, the word concerning the Savior had penetrated those areas, constraining people to go to Jesus hearing His words and beholding His works.

THEY HEARD WHAT HE DID AND CAME TO HIM. The Spirit is very specific about the things that had been reported concerning Jesus— *“what great things He did.”* Extraordinary things were told of the extraordinary Savior. Some of those responses are recorded – responses that took place prior to this text. **When the palsied man was healed** – *“They marveled and glorified God, which had given such power unto men”* (Matt 9:8). **When the unclean spirit was cast out of a man** – *“And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him”* (Mk 1:27). Words like this spread throughout the region, drawing attention to the Lord of glory. The manner in which He had rebuffed the scribes and Pharisees had no doubt been reported also. This was a different manner of Man, teaching a different manner of doctrine, and performing a different manner of work.

The Blight of Mediocrity. One of the unfortunate conditions extant in the modern churches is that of mediocrity, or averageness. The greatness of Jesus is not standing out. The uniqueness of the New Covenant is not being proclaimed. The marvelous nature of *“newness of life”* is not being lived out – at least, not on any measurable scale. However, the very Jesus who drew attention to Himself during those early days, is the same Jesus who has been exalted to the right hand of God. Peter made a point of this on the day of Pentecost: *“God hath made that same Jesus , whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:36). By means of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus has been declared to be *“the Son of God with power ”* (Rom 1:4). That *“power”* dwarfs any human ability, and is unworthy of any comparison with it. When the church sets objectives that can be realized through human appeals, consulting with the worldly wise, and following worldly principles, it should not surprise anyone that it does not draw the attention of people. Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness surely involves a quest for the Lord to reveal Himself in unquestionably great ways that violently interrupt ordinary life.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By; Given O. Blakely

Lesson 30

by Given O. Blakely

“ Mark 3:9 And He spake to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. 10 For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him

for to touch Him, as many as had plagues. 11 And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12 And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known.” (Mark 3:9-12)

INTRODUCTION

It has never been common for men to see religion as having something that people **need** , much less something that they **want** . Men tend to think of things pertaining to God as having to do with inhibition, restraint, and demanding that people do what they do not want to do. And, indeed, this was largely true until Jesus *“put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”* (Heb 9:26). The prophets foretold of a time when the nature of man would be changed, and he would run to God with great anticipation, earnestly seeking to know Him and enjoy His benefits (Isa 27:13; 35:10; 66:18). With the advent of John the Baptist, this sort of thing began to be seen, and was brought to a crescendo when the Son of God appeared among men. People began to flock to Jesus, to press Him, ask Him questions, seek His touch, and obtain mercy from Him. **This was a revelation of the very nature of “the day of salvation.”** There was something fresh about Jesus – something few people had ever associated with the Living God. The people were able to see Divinity as He could never be seen by means of Law. Rules and regulations, however lofty they may be, can never make God known as He is revealed in Christ Jesus. That is the significance of the *“fulness of the Godhead”* dwelling in Him bodily (Col 2:9).

“ 3:9 And He spake to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him.”

HE SPAKE TO HIS DISCIPLES. There are very few times when Jesus solicited help from those who were not devoted to Him. Several woman who ministered to Him were devoted to Him, being among His disciples (Luke 8:3). He dwelt in the homes of His disciples, like Peter and Andrew (Mk 1:29), and Martha (Lk 10:38). When teaching the multitudes on the sea shore, Jesus borrowed the boat of Peter (Lk 5:3). When Jesus sent His disciples to bring an ass and its colt to Him, He told them to tell the owner *“The Lord hath need of them.”* He then told them, *“and straightway he will send them,”* confirming it was a person who was a disciple (Matt 21:2-3). While this is not to be regarded as a hard and fast rule, it does suggest the advantages of being a follower of Jesus. Holy involvements are for dedicated people.

WAIT ON HIM. Jesus tells His disciples *“that a small boat should stand ready for Him.”* NASB In fact, they were to *“have a small boat ready for Him.”* NIV It is understood that Christ’s disciples are to be ready to do His will. They are learners, but not **only** learners. They are followers, but not **only** followers. They are listeners, but not **only** listeners. There comes a time when Christ’s disciples will be required to **DO** something. In this case, they were to have a small boat ready for Him – something immediately available to Him.

When Jesus was to ride into Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy (Zech 9:9), He sent some of His disciples to fetch the animal (Mk 11:2-3). When the time of the last Passover drew nigh, Jesus sent two of His disciples into the city to obtain a room and prepare the feast (Mk 14:13-15). When He prepared to go into Jerusalem, knowing He would pass through Samaria, He sent messengers before Him to the Samaritans, to *“make ready for Him”* (Lk 9:52). When He prepared to pay tribute money, He sent Peter to collect it from a waiting fish (Matt 17:26-27).

The disciples of Christ are like a pool of workers, and are to be ready to be called into service to do some particular work. It may be Paul calling for Timothy to bring him his cloak and some parchments (2 Tim 13). It may be Paul sending Titus and another brother to Corinth, to learn of their state (2 Cor 12:18). Perhaps it is like Paul sending Timothy to Corinth to bring them in remembrance of his ways and teaching (1 Cor 4:17). The Apostles once sent *“Peter and John”* to Samaria, to assist Philip in his ministry (Acts 8:14). The church at Jerusalem *“sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch”* (Acts 11:22). The church at Antioch sent *“Barnabas and Saul for the work”* of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:3).

It is a blessing beyond description when there is a spirit of willingness among the disciples and within the assembly. When there are souls who are eager to serve the Lord, much work will be accomplished, for those are the kind of laborers Christ seeks.

LEST THEY THROG HIM. The reason for this word to Christ’s disciples was *“because of the people, lest they should throng Him,”* or *“crush Him,”* NKJV or *“crowd Him,”* NASB or *“be crowded off the beach.”* NLT You might think that those seeking the Lord would not want to put Him at a disadvantage, pushing Him, as it were, into the water. But, after all was said and done, this crowd was mostly interested in what they could get from Jesus. And, from one point of view, that was good. That **is** the nature of the Kingdom, to **“OBTAIN”** what the Lord has to give (1 Cor 9:24; 1 Thess 5:9; 2 Tim 2:10; Heb 4:16).

However, there is also something about a crowd that can diminish noble objectives. There were times when Jesus withdrew from the multitudes and sent them away. Matthew’s Gospel records the following. *“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain”* (Matt 5:1); *“Then Jesus sent the multitude away”* (Matt 13:36); *“He sent the multitudes away”* (Matt 14:22); *“And when He had sent the multitudes away”* (Matt 14:23); *“And He sent away the multitude”* (Matt 15:39).

Jesus will react favorably in this instance, but it is not because of any sanctifying effect that crowds are imagined to have. It was a multitude that cried out *“Away with Him away with Him, crucify Him”* (John 19:15). It was a *“multitude”* that *“cried out again, ‘Crucify Him!’”* (Mk 15:8,13). There remains this inveterate tendency in man to imagine that a multitude makes something good or right. There are some churches and religious movements that have nothing more to recommend them than a *“multitude.”* While Jesus did begin drawing people to Himself in great numbers, it is what He DID that drew them, not an advertising campaign. Some people have shaped history with their ideas. Others have done so by coercion, bludgeoning people into compliance with

their ambitions. Jesus could move people by what He did. These were not feats of strength, or some form of entertainment. Rather they were *“the works of God”* (John 9:3), that were impossible for men to do.

“ 10 For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.”

Here is the reason for the pressing multitudes: *“He had healed many!”* In all of prior history, of whom could such a thing be said? Through Abraham’s prayer, Abimelech was healed, about 2,100 years after creation (Gen 20:17). Moses healed Miriam’s leprosy, about over four hundred years after Abimelech’s healing (Num 12:10-15). Elisha healed Naaman of leprosy, about 1,000 after Miriam’s healing (2 Kgs 5:1-19). Isaiah, by means of a poultice, healed Hezekiah of a grievous boil, about 150 years after Naaman’s healing (Isa 38:21). Before Jesus, there were a few people raised from the dead. The first occurred nearly 3,000 years after creation (1 Kgs 17:17-24). The second took place over 100 years after the first raising (2 Kgs 4:18-26). The third occurred over 50 years later (2 Kgs 13:21).

Within a period of four thousand years, five healings and three resurrections of the dead are recorded! Suddenly, within a few months following the introductory ministry of John the Baptist *“many”* have been healed by a single Man! It is no wonder that the people flocked to Him! Never had such a thing taken place – even among the chosen people of God! In all the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – *“the fathers”* – and for several hundred years after them, there is a record of a single healing. Beginning with Moses, and extending for at least a thousand years, there is the record of a single healing. Then, for around 1,500 years, there is the record of a one solitary healing.

There are several records of Jesus healing *“multitudes”* – something that had **never** occurred before. Matthew tells of Him healing *“multitudes out of “all Syria”* (Matt 4:24). On another occasion, *“great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all”* (Matt 12:15). On yet another occasion, *“great multitudes came unto Him . . . and He healed them”* (Matt 15:30). Again, it is written, *“And great multitudes followed Him; and He healed them there”* (Matt 19:2). On still another occasion we read, *“And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them”* (Matt 21:14). Upon hearing of this remarkable pouring forth of Divine compassion, the people rushed to Jesus.

THEY PRESSED UPON HIM. The people earnestly sought to get close to Jesus, *“pushing forward”* NIV to *“touch Him”* if at all possible. Later Mark records, *“and as many as touched Him were made whole”* (Mk 6:56). Luke records, *“And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him , and healed them all ”* (Lk 6:19).

There is a wonderful Kingdom principle seen here – something that the people sensed, though yet in a very elementary manner. **In order to obtain benefit from Jesus, you must get close to Him, and “touch” Him.** Many a person has sought Divine benefits while living at a distance from the Lord. The *“sweet Psalmist of Israel”* once delivered a song to *“the chief Musician.”* It’s opening words were, *“They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens”* (Psa 65:8). That is, when God does work, it frightens them, and thus they do not seek for Him to work. However, those who associate Christ Jesus with genuine human need will find a way to get to Him. That is the invariable trait of Christ’s *“sheep.”* Where people do not extend themselves to come to Christ, it is only because they see no real need for Him. To them, Jesus is like a museum piece be seen occasionally, but is not to be taken home.

We also have here a depiction of the manner of a legitimate quest for the Lord. It is characterized by an energy that cannot be quelled. Jesus spoke of this new manner, commencing during the days of John the Baptist, in these words: *“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it”* (Luke 16:16). Matthew records, *“... violent men seize it by force [as a precious prize—a share in the heavenly kingdom is sought with most ardent zeal and intense exertion]”* AMPLIFIED (Matt 11:12). Real revivals are an awakening of **this** spirit, which is the standard of the kingdom of God’s dear Son. This is why aggressive terms are associated with spiritual life: *“striving”* (Phil 1:27; Col 1:29), *“running”* (1 Cor 9:26; Heb 12:1), *“fighting”* (1 Cor 9:26; 1 Tim 6:12), *“wrestling”* (Eph 6:12), *“pressing”* (Phil 3:14), *“standing against”* (Eph 6:11), *“resisting”* (James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9), and *“seeking”* (Col 3:1; Heb 13:14).

AS MANY AS HAD PLAGUES. Those pressing to touch Jesus had *“plagues,”* or *“afflictions,”* NASB or *“diseases.”* NIV They were painfully aware of their real situation, and had been convinced that only Jesus could help them. This too is the manner of the Kingdom. Those who earnestly seek to *“obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need”* (Heb 4:16) are dominated by a sense of their need. They cannot get away from it. It is something they carry about with them, against which they have no power. They have, however, been convinced by faithful reports of the working of the Lord, that if they can only reach Him and touch Him, they will be healed. Blessed day of discovery when such a persuasion is possessed.

“ 11 And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12 And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known.”

Many of them that pressed toward Jesus were apparently possessed of unclean spirits. What manner of grace is this that can draw such souls, moving them to come close to Jesus, whom the spirits who are dominating them want to avoid? This is a most vivid picture of the drawing power of the Lord! There is no other way to account for people possessed of the powers of darkness to rush out to meet Jesus, or press relentlessly to get close to Him and touch Him! Blessed is such a person (Psa 65:4).

THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS. So far as the record is concerned, no unclean spirit, or any other demon, ever moved a person to run **from** Jesus. In the synagogue, such a spirit plead for Jesus to leave them alone, but did not cause the one possessed to flee from Jesus (Mk 1:23-24). When the possessed wild man of Gadara saw Jesus *“he ran and worshiped Him,”* the evil spirits pleading that Jesus not torment them (Mk 5:6-7). But we have no record of an evil spirit causing the ones they possessed to run away from Jesus, or to hide from Him. Is this not a marvelous testimony of the subjection of the dark world of demons to the Lord Jesus. It is totally true that angels, authorities, and powers have been *“made subject to Him”* (1 Pet 3:22). All Jesus has to do is, as it were, point to them, and they must vacate the place they have dominated. Thus Jesus spoke of Himself as casting out demons *“with the finger of God”* (Lk 11:20). The children of God are out of order fearing Satan, his angels, or any other spirit or person that is within his domain. Those who teach men to be afraid of *“the Antichrist”* (1 John 2:18) *“the Beast”* (Rev 13:17), *“the False Prophet”* (Rev 16:13; 20:10), *“the Man of Sin”* (2 Thess 2:3), or the *“Son of Perdition”* (2 Thess 2:3), are not doing well! That such personalities do, in fact, exist, and that they will exercise great influence, cannot be denied. However, God has determined that they will fall, and they shall. We read of those who follow Jesus overcoming these foes (Rev 12:11; 15:2).

THOU ART THE SON OF GOD! When these *“unclean spirits”* saw Jesus, they *“fell before Him.”* They did not attack Jesus like one of their kindred spirits did the *“seven sons of Sceva”* (Acts

19:14-16). They could not throw the Lord to the ground as one of their number did a young boy (Mk 9:20-21). They made no effort to mount an initiative against the Son of God – which thing they would surely have done if it was possible. In fact, the only time such an assault could take place is when God gave them a special “*hour*” to do their evil deeds – even though it was only to fulfill His will (Lk 22:53; Acts 4:28).

The confession of these “*unclean spirits*” is most intriguing. They did not say, “You are God,” or “You are a mighty man of God,” but “*You are the Son of God.*” NKJV That is, He was “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16), or one in whom “*dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily*” – or “*in bodily form*” NASB (Col 2:9). Keep in mind, this was the Lord in His most humble state – concealed from men, but not from demons! Unclean spirits knew Jesus because of their acquaintance with the unseen realm. Men know Him by revelation (Matt 16:16-17). **This is the capacity in which Jesus must be known if salvation is to be experienced among men.** That is why Philip laid down the requirement of believing in order for the eunuch to be baptized. The eunuch answered appropriately, “*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*” (Acts 8:37).

When Jesus is represented as being primarily a Helper of humanity, and a Means of obtaining personal desires, neither the devil nor men will be moved. If He is seen basically as the Answer to governmental, domestic, personal, and social concerns, it should not surprise us that devilish activity continues, even increasing, and that men remain fundamentally unchanged. It is Christ’s association with God that brings power to religion. If that association is not perceived, embraced, and chronicled, all religion is vain.

THEY SHOULD NOT MAKE HIM KNOWN. Why not let the demons proclaim Jesus? Did not the divining spirit of that woman in Macedonia declare the truth about Paul (Acts 16:17). Technically “Yes,” spiritually “No!” Such a testimony does not promote faith but fear. It associates Jesus with the dark world that promotes bondage, and thus characterizes Him as one **not** to be desired – just as evidenced in that Macedonian event.

The word used here indicates that Jesus vehemently rebuked the spirit. There was nothing casual or academic about it. Thus another version reads, “*He charged them strictly and severely under penalty again and again that they should not make Him known.*” AMPLIFIED This word was also driven by the nature of the time – it was not yet time for the powers of darkness to agitate the masses as they would later. Too, God had appointed that those who have tasted of the Lord should be the spokesman for Him (2 Cor 4:13).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By; Given O. Blakely

Lesson 31

By: Given O. Blakely

“ Mark 3:13 And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. 14 And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16 And Simon He surnamed Peter; 17 and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19 and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him: and they went into an house.” (Mark 3:13-19; Matt 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has sent the multitudes away, and now proceeds to do more of the works He sees His Father doing: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise”* (John 5:19). Among the works He saw the Father doing was the ordaining of twelve key men – men who would be associated with the very *“foundation”* upon which the church is built (Eph 2:20). The choosing of the men would even ensure the appointed betrayal and consequent crucifixion of the Savior – a determination that had been made before the world was founded – purposed and created (Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8). This was one of Christ’s key works, the effects and ministry of which remain until this day. This was a work that could not be done in the synagogue, on the mountain as He taught the multitudes, or in the temple where He taught during the day time (Lk 21:37). This was a foundational work that, according to Divine appointment, would ensure the dispersement of the truth, as well as its exposition. Here is a part of Christ’s ministry that did not deal directly with the multitudes. Here, the purpose of God, the dissemination of the truth, and the decimation of Satan’s power were the dominating considerations.

“ 3:13 And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him.”

HE GOETH UP INTO A MOUNTAIN. Luke tells us that this event was preceded by Jesus praying all night on this very mountain. *“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God”* (Luke 6:12). The Gospels record Jesus going up into a mountain twenty times. On a mountain He **taught** the people (Matt 5:1; 15:29), **prayed** (Matt 14:23; Mk 6:46; Lk 6:12; 9:28), **chose** the twelve apostles (Mk 3:13), **taught** His disciples (John 6:3; Matt 24:3; Mk 13:3), was **transfigured** (Matt 17:1-2), went **to be alone** (John 6:15), **sent out** His disciples from (Matt 21:1; Mk 11:1; Lk 19:29), **stayed** during the night (Lk 21:37; John 8:1), **went with His disciples** following the last supper (Matt 26:30; Mk 14:26; Lk 22:39), and ascended from into heaven (Matt 28:16).

The lofty climes of a mountain seemed befitting for holy contemplation, praying, choosing, sending, and teaching. There He was above the distracting sights and sounds of the world. Abraham was tested on a mountain (Gen 22:1-14). Moses was called to deliver Israel on a mountain (Ex 3-4). The Law was given on a mountain (Ex 19:23-20:17). The blessings and cursings of the Law were read from mountains (Deut 27:12,13). Jerusalem was built upon a mountain (Psa 48:2; Isa 10:32). The temple was built on a mountain (2 Chron 3:1).

All of these things confirm the lofty nature of spiritual life. It is lived above the din and commotion of the world. Spiritual life demands times of practical isolation from the world – whether achieved in the heart and mind, or by physical withdrawal. The world – even the religious world – can be a formidable distraction to the soul. If ever there was a religious environment, it was when the Son of God was ministering to the people. However, there came a time when what He had to do could not be accomplished in that kind of environment.

HE CALLETH UNTO HIM WHOM HE WOULD. Matthew says “*He called unto Him His twelve disciples*” (Matt 10:1). Mark says “*He called unto Him whom He would*” (Mk 3:13). Luke says, “*He called unto Him His disciples and of them He chose twelve*” (Lk 6:12). There are at least three distinctive things seen here.

First, Jesus called those He wanted – “*whom He would.*” Here is a level of Divine will that is more focused, and more precisely reflective of Divine purpose. In a general sense, the Lord “*will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4). In this text, however, we come more to the center of God’s will.

Second, at some point, He called His general disciples – those who were committed to following Him and learning from Him. These were not the curiosity-seekers, nor those who sought for healing and deliverance. These general disciples chose to follow the Lord for a variety of reasons. Some were more noble than others. Divine power was involved in their choice, but to a lesser degree than those “*whom He would*” have to follow Him.

Third, from the general disciples, He chose specific ones for specific exalted duties. This choice was closer to the heart of Divine will – God’s “*eternal purpose*” – and thus was not attended by sundry conditions. There are no volunteers on this level. Divine choices that confirm this is the case include Abraham, Jacob, Moses, the Prophets, John the Baptist, and the Apostles. Their participation in the purpose of God was wholly determined by Divine choice. It is essential for us to see this level of the Kingdom of God. Without it, the concept of “LORD” falls to the ground, being nothing more than something that ought to be. There are Divine choices that are **not** influenced by the chosen ones.

THEY CAME UNTO HIM. Here is an example of the drawing power of the Lord. Jesus said, “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me*” (John 6:37). Ponder what a marvelous thing this is! How many thousands have heard a call from God, yet did not come to Him. Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God being like a man who prepared a great wedding feast. Upon inviting “*his servants*” to this sumptuous feast, Jesus said, “*they would not come*” (Matt 22:3). Our text is an example of, what some have chosen to refer to as, as “*effectual call.*” The idea is that of a call that is accompanied with Divine power. It is the outworking of a truth Jesus proclaimed concerning His sheep – the real ones. “*My sheep hear My voice . . . and they follow Me*” (John 10:27). Their following of the Christ **confirms** they are His. That very thing is lived out in our text: Jesus **called**, the disciples **heard**, and they **came** to Him. The knowledge of these things is indispensable to proper self examination (2 Cor 13:5).

“ 14-15 And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.”

AND HE ORDAINED TWELVE. Matthew says, “*He called unto Him His twelve disciples*” (Matt 10:1). Luke says, “*He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles*” (Luke 6:13). The word “*ordained*” means literally “to make, to produce, to cause, to make a thing out of something, and constitute or appoint one to anything.” THAYER This is a creative word – something declaring Divine activity. As one might suppose, it is found many times in the New Testament writings – no less than seventy-five. As used here, it is generally translated “*appointed*” in later versions. The point is that their choice was wholly owing to the Lord. **The men themselves had no part in the choice.** They had chosen to follow Jesus, and now He made them something special.

Luke tells, “*whom He also named apostles.*” Other versions read “*designated,*” NIV “*called.*” GENEVA From this point on, to this very day, these men were unique among all of Christ’s followers. They are referred to as “*the twelve apostles*” (Matt 10:2; Lk 22:14), “*the twelve apostles of the Lamb*” (Rev 21:14), “*the twelve disciples,*” Matt 20:17), “*the twelve*” (Matt 26:14,20,47; Mk 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; Mk 14:10,17,20,43; Lk 8:1; 9:12; 18:31; Lk 22:3,47; John 6:67,71; 20:24; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5). One of them would fall by transgression, betraying the Son of Man, and would be replaced by Mathias, who is said to have been “*numbered with the eleven apostles*” (Acts 1:26).

The word “*apostle*” means “one sent forth, a messenger.” STRONG’S These men would be given a message that had been concealed in previous ages. As it is written, “*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*” (Eph 3:4-5). They are also referred to as a foundation upon which the church is built (Eph 2:20). Jude reminds believers to remember “*the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Jude 1:17). It is also taught that they are “*first*” in rank in the church (1 Cor 12:28). They head up the teaching ministry of the church (Eph 4:11). The early church is said to have “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine*” (Acts 2:42).

THAT THEY SHOULD BE WITH HIM. Being “*with*” Jesus was not a privilege to be assumed. While there were times when the multitudes could follow Jesus, there were also times when He sent them away. These twelve men, however, were vouchsafed the privilege of remaining with Jesus. This confirms that those who are used by Jesus must spend time with Him. Jesus has no work to do that does not require the worker to be with Him.

This is the means God used to give these men to Jesus. Jesus would refer to them as men who were uniquely given to Him by the Father (John 17:9,11,24).

THAT HE MIGHT SEND THEM FORTH TO PREACH. Mark is the only Gospel writer that relates this point to the time when the twelve were “*ordained.*” Luke speaks of a later time when Jesus “*sent them to preach the kingdom of God*” (Lk 9:1). Following His resurrection, when Jesus appeared to His disciples, He told them to “*preach the Gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15). Then, they would preach with greater insight and greater power – but only because He ordained them “*that He might send them forth to preach.*” Paul alludes to this principle when he writes, “*And how shall they preach, except they be sent ? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things*” (Rom 10:15). Their preaching approximately two years **before** Jesus died, was moved to a higher level following His resurrection, and continues through their “*doctrine*” to this very day. Christ’s

choice was successful!

TO HAVE POWER TO HEAL SICKNESSES AND TO CAST OUT DEVILS. If Jesus does not give this power, it cannot be possessed. If He gives it, it cannot fail to be fulfilled. Matthew says, *“He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease”* (Matt 10:1). Luke omits this reference. The point is that these men would continue the assault on Satan’s kingdom that Jesus had started. *“Power,”* in this case, means *“authority.”* NASB That is, they were given jurisdiction in an area in which men were ordinarily impotent. He could do this because the kingdom and the power belonged to Him. But this was not a privilege given to all of His disciples. In this case, it was given only to the twelve. Later it would also be given to seventy especially chosen ones also (Lk 10:1,9,17). Following His resurrection, the Lord is said to have placed *“gifts of healings”* in the church (1 Cor 12:28). Just as in our text, such gifts are dispensed with Divine discretion. The infrequency of reference to this gift (four times – 1 Cor 12:9,28,30, James 5:16) confirms it can only be dispensed by the Lord Jesus.

“15-19 And Simon He surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.”

NAMES CHANGED OR ALTERED. Jesus *“surnamed,”* or gave another name, to **Simon** (meaning “to hear”), changing it to **Peter** (meaning a stone, John 1:42). He was also called *“Cephas,”* which was the Syriac form of the name (John 1:42; 1 Cor 1:12.; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 2:9). This man was to be noted for stability, and Jesus would cause him to be more firm than he had ever been before. **James** (“supplanter”) and **John** (“Jehovah is a gracious Giver”) to **“Boanerges** (*“sons of thunder”*). This was no doubt because of their volatile nature, which once erupted when they wanted to call down fire on certain Samaritans who did not want to receive Jesus (Lk 9:52-56). Jesus would tame their natures. James would be martyred early in the history of the church by Herod (Acts 12:1-2), and John would be known as *“the disciple whom Jesus loved”* (John 21:20).

THE DIVERSITY OF THEIR NATURAL PERSONS. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were **fishermen** (Matt 4:18-20). Matthew as a **tax collector** (Mk 2:14). Simon was a **Canaanite** and also called a **Zealot** (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). The Zealots were a fanatical sect who thought any deed of violence justified the recovery of their national freedom. Philip, Peter, and Andrew were from the city of **Bethsaida** , noted for its unbelief (John 1:44). Bartholomew is generally understood to be Nathanael of the Gospel of John, who is never mentioned in the first three Gospels (John 1:45-49; 21:2). Thomas was a **twin** (the meaning of Didymus (John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2). Judas ultimately betrayed Jesus, and was noted as *“the traitor”* (Lk 6:16). He was deliberately chosen, though Jesus *“knew from the beginning ... who should betray Him”* (John 6:64). He was chosen that the Word of the Lord might be fulfilled, and was a *“devil from the beginning”* (John 6:70).

MATTHEW 10:2-4

MARK 3:16-18

LUKE 6:14-16

Simon, called Peter

Simon, surnamed Peter

Simon, whom He also named Peter

James, the son of Zebedee

James, the son of Zebedee

James

John his brother

John the brother of James

John

Andrew, his (Peter's) brother

Andrew

Andrew, his (Peter's) brother

Philip

Philip

Philip

Bartholomew

Bartholomew

Bartholomew

Matthew the publican

Matthew

Matthew

Thomas

Thomas

Thomas

James the son of Alphaeus

James, the son of Alphaeus

James the son of Alphaeus

Lebbaeus, surname was Thaddaeus

Thaddaeus

Judas, the brother of James

Simon the Canaanite

Simon the Canaanite

Simon called Zelotes (Zealot)

Judas Iscariot, which betrayed

Judas Iscariot, which betrayed

Judas, the traitor

These men were chosen out of the multitudes of disciples that pursued Jesus during His ministry. Vast numbers of those disciples eventually forsook the Lord. It is said of them that they *“went back and walked no more with Him”* (John 6:66). However, with the exception of Judas, who fulfilled his appointed destiny (Acts 1:25), these disciples remained with Jesus, fulfilling the reason for which they were appointed. The effectuality of the Divine call is demonstrated in them. There is a level of Divine determination in which the full intentions of the will of God are carried out to completion. Thus it is written, *“Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified”* (Rom 8:30). Ultimately, the stability of believers is owing to Divine choice. Even though this may be exceedingly difficult to perceive, it will be acknowledged in the end. Thus the voice of the saints will be heard saying, *“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb”* (Rev 7:10)

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 32

“Mark 3:20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21 And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself. 22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils.” (Mark 3:20-22).

INTRODUCTION

The uniqueness of Jesus elicited a variety of responses from those who heard Him. They did not respond to Him as they did to the scribes and Pharisees because what He said demanded a more extensive reaction. When men are confronted with the truth, a kind of pressure is exerted upon their spirits. When it is to some measure understood, men cannot respond to the truth as they do to the newspaper, politics, and social issues. It is ever true that when men are indifferent to the truth of God, they have not perceived its reality or its implications. By “implications,” I mean conclusions to which the truth necessarily leads: i.e. if I am going to die and stand before the judgment seat of Christ, then it is reasonable to prepare for those appointed occasions. One of the roles of a preacher and a teacher is to so deliver the truth that its nature is perceived, even if its details and implications are not clearly seen. When the Word of God is delivered as something that is critical, and for which no allowance is made for varied meanings, it leads men to a more sober consideration of it. On the other hand, when other issues are allowed to upstage the Word itself – like domestic, social, or political issues – the unavoidable conclusion is that the Word of God is really not vital at all. In such a case, it is more like a novelty, to be pursued when nothing else is pressing. As we should know, Jesus was faithful to leave men with the solid impression that what He said was essential to life and godliness, and that it could not be ignored, twisted, or treated as though it was anything that could be placed to the side.

“ 3:20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.”

THE MULTITUDE CAME TOGETHER AGAIN. The nature and impact of Christ’s ministry is unveiled in this single sentence. He was no ordinary man, and people did not respond to Him as though He was. Previously, Mark records that *“all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them”* (Mk 2:13). Again, when Jesus withdrew from the city *“to the sea,”* it is written that *“a great multitude followed Him”* from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumaea, beyond Jordan, and Tyre and Sidon. They came because *“they had heard what great things He did.”* At that time, because *“He had healed many,”* the people *“pressed upon Him for to touch Him,”* and unclean spirits fell before Him (Mk 3:7-12).

Now, the multitudes come together *“again.”* They had not tired of Jesus. They could not

easily grow accustomed to the Son of God. They knew that in His presence things were made available to them that could not be found elsewhere. No man spoke like Him (John 7:46), and no one displayed such authority as He obviously possessed. He “*taught*” with authority (Matt 7:29). He “*commanded*” with authority (Mk 1:27). With “*authority and power*” He commanded unclean spirits, and they left the persons who were possessed by them (Lk 4:36). From one point of view, it was His uniqueness that drew the people to Jesus. From another, God was working through His unequalled words and deeds to draw the people to Him.

Something to be seen. If we are correct in saying that Christ’s uniqueness is what is used to draw men to Him, then the manner in which we present Christ is most crucial. If He is seen as doing nothing more than capable or gifted men can do, or if He is placed within the context of everyday life alone, His real Person will become obscure. The works Jesus did could not possibly have been done by anyone else, unless He gave them power to do so (Matt 10:1; Mk 6:7; Lk 9:1). When men tend to speak of Jesus as a sort of superman, with only expanded human powers, they have greatly erred. This is involved in Paul’s statement pertaining the perspective of Jesus that is entertained by those who are a new creation: “*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more . Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Cor 5:16-17). In an introductory way, the people who flocked to Jesus saw Him as separate from other men – “*not as the scribes*” (Mk 7:29), “*never man spake as this Man*” (John 7:46), “*What manner of man is this*” (Matt 8:27), and “*We never saw it on this fashion*” (Mk 2:12). As the “*pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15), the church is responsible for an accurate presentation of Christ in both doctrine and life.

THEY COULD NOT EAT. The reference is to Jesus and His disciples. The people thronged Him “*to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.*” NASB Another version reads, “*so that He and His disciples were not even able to eat.*” NIV This may have been inconvenient for the disciples, although there is no statement suggesting such a thing. However, Jesus provided us some insight concerning His own reaction to such things. “*I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work*” (John 4:34). He derived superior satisfaction from doing the will of His Father, and finishing the work that He had been given to do.

If it is true that the “*inward man,*” that is being “*renewed day by day,*” is superior to the “*outward man,*” which is perishing (2 Cor 4:16), then the satisfaction of that “*inward man*” far transcends any satisfaction that can be realized in the “*outward man.*” Job said it this way: “*Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*” (Job 23:12). David said it this way : “*The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*” (Psa 19:10). Again he wrote, “*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches*” (Psa 63:6).

Many a professing believer has never experienced this satisfaction because they have remained aloof from the Lord, immersed in their own circumstances, and living within the narrow circumference of life in this world. It is not surprising that such souls are inconsistent in their spiritual life. When a person has arrived at the point where they can relinquish the interests of the body in deference to being involved in the will of the Lord, decided progress in the faith has been realized, and the fountain of joy will be opened.

“ 21 And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside himself.”

HIS FRIENDS. The word “*friends*” literally means “those from the side of him (Jesus). ROBERTSON It could mean the circle of His disciples – but they were already with Him, and are never represented as engaging in the conduct described in this verse. It is generally understood that this is a reference to His family, or kinsmen according to the flesh. In my judgment, these are the people referred to in verse 31: “*There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him.*” In this verse, they are said to have “*went out.*” In verse thirty-one they arrive.

These relatives – particularly Christ’s brothers (James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon – Mk 6:3), and mother – “*heard of it*” – of the multitudes thronging Jesus. Although He was some distance from Nazareth, His home town, word had rapidly spread concerning His mighty works. Having heard of His spreading popularity, His relatives headed for Him.

TO LAY HOLD ON HIM. The idea is that they went out to “*take custody of Him,*” NASB or “*restrain Him,*” NSRV or “*seize Him.*” RSV Another version reads, “*they went out to take Him by force.*” AMPLIFIED From their vantage point, this was something like a rescue mission. They had every intention of removing Jesus from this situation – saving Him from insanity.

HE IS BESIDE HIMSELF. The Holy Spirit gives us the benefit of the reasoning of Jesus’ family “*according to the flesh.*” Hearing that He was thronged with people, and could not even take time to eat, they concluded He was “*beside Himself,*” losing His good sense in the face of crowds of eager people. Other versions read, “*He is out of His mind,*” NKJV “*He has lost His senses,*” NASB “*He is off His head,*” BBE “*He is become mad,*” DOUAY and “*He is out of His mind (beside Himself, deranged).*” AMPLIFIED

The expression “*beside Himself*” comes from a single word that means “to throw out of position, to displace, to throw one out of his mind, drive one out of his senses.” THAYER The idea is that such an individual has left the realm of normality, and has become an odd-ball. If something is not done to rescue the person, they will become altogether and hopelessly demented, insane, and of little or no value in the mainstream of life.

Do not fail to see the picture here, for it is as relevant today as it was then. Here is the Son of God, doing the will of the Father, tirelessly ministering what no one else could minister, and making God Himself known to the people. Yet, His own kinsmen, not unacquainted with the Scriptures or God, consider that He has gone off the deep end, being carried into a state of unreasonableness by the multitudes that thronged Him.

These were the people who spent time with Jesus, beholding His manner of life in the home, in the carpenter shop, and about the various normalities of life. Yet, they did not have the faintest understanding concerning His real purpose in life, why He entered the world, or how He was doing the will of God. Somehow, in their familiarity with Jesus, they had missed who He really was. In fact, a point is made of His brethren not believing on Him: “*For neither did His brethren believe in Him*” (John 7:5).

Although it is not fashionable to do so, let us pursue this line of reasoning. If it is true that Jesus’ brother’s did not perceive Him as He really was in the normalities of life, do you suppose that people will see you for who you really are in Christ in such a context? Do you imagine that letting your “*light shine*” (Matt 5:16) merely means going about the duties of life with a commendable attitude? Should there not be some focused involvement in the “*eternal*

purpose” of God that separates you from the mundane? If this was the case with Jesus – with not even John the Baptist knowing who He was until He publicly became associated with a Divine ordinance (John 1:31,33) – do you imagine you can be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ without being involved with some public aspect of His great salvation? Those who consider public and obvious association with Christ to be secondary, have not seen the matter of spiritual life as clearly as it ought to be seen.

The condition described in our text is still with us. As soon as you, for Jesus sake, go beyond the ordinary, you will be charged with being radical, unreasonable, and not making good sense. When your manner of life puts you clearly outside the circle of religious and spiritual apathy, you too will be considered to be *“beside yourself.”* In this regard, Paul said of himself, *“We are fools for Christ’s sake”* (1 Cor 4:10). It is not that he was really foolish. Rather, that is how it appeared to those who were blind to *“the things of the Spirit of God.”* That is simply the way a committed life to Christ appears to those who are primarily of this world – religious or not. In view of this, and in my judgment, a compromising and uncommitted church cannot possibly exercise holy influence on the society around it.

“ 22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils.”

THE SCRIBES. In this text, this is the third reaction to Jesus. The first involved the multitudes, who saw in Jesus something of value. The second was His family, who saw a Man who had lost His good sense. Now we are faced with the religiously elite, scholars in the text of Scripture, and teachers of the Law. How do they view the Lord Jesus?

Jesus said that unless our righteousness went beyond that of *“the scribes,”* we could *“in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Mat 5:20). Their teaching is represented as being without *“authority”* (Matt 7:29). They were among those into whose hands Jesus was eventually betrayed (Matt 20:18). Jesus said they bound heavy burdens on the people and refused to move them *“with one of their fingers”* (Matt 23:2). They are also depicted as questioning Christ’s disciples, seeking to find some cause for condemning Jesus (Mk 9:14). The Master told His disciples, *“Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation”* (Mark 12:38-40). Now they come to make a statement about Jesus of Nazareth, who was gaining more popularity than themselves.

CAME DOWN FROM JERUSALEM. First, they came all the way from Jerusalem, about 70-75 miles from Galilee, where Jesus was ministering. Just as the multitudes thought nothing of distance in their quest to benefit from Jesus, so His opponents thought nothing of distance in their determination to oppose Him.

HE HATH BEELZEBUB. Other versions say, *“He is possessed by Beelzebub,”* which is, indeed, what they intended to say. He was, they charged under the control of *“Beelzebub.”* This term is mentioned seven times in Scripture, with six of them referring to the incident before us: three of them by the Scribes or Pharisees (Matt 12:24; Mk 3:22; Luke 11:15), and three by the Lord Jesus (Matt 12:27; Lk 11:18,19). Jesus referred to Beelzebub on yet another occasion. *“It is enough for the disciple that he be as is Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house **Beelzebub**, how much more shall they call them of his household?”* (Matt 10:25). It was shortly after this word that Jesus was actually charged with being possessed by *“Beelzebub.”*

From the standpoint of language, *“Beelzebub”* is said to have been a Philistine deity. The

word means “lord of flies.” FRIBERG This term Jesus applies to the devil himself, for it implies one who is the head of a house. The word had gone out concerning Jesus, “He hath a devil (demon)” (Luke 7:33). “Many” others said, “*He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?*” (John 10:20). Now, these scribes undertake to explain the whole matter.

BY THE PRINCE OF DEVILS. This is the proper explanation of “*Beelzebub*” – the “prince” or “head” of the evil horde of demons who were being attacked by Jesus. Another expression of this princship of the devil is, “*the prince of the power of the air*” (Eph 2:2). The hierarchy of his domain is said to be “*principalities,*” “*powers,*” “*the rulers of the darkness of this world,*” and “*spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph 6:12). Concerning the domain in which Satan exercises his power, Jesus spoke of him as “*the prince of this world*” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

They Could Not Deny What Was Done. It would have been better for the scribes, if the work of Jesus could have been altogether denied – if it had been nothing more than a deception. But such a view was not possible. Christ’s work was undeniably effective. The only recourse open to these enemies was to credit the work to the devil himself. They were in much the same position as those who were faced with the lame man who was healed by Peter: “*for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it*” (Acts 4:16). Thus the scribes attempt to demean the work of the Lord Jesus by crediting it to something other than the power of God.

Something to be Learned. There is something to be learned here. A work of God will not necessarily turn skeptics into believers – even when the greatness of the work cannot be denied. Unbelief would rather ignore the works of God altogether. However, when their presence is beyond all question, unbelief will concoct an explanation that reproaches Christ and gives honor to men. That is a consistent trait of unbelief, which is the direct result of the blindness caused by the devil. As it is written, “*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*” (2 Cor 4:4). All of this, and much more, was lived out in Christ’s ministry.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 33

“ Mark 3:23 And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.” (Mark 3:23-27; Matt 12:25-29; Luke 11:17-22).

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' mother and brothers have just left to come and lay hold of Him, because they felt He was “beside Himself” – thrown unto an unstable state because of the pressing multitudes, and having to go without eating. In the meantime, while they are coming, certain scribes who have come down from Jerusalem had diagnosed Christ's ministry, announcing “He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils” (Mark 3:22). Jesus will now respond to that charge – one that was made on other occasions as well: “He casteth out devils through the prince of devils,” “they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub,” “Thou hast a devil,” “Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil,” “Now we know Thou hast a devil,” and “He hath a devil, and is mad” (Matt 9:34; 10:25; John 7:20; 8:48,52; 10:20). During these other occasions, Jesus told His disciples not to fear such people (Matt 10:26). On one occasion He simply said, “I have done one work, and ye all marvel” (John 7:21). Another time He responded, “I have not a devil” (John 8:49). On this occasion Jesus will cast down their imagination, revealing its utter foolishness. Here we will see Christ, who is “the Wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24), unveiling the weakness of the lie, and the inability of it to remain when once the light of God is shined upon it. He will come to grips with what has been said, and show how absurd it really was.

“ 3:23 And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?”

HE CALLED THEM. The scribes from Jerusalem did not appear to have made their charge directly to Jesus. Mark says they said this of Jesus, “He hath Beelzebub . . .” Matthew represents the scribes as saying, “This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub,” then states that Jesus “knew their thoughts” (Matt 12:24-25). Luke says, “But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them” (Lk 11:17). Now Jesus summons them to come to Him in order that He might deal directly with them. He will not allow them to remain in the background, but will deal with them publicly. This is also a manner Paul taught Timothy concerning elders who sinned: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim 5:20). These scribes were leaders about the people, whom Jesus said “sit in Moses' seat” (Matt 23:2). They occupied “the chief seats in the synagogues” (Mk 12:39), and were held in high regard. He will not allow such men to privately spread their venom among the people, but will call them out into the open, displaying their folly to all.

Christ's blistering denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, in which He eight *times* said to them, "*Woe unto you*" (Matt 23:13,14,15,16,23,25,27,29), was pronounced publicly, before the multitude and His disciples. As it is written, "*Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees. . .*" (Mat 23:1-2). The record of His words continues through verse thirty-nine without a single interruption, interpretation, or interjection by Matthew.

In a sense, we have here a miniature picture of "*the day of judgment,*" when men will be called into account for their words. As it is written, "*But I say unto you, That every **idle word** that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof **in the day of judgment**. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*" (Mat 12:36-37). Those words were included in the response Jesus gave in this very text. An "*idle word*" is a careless one, spoken without regard to the whole of the truth. It is also a word that is "*inoperative, nonworking*" AMPLIFIED, being unable to produce any fruit to God or bring any advantage to men. Such words are altogether too common in our day. Our text reveals how Jesus will deal with them.

AND SAID TO THEM IN PARABLES. Only Mark points out that Jesus spoke to them "*in parables.*" The definition of a parable is, "a comparison, figure, or proverb." Jesus will speak to them in similes, proverbs, and parables, thus blunting the edge of the truth because of their blindness. Once, when speaking to His disciples of the time when He would return to heaven and send the Spirit to them, Jesus said, "*These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father*" (John 16:25). **In this case, "proverbs" were contrasted with plainness.** Elsewhere, when the disciples asked Jesus, "*Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?*" Jesus answered, "*Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given*" (Matt 13:11). He went on to say, "*Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive*" (Mat 13:13-14).

This was, therefore, the means Jesus used to blind hard-hearted people, putting the truth beyond their reach because of their deadness to God. He also spoke in parables to fulfill the word of the prophet: "*I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world*" (Matt 13:34-35). A parable is truth NOT expounded, or opened up. Thus it is written, "*But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples*" (Mk 4:34).

HOW CAN SATAN CAST OUT SATAN? Other versions read, "*How can Satan drive out Satan?*" NIV and "*How is the Adversary able to cast out the Adversary?*" YLT Can one demon cast out another demon? Can Satan put himself out of those he possesses? The thing to see here is that Satan is, in fact, a person, not an impersonal force or power. That is, he is an intelligent foe who purposes, strategizes, snares, and traps. He promotes erroneous thoughts, fulfills diabolical designs, and has intentions. He is of such a nature that men cannot confront him in their own strength. He is above the natural order, being "*the god of this world,*" and "*the prince of the power of the air*" as well (2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2). Such a person cannot work against his own designs, intentionally frustrate his own purpose, or himself overthrow what he himself has contrived. Another thing to see here is that, while Satan might well feign such a work, Jesus **really did** drive out Satan, and with His word expelled demons from those whom they possessed.

"24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

A KINGDOM DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF. Mark states that a kingdom divided against

itself, or competing with itself, “cannot stand.” Matthew and Luke say such a kingdom “is brought to desolation” (Matt 12:25; Lk 11:17). Other versions read, “A kingdom at war with itself will collapse,” NLT and “If a kingdom is divided and fights against itself.” IE

Here, Satan’s domain is called a “kingdom” – a arena over which he rules. Both Matthew and Luke affirm that Jesus, at this time, also said if Satan was against himself, “how shall **his kingdom stand?**” (Matt 12:26; Luke 11:18). Satan’s kingdom is a vast domain that is characterized by “darkness” – “darkness” that is with “power” (Lk 22:53; Acts 26:18; Eph 6:12; Col 1:13). It is a kingdom that promotes sin, spiritual ignorance, and disobedience. It works in strict accord with the purposes of the devil, and is not divided. No part of Satan’s empire promotes truth, encourages obedience to God, or illuminates His truth.

Satan’s kingdom will not fall because it is against itself. **It will fall by force** – by Christ Jesus, who will bring it down at the appointed time, calling an abrupt and final end to its activity. When Satan is thrown down, all of his works will come down as well.

This principle – that a house divided against itself cannot stand – has been exploited by God against the wicked. It has often been the means He employed to bring an end to wicked dominance. This is how God brought the building of the tower of Babel to an end – by **dividing** the people in the breakdown of their language (Gen 11:7-8). It is what he used in the time of Gideon, to overcome the Midianites, setting “every man’s sword against his fellow” (Judges 7:22). He did the same with the Philistines in the time of king Saul (1 Sam 14:20). It happened again when the Lord “set abushments” against the children of Ammon and Moab, and they “helped to destroy one another” NKJV (2 Chron 20:22-23). Isaiah prophesied that God would use this means to destroy Egypt. “And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof” (Isa 19:2-3).

When a kingdom is divided against itself, and war is found among its various parts, doom is sure, and decimation is on the way.

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF. Matthew says “city or house” (Matt 12:25). This principle is also true on a smaller scale – with a house, or household. Abraham and Lot traveled together until their entourage was divided by discontent and war among their servants (Gen 13:6-7). The household of Jacob was also divided, with the brothers of Joseph being against him, and unable to “speak peaceably with him” (Gen 37:4). Only when they came together in harmony was the household of Jacob made secure (Gen 50:16-17).

Those who are in Christ Jesus, being His “house” (Heb 3:6), are told, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Gal 5:15). When the “unity of Spirit” is not maintained “in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3), desolation is sure.

CANNOT STAND. When either a kingdom or a house is divided against itself, experiencing civil war, it “cannot stand.” Disunity sets the decaying process and decline in motion. Whether it is a kingdom, a house, or even a marriage, where discord exists, the possibility of remaining is taken away.

Even evil purposes, if men unite in them, can produce success and longevity in this world. It was for that very reason that God confused the speech of the people who were building a “city and a tower” in Shinar to secure their own name, and give them guaranteed safety. God said of that group, “Behold, **the people is one** , and they have all one language; and this they

begin to do: and now **nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do** ” (Gen 11:6). By destroying their accord, the work was brought to a close – “*they stopped building the city*” NASB (Gen 11:8).

Once, when Paul was brought before the high priest Ananias, he perceived that his accusers (the Sadducees and the Pharisees) were divided. Knowing that they were in theological disagreement, with the Sadducees saying “*that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit,*” while the Pharisees “*confess both,*” Paul said he was “*called in question*” concerning “*the hope and resurrection of the dead.*” As a result, “*a dissension*” arose among his accusers, “*and the multitude was divided.*” The outcome of it all was that the Pharisees dropped the charges (Acts 23:6-9). Paul knew that a house divided against itself “*cannot stand.*”

Thus, Jesus, in parabolic form, confronts the scribes with this principle, which could not possibly be controverted. He made them confront the foolishness of their own words.

“ 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.”

IF SATAN RISE UP AGAINST HIMSELF. Earlier Jesus had asked, “*How can Satan cast out Satan?*” (verse 23). Matthew and Luke add that Jesus asked, “*And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges* ” (Matt 12:27; Luke 11:19). That is, they themselves knew that any effort to cast out devils, whether from themselves or anyone else, could not possibly have been prompted by Satan. Just as surely as “*no man ever yet hated his own flesh*” (Eph 5:29), so Satan cannot possibly “*rise up against himself.*” Christ and Belial can have no “*concord*” (2 Cor 6:15), but Satan and his hosts **are** in agreement, working together for a common cause.

A STRONG MAN. Here is a parabolic description of Satan, and it is from our point of view – “*a strong man.*” Although Jesus could deal with Satan’s hosts with “*the finger of God,*” so to speak (Lk 11:20), this is not how men deal with him. He is “*strong*” toward men, especially those who are not in Christ Jesus. That is why John writes, “*the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*” NKJV (1 John 5:19). He blinds men’s minds (2 Cor 4:4), takes men “*captive*” (2 Tim 2:26), and works in “*the children of disobedience*” (Eph 2:2).

ENTERING AND SPOILING. Before Jesus liberated those who were bound by Satan in the flesh, He first dealt with the wicked one himself. During Jesus’ ministry, when He “*went in and out*” among men, these deliverances were largely, if not completely, wrought externally. Of the thirty-six recorded miracles of Jesus, twenty-six of them had to do with liberating people from the hold of Satan. All of them were wrought in their bodies. No one’s mind was healed. No one received a new heart or a new spirit. No one was healed of covetousness, or lying, or blasphemy, or fornication, or drunkenness. No one was freed from delusion, or fleshly anger, or of malice. Inner deliverances **followed** Christ’s death, in which He delivered a mortal wound to Satan, bruising His head (Gen 3:15; Heb 2:14).

Nevertheless, these observable deliverances were an actual liberation of people from the grip of Satan. Jesus entered into Satan’s own domain, first subdued him, then freed those who were dominated by him.

FIRST BIND THE STRONG MAN. In order for his kingdom to be disrupted, Satan must first be bound, or “*tied up.*” NIV When Jesus sent out seventy of His disciples, He gave them

power to “*heal the sick*” (Lk 10:9). When the seventy returned, they exulted in what they had done saying, “*Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name*” (Lk 10:17). Jesus immediately responded, “*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*” (Lk 10:18). What did He mean? **He had first bound the strong man**, else the seventy would not have been able to enter Satan’s house and take his goods from him!

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ERA OF THE NEW COVENANT. Jesus was introducing people to “*the kingdom of God*” – a kingdom that would be most fully revealed in this world with the inauguration of the New Covenant. Once sin had been “*put away*” (Heb 9:26), and the devil “*destroyed*” (Heb 2:14), Jesus entered into Satan’s house, and began to “*spoil his goods.*” On the day of Pentecost, in the very city associated with the crucifixion of Jesus, and before the very multitude that had cried out “*crucify Him,*” less than two months before (50 days), Peter announced what had really happened when Jesus died. That very day, 3,000 souls were snatched from the grasp of Satan. For the first time they saw Jesus for who He really was. For the first time they asked what they ought to do. For the first time they “*gladly received the word.*” For the first time they instantly obeyed. For the first their sins were forgiven. For the first time they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What had happened? The “*strong man*” had been bound, and could hold his victims no longer! Rather than crying out against Jesus, they confessed and obeyed Him. Jesus had found them, and brought them to His own abode. This work was of an even more exalted nature than the many miracles that He had wrought. Now men were being raised above Satan’s domain into the “*heavenly places*” (Eph 2:6). Now they were experiencing “*eternal life.*” Now they were able to “*partake of the Divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4).

Now, bound by the Lord Jesus, Satan cannot stop anyone who believes from coming to Jesus. He cannot thwart their prayers, or stop them from growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. His only power is delusion, and even that has no effectiveness where faith is found. He cannot blind the person who is looking to Jesus, or restrain the one who comes to God through Him. What a day this is!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 34

“Mark 3:28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” (Mark 3:28-30).

INTRODUCTION

Those who know the Lord, have some awareness of the danger of a mere academic approach to the Word of God and spiritual life. By that, I mean an approach that relies wholly upon men and their abilities. The Word of God and spiritual life cannot be dealt with as though man's mind was superior, human intellect was sacred, and the conclusions of the created were acceptable. In order to truly know things pertaining to life and godliness, study must be augmented by prayer, and inquiry coupled with faith. There are texts that particularly accent these observations. They tend to stymie surface thinkers, extending beyond their narrow views. We have such a text before us. It does not handily fit into theological systems compiled by men. It also has such a tone of sobriety, that honest men dare not walk away from it as though it was inconsequential. It deals with sin, but in a most unique manner. On the one hand, it opens the door of hope. On the other, it closes the same door, confirming that we dare not enter into the room of sacred contemplation as though nothing was at stake. This particular saying of our Lord was prompted by the charge leveled against Him: *“He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils”* (3:22). Jesus does not treat this as a thoughtless outburst of no consequence. His reply confirms that these words were well thought out, deliberate, and came from calloused hearts, and those with blinded minds. Men may tend to treat such sayings as a mere “slip-of-the-lip,” but Jesus will not. **What men say, particularly regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, is actually shaping their eternal destiny.** Our words are immediately associated with God's judgment of us, and by them we will be either “justified” or “condemned” (Matt 12:37).

“3:28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme.”

Matthew records a statement Jesus made just before this: *“He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad”* (Matt 12:30). Jesus is not tolerant of those who reject or criticize Him! The person who is not partnering with Christ – gathering with Him – is living a totally vain and pointless life – “scattering.” Notice that the critical factor is not simply making a favorable statement about Jesus, but “gathering with” Him. Involvement with Jesus is critical. In fact, that is the stated objective of salvation, for God has “called” us “into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” NKJV (1 Cor 1:9). It is within the context of that statement that the following words were spoken. In our time Christendom has been inundated

with all manner of teaching and procedural instruction that requires no active association with Christ Jesus. That makes this passage particularly important.

ALL SINS. Matthew reads, “*all manner of sin*” (Matt 12:31). While there is a sense in which sin can be considered as a whole – “*sin of the world*” (John 1:29) – there are different categories of sin as well. Paul mentions sins that are “*without the body*” and fornication, which is “*against the body*” (1 Cor 6:18). There are sins of the “*eyes*” (2 Pet 2:14), sins of the “*tongue*” (Psa 39:1), and sinful “*desires of the flesh and of the mind*” (Eph 2:3). The mouth can cause the flesh to sin: “*Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?*” (Eccl 5:6). There are “*secret faults*” (Psa 19:12), “*secret sins*” (Psa 90:8), and evil “*secrets of the heart*” (Psa 44:21).

SHALL BE FORGIVEN. The concept of forgiveness presumes the existence of a debt that must be paid. Thus Jesus taught us to pray, “*forgive us our debts*” (Matt 6:12). The word “*forgive*” means “to send away, to let go of a debt, and to remit. THAYER Sin may bring momentary pleasure and seeming advantages to men, but it creates a debt in heaven, and is written in the books of God’s remembrance. Only in Christ are sins “*remembered no more*” (Heb 8:12). Sin is an attempt to superimpose man’s will upon God. It robs God of His glory, and makes self the center of attention.

Sins that are “*forgiven*” require no further payment. The debt is liquidated. When Jesus “*put away sin,*” He liquidated the debt, so that no further payment can possibly be required. Thus it is written, “*Now where remission of these is, there is **no more** offering for sin*” (Heb 10:18). The idea of “*penance,*” perpetrated by the Roman church, whereby an additional payment is made for sin by the sinner, is a most wretched corruption. God cannot be any more satisfied with a payment for sin than He is with that which was made by Christ Jesus. As it is written, “*He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge [the knowledge of Him NIV] shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities*” (Isa 53:11). Here, Jesus speaks with that His atoning death in mind.

We do read of certain action to be taken following disobedience. “*And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled*” (2 Cor 10:6). This does not have to do with any payment for sin, but rather refers to the punishment of sin exacted upon willing transgressors – like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), the Corinthian fornicator (1 Cor 5), and Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:10). This punishment is to be inflicted only by those who have ordered their own lives aright.

THE SONS OF MEN. So far as Scripture is concerned, only Adam’s offspring can have their sins “*forgiven.*” The “*angels that sinned*” have been bound with “*chains of darkness,*” and “*reserved*” in their condition “*for judgment*” NKJV (2 Pet 2:4).

AND BLASPHEMIES. “*Blasphemies*” are evil speakings – derisive and abusive talk, and slander. It is impious and reproachful speech that is injurious to the Divine majesty. Jesus said such speech comes “*from within, and defile the man*” (Mk 7:22). Paul said “*blasphemy*” belonged to the flesh, and was to be “*put off*” (Col 3:8). Jesus noted the “*blasphemy*” of some who opposed the church at Smyrna, and told the brethren He knew of it (Rev 2:9).

Jesus here states that blasphemies, or evil speaking, will be forgiven men, “*whatever blasphemies they may utter.*” NKJV The idea is that God is forward to forgive, and is, as it were, looking for an opportunity to do so. As it is written, “*But there is forgiveness with Thee, that thou*

mayest be feared” (Psa 130:4). Matthew includes blasphemies spoken “*against the Son of man*” as something that “*shall be forgiven him*” that uttered it (Matt 12:32). It is to be understood that repentance must precede that forgiveness.

“ 29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.”

The Lord here adds a word that is most frightening – a type of blasphemy – a sin – that can **never** be forgiven. All sin, therefore, cannot be the same, for while “*All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men,*” here is one that will **not** be forgiven.

BLASPHEME AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST. Matthew adds, “*whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost.*” Although these words can be difficult to comprehend, they are directly associated with the charge that had been leveled against him by the scribes: “*He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils*” (3:22). At the very least, that sin led in the direction of blaspheming “*against the Holy Spirit.*” That is, when confronted with something that could not possibly be attributed to Satan, for Satan cannot cast out Satan (Mk 3:23), these men charged Jesus with being under the control of the devil himself, so that, according to them, Satan was working through Him to disrupt his own empire.

Some might suppose that since no malicious deed was done, but only words were spoken, nothing of any consequence was actually done. This, however, is emphatically not the case. When men give vent to their sinful notions, putting them into words, they are causing sin to take hold of them more firmly, and lessening the possibility of their own recovery. There is a degenerative nature to sin, so that it hardens the heart more and more, until this very sin is committed. All sin, then, is not alike, for here is a sin that is treated differently than others.

The seriousness of this sin is seen in the extensive ministry of the Holy Spirit, and His indispensable role in the realization of God’s “*great salvation.*” The persuasion of things requiring salvation, and of the futility of Satan’s rebellion against God, is brought on by the Holy Spirit. Jesus put it this way: “*And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*” (John 16:8-11). First, where there is no persuasion of the necessity of the Person of Christ, no one will seek Him. Second, the Holy Spirit, therefore, “*reproves,*” or convinces, the world of its guilt of unbelief – its lack of persuasion of Christ’s Person, and of their need for Him. He also convicts the world of their own lack of righteousness before God – how that Jesus is the only One who could ascend into heaven, being fully accepted of God. There can be no righteousness apart from Him – none at all! Third, in order to be turned from Satan, the soul must be convinced that he has already been judged, and that all who serve him are bound to be condemned with him. Therefore, the Spirit convinces the world of the present and future state of the devil, who is the god of this world, and under whose sway, all that are of the world presently reside (1 John 5:19).

The new birth itself is wrought through the Holy Spirit. Thus we are said to be “*born of the Spirit*” (John 3:3,6). In that blessed birth, through the “*sanctification of the Spirit*” (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2), we are prepared for fellowship of Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and set apart for the “*good works,*” for which God has ordained us (Eph 2:10). The Spirit is the One through whom we are “*washed,*” “*sanctified,*” and “*justified*” (1 Cor 6:11).

Following our entrance into Christ, God dwells in us “*through the Spirit*” (Eph 2:22),

and the Spirit distributes to us appropriate gifts that enable us to be workers together with God (1 Cor 3:9). He personally assists us in putting to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13), and even makes intercession for us when we do not know what to pray for as we ought (Rom 8:26-27). He is the One who causes us to “*abound in hope*” (Rom 5:13). The truth itself is obeyed “*through the Spirit*” (1 Pet 1:22).

NEVER FORGIVENESS. Other versions read, “*will never be forgiven,*” NIV This parallels the expression found in Hebrews: “*there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*” (Heb 10: 26). The idea is that there is no provision for forgiving blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Even the atoning blood of Christ cannot touch this sin. Jesus has spoken too plainly for us to mitigate His words by saying there is no sin God cannot forgive, or there is no state from which God cannot retrieve us. There is at least one sin that cannot be forgiven, and one state from which men cannot be recovered.

IN DANGER OF ETERNAL DAMNATION . Other versions read, “*is guilty of an eternal sin,*” NASB “*but the evil he has done will be with him forever,*” BBE and “*he is guilty of an everlasting sin.*” NAB **There is such a thing as an incurable spiritual condition.** Once God said to Israel, “*Thy bruise is incurable*” (Jer 30:12). Again He said through Micah, “*For her wound is incurable*” (Mic 1:9). These are most sobering words, and ought to be pondered.

“**30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.**” Mark adds WHY Jesus said these words. **It was because His critics said He had an unclean spirit.** I do not understand this to mean those men had necessarily committed the sin of which Jesus spoke – which sin would never be forgiven – although that is possible that this had occurred. They had at the very least, however, moved in the direction that terminated in never having forgiveness – moving beyond the circumference of the atonement.

Suffice it to say, the more immediate the presence of God, the more serious sin becomes. Here were people who were faced with “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16). With obvious and unquestionable power, he had driven demons from people they had dominated for many years. Christ’s word was with power, and He was “*approved of God*” before their very eyes “*by miracles and wonders and signs*” (Acts 2:22). These were all of an epochal nature, and ought to have stimulated fear, or at least great wonder. Instead, the wickedness of these men rose to the surface and spilled out in a charge that said Jesus was actually aligned with Satan, God’s arch-foe. Thus, with this in mind, Jesus said these words.

There is a principle here that must be grasped. **The more directly we are confronted with the Son of God and the truth of God, the more dangerous the rejection of the truth and utterance of malicious speech become!** Where God is working in an unusual way, human insolence will not be tolerated. This is because grace and truth accompany the Person of Christ (John 1:14,17). The grace of God is as close to us as the Son of God. All of the benefits of God’s great salvation are within our grasp when Jesus is near and truth is clear. Therefore, those who have been exposed to much, yet remain aloof, are moving closer and closer to the point from which they will not be able to recover. God has not revealed precisely when or where this occurs. It has not been confined to a particular word, deed, or attitude. However, wherever that line is, indifference, heart-heartedness, disobedience, and thoughtless words are clearing moving in its direction.

OTHER TEXTS. “ MATT 12:32 *And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*” “*And whosoever shall speak a word against the*

Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven ” (Luke 12:10).

This sin, therefore, cannot be unbelief, for Paul was forgiven of both “blasphemy” and “unbelief.” As it is written, “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim 1:13). His blasphemy was against the people of God, and possibly Christ Jesus – but not against the Holy Spirit.

There is an allusion to this kind of sin in the book of Hebrews. This was written to people who were in a backward stance. They were actually moving toward perdition, and thus were warned with words of the greatest solemnity. “*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened , and have tasted of the heavenly gift , and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost , and have tasted the good word of God , and the powers of the world to come , if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*” (Heb 6:4-6). It is as though such people crucified Jesus again. Although that crucifixion was only by their intention, yet God will not raise His Son again – even in time or figure.

Repentance thus becomes impossible – a thought that is most terrifying to ponder! It is the sin that Esau committed, moving beyond the possibility of repentance. It is said of him, “*For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance , though he sought it carefully with tears*” (Heb 12:17). The NIV reads, “*He could bring about no change of mind.*”

Again, warning us of this category of sin, we read, “*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins* ” (Heb 10:26). That is, “*no sacrifice for sins is left,*” NIV and “*there is no longer any sacrifice left to atone for [our] sins [no further offering to which to look forward].*” AMPLIFIED **That is, Christ’s death was never intended to cover this kind of transgression!** If it was so intended, then Satan and his angels could all be forgiven through Christ’s blood. But they cannot, for they were exposed to the immediate presence of God, and “*left their own habitations*” in preference for the devil’s delusion (Jude 1:6; Rev 12:4). There was nothing more to draw them! So those who totally reject the Spirit, blaspheming against Him, have nothing more that can convict them, draw them, sanctify them, or change them. **When you reject the Holy Spirit, you forfeit everything He brings as well.**

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 35

“Mark 3:31 There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. 32 And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. 33 And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren? 34 And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! 35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.” (Mark 3:31-35).

INTRODUCTION

In this short passage, there are **18** references to Jesus – “*His brethren . . . His mother . . . unto Him . . . calling Him . . . sat about Him . . . said unto Him . . . Thy mother . . . Thy brethren . . . seek for Thee . . . He answered . . . My mother . . . My brethren . . . He looked . . . about Him . . . My mother . . . My brethren . . . My brother . . . My sister . . . !*” This provides a most precise picture of the nature of Christ’s ministry among men. **It is all about Jesus, what people think of Him, and what He thinks of them!** Everything centers and finds meaning in Him. That is fundamental to our understanding of Christ Jesus. In this text Jesus soundly affirms that His life revolved around the will of God. There is also a sense in which He only recognizes those who are occupied with Him. It is important that these not be mere academic observations, viewed as external to ourselves. We must associate this passage with ourselves, and do so with wisdom and spiritual understanding. Whatever we may think of the sanctity of the family, Jesus makes no provision for it to upstage the purpose of God, which is “*eternal*” (Eph 3:11). This is an exceedingly difficult thing for some, but there is no need for it to be. Everyone who is willingly associated with Jesus experiences the greatest blessings and benefits. There are no lasting disadvantages in Him. Our best interests are served when we choose Jesus, and place a priority on His words and will.

“3:31 There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. 32 And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee.”

HIS BROTHERS AND HIS MOTHER. Earlier, Mark refers to Christ’s brethren and mother in a non-domestic sense: “*His friends,*” or those who were close to him (3:21). The names of Jesus’ brothers are provided, while His sisters remain anonymous: James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Matt 13:55). Paul recounts how he had seen Jesus’ brother James in Jerusalem: “*But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother*” (Gal 1:19). Christ’s brethren and mother had heard of the multitude being around Jesus, and that He and His disciples “*could not so much as eat bread,*” and had concluded “*He is beside Himself.*” Therefore, they had embarked on a kind of rescue mission to “*lay hold of Him,*” getting Him out of, what they were conceived to be, unwise and debilitating circumstances. They were not in the house listening to Jesus, but have now arrived, and are “*standing outside.*” NKJV

At this time, Jesus' brothers did not believe on Him. John tells us of one occasion, when the feast of the tabernacles was at hand, when they sought to counsel Jesus. "*Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him*" (John 7:3-5). This incident immediately followed Jesus' words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:50-71). Prior to Christ's resurrection, His brothers apparently viewed Him as a political deliverer, much like the multitudes who desired to "*take Him by force, to make Him a king*" (John 6:15). They could not conceive of Him being primarily a Teacher, to say nothing of Him being "*the Christ, the Savior of the world*" (John 4:42).

We ought to note that carnal relationships bring no spiritual advantage. This is why Jesus said, "*A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house*" (Matt 13:57). Throughout history, great men and women of God have not been recognized by their own kinfolk. The list includes men like Abel, Moses, Joseph, and David. It does not have to be this way, for if family members will believe on Christ, they will appreciate His workers, even when they are within their own house. Speaking for myself, it was only when the day dawned and the Day Star arose in my heart, that I had a proper perspective of, and appreciation for, my good parents, brother Fred and sister Rubye Blakely.

SENT TO HIM AND CALLED HIM. Matthew says that while Jesus "*talked to the people, behold His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak to Him*" (Matt 12:46). Luke tells us they were standing outside because they could not get in because of the great crowd: "*Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at Him for the press*" (Luke 8:19).

His family makes no inquiry concerning what Jesus is saying. Instead, "*they sent someone to call Him*" – to come to them. The thought does not occur to them that this constituted an interruption, or that they might be depriving some hungry souls of the bread of life. That is not how "*the flesh*" thinks. It only has its own interests in mind, and only values its own opinion of things. Now, we will see how Jesus responds to such a circumstance.

THE SITTING MULTITUDE. Mark tells us that "*a multitude was sitting around Him,*" NKJV listening to Him declare the Word of God, as Jesus Himself affirms later. How important is this "*multitude?*" Will Jesus leave them to give attention to His relatives in the flesh? How will He treat this interruption? Remember, we are being exposed to the Savior of the world, how He thinks, and who are highly regarded in His sight.

THE MESSAGE. Christ's relatives sent a word to Jesus, and it was delivered: "*and THEY said to Him, Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You,*" NKJV or "*asking for You.*" AMPLIFIED Luke reads, "*And it was told Him BY CERTAIN which said, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee*" (Luke 8:20). Matthew reads, "*Then ONE SAID to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You'*" (Mat 12:47).

The idea here is that the word got from outside the house to the inside, probably by a single individual. Those who were sitting in the house then became privy to the message being sent to Jesus. Perhaps they could see the five family members standing outside. At any rate, this was not private. Jesus is teaching publicly, and it now becomes known that His own mother and half-brothers are outside wanting to speak to Him. Now Jesus is facing competition between the flesh and the Spirit – between fleshly relationships and spiritual ones.

There is nothing obviously sinful or wrong in the situation. What will Jesus do?

“ 33 And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren? 34 And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren!”

We must take care not to become diverted to fleshly speculations in our consideration of this text. Some might choose to conjecture that this could have been viewed as a crisis that required Jesus’ attention. Others might say that this was an opportunity to duly honor his mother, and show His love for His brothers, so as not to offend them. But subdue any inclinations to reason through this incident as a man. Jesus will answer any questions we may have by His recorded response to this unusual occasion.

HE ANSWERED THEM. Matthew reads, “*And He answered and said unto him that told Him*” (Matt 12:48). Luke says, “*And He answered and said unto them*” (Lk 8:20). The message had not requested an answer, but Jesus gave one anyway. No inquiry was made as to what Jesus thought about this or that. He was being asked to join his relatives outside, who thought He was “*beside Himself.*” I suppose they thought that then they could whisk Him away to a place of quiet safety, where He could recuperate and gain back His good senses. Jesus, however, does not do what they ask, and does not send any word to them.

WHO IS RELATED TO CHRIST? What an answer is this! “*Who is My mother, or My brethren?*” Matthew reads, “*Who is My mother? And who are My brethren?*” **At once we see that there is a spiritual dimension to life that is not apparent to the flesh.** Yet, it is very real, else Jesus would not have drawn the attention of the people to it. It is a principle of the kingdom of Christ that no one is known “*after the flesh*” (2 Cor 5:16).

HE LOOKED. Who is it that captures the attention of the Master at this time? Is the one who has delivered the message to Him? Is it His mother and His brothers? Indeed not. Jesus rather looked “*at those who were seated in a circle around Him.*” NIV He was the center of their attention, and now they were **His** focus. Matthew says that as He spoke “*He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples*” (Matt 12:49) – those who were sitting at His feet and learning. Previous to this occasion, Jesus had cried out to the multitudes, “*Come to Me . . . learn from ME!*” (Matt 11:28-29). This is precisely what the people encircling Jesus have done. They have come to Him, and they are learning from Him. They have, like Mary, “*chosen that good part,*” and it “*shall not be taken away*” from them – not even by His own flesh-and-blood family (Luke 10:42). This is how Jesus IS!

BEHOLD! Look! Consider! Perceive! Here is a very real condition – something that exists – yet it must be seen to be appreciated. This circumstance was not like the air you breath, which cannot be seen, yet can be enjoyed. It is not like the rays of the sun in which we can bask and profit, even though we may not have a perceptive grasp of their presence. In Christ Jesus, there are things to be beheld – realities to be seen that will alter one’s manner of thought, and open the wells of salvation for refreshment and stability. Just such a truth is before us. Jesus will announce a condition that exists, yet can in no way be substantiated by mere appearance or any form of human reasoning.

Rather than His mother and brothers standing outside, Jesus looks at those sitting around Him and affirms, “*Here are My mother and My brothers.*” NIV Luke reads, “*My mother and My brethren are these*” (Lk 8:21). He provides no modifying explanation – none at all! He makes no attempt to elucidate on the matter, clearing up any misunderstanding. Jesus was now about His Father’s business, and it took the precedence over everything else. As the Son of man, Jesus had relatives – ike Mary and His brethren. However, as “*the Son of God,*” His relatives consisted of another group of people. In the ultimate sense of the word, true disciples are

Jesus' "mother" because He is "formed" in them (Gal 4:19). They are His "brethren" because God is their "Father" also (John 20:17).

How refreshing it must have been when the listeners heard these words! One of the many benefits of sitting at the feet of Jesus is what He has to say about those who listen to Him. In Him the words of the prophets are fulfilled, "*hear, and your soul shall live*" (Isa 55:3). And again, "*I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints*" (Psa 85:8).

If it is true that Christ's words "*are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63), what marvelous advantages there are in being exposed to them. In this text we see how Jesus Himself views such souls. Such are His family – His "house," or "household." **He will give more of Himself to them that to those who were only related to Him in the flesh!** If anyone should know this, it should be His church, which at the present time is largely composed of Gentiles – who, by nature, are "*not a people*" (1 Pet 2:10) – not, in the words of our text, His brethren and mother outside.

" 35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and Mother." Matthew records nearly the same words, "*whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven*" (Matt 12:50).

WHICH HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. Luke reads, "*which hear the Word of God and do it*" (Lk 8:21). Those who are familiar with the Gospels know that Jesus placed a great stress upon hearing the Word of God. The parable of the Sower was all about "*hearing*" the Word: "*when they have HEARD Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts . . . when they have HEARD the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves . . . such as HEAR the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word . . . such as HEAR the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit*" (Mk 4:15-20).

Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who "*hear the word of God and keep it*" (Lk 11:28). He also said the hearing ear was a blessing: "*But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear*" (Matt 13:16).

Hearing is the means by which faith comes to us: "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom 10:17). That is why the Gospel is referred to as "*the word of faith*" (Rom 10:8), or the word by which faith comes to us.

WHOSOEVER SHALL DO THE WILL OF GOD. Now the Lord narrows down the family to which He alludes – His mother and brethren. It requires more than hearing, or exposure to, His word to fall into this category. Hearing about the will of God is not enough. Knowing the will of God intellectually is not adequate. The will of God must be DONE. John said that the person who does God's will remains forever: "*And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that DOETH the will of God abideth for ever*" (1 John 2:17). Jesus said those who would enter into the kingdom of heaven were not those who said "*Lord, Lord,*" but "*he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven*" (Matt 7:21). He said a wise man was one who hears His sayings "*and doeth them*" (Matt 7:24; Lk 6:47). Jesus said His meat, or sustenance, was to "*do the will of Him that sent Me*" (John 4:24). How could anything less be required of those related to Him?

Doing the will of God is an exceedingly broad requirement. Slaves were instructed to diligently serve their masters, "*not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*" (Eph 6:6). We are also told that doing the will, of God involves abstaining from fornication (1 Thess 4:3-4). Giving thanks in everything is also "*the will of God in*

Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess 5:18). Believers are told they have “*need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God , ye might receive the promise*” (Heb 10:36). It is also affirmed that “*the will of God*” it putting to silence “*the ignorance of foolish men*” with “*well doing*” (1 Pet 2:15). In fact, the entirety of our lives following the new birth is to be lived “*unto the will of God*” (1 Pet 4:2).

Doing the will of God assumes there are others “*wills*” that can be done. They are competing wills, like “*the will of the flesh*” and “*the will of man*” (John 1:13; 2 Pet 1:21), and “*the will of the Gentiles*” (1 Pet 4:3). These are all “*wills*” that are independent of Divine influences – “*wills*” upon which the light of truth has not shined. If one wonders just how we can come to know of “*the will of God,*” in order that we might do it, Jesus provides the answer. “*If anyone wants to do His will , he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority*” NKJV (John 7:17). Notice that “*His will*” is tied to “*the doctrine.*” That is, knowing God’s will is not a mere intuition, but is the result of hearing it articulated. As Luke’s account of this incident reads, “*My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it*” (Luke 8:21). Jesus also said, “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*” (John 13:17).

Here is the great dividing line between religious men: the doing of the Word – translating it into life, so that the will of God is lived out. This is life lived within an acute awareness of Jesus and what He has to say. It was being demonstrated in the house in which Jesus was found that day – a house where the “*multitude cometh together again*” to hear the Lord Jesus. Sitting around Him, with Him being the focus of their attention, they were being exposed to the mind of the Lord, the kingdom of God, and the will of God. As such, in Christ’s mind, they took the precedence over all fleshly associations.

Here is a circumstance that will never be answered with disappointment – when people cluster around Jesus to hear the Word of God, intent upon keeping and doing what they hear. It is an exceedingly rare thing to find in our day, but wherever that kind of gathering is found, the blessing of the Lord will be had, and Jesus will not leave.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 36

“ Mark 4:1 And He began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2 And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine, 3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9 And He said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mark 4:1-9; Matt 13:3-9; Lk 8:5-8).

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus saw the multitudes, His inclinations were always in synch with the will and purpose of God. Once, when Jesus saw the multitudes, He was “*moved with compassion,*” seeing them as those who “*fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*” (Matt 9:36). Another time He saw a “*great multitude,*” was “*moved with compassion toward them,*” and “*healed their sick*” (Matt 14:14). Another time He said He had “*compassion on the multitude,*” and would not send them away with nothing to eat, lest they “*faint in the way*” (Matt 15:36). Later, Mark says of a similar occasion, “*And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things*” (Mark 6:34). For many, “*multitudes*” are nothing more than numbers – mere statistics. But this was not the case with Jesus. In our text, He will again be moved to teach them – to acquaint them to some degree with the “*kingdom of God,*” which He was preaching, or declaring (Lk 4:43). This way of viewing the multitudes is exceedingly rare in our day.

“ 4:1 And He began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2 And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine.”

HE BEGAN AGAIN TO TEACH. Matthew says Jesus “*sat by the sea side,*” and a “*great multitude were gathered together unto Him*” (Matt 13:1). Luke affirms of this occasion that “*much people were gathered together, and were come to Him out of every city*” (Lk 8:4). Earlier, when the people “*pressed upon Him to hear the word of God,*” Jesus entered Peter’s boat and asked him to “*thrust out a little from the land*” in order that He might teach the people (Lk 5:1-3). Here, in the beginning of Christ’s ministry, it is remarkable how the people flocked to Him. It confirms that His words had a certain freshness and power in them that the people had not heard before. Then, as now, Jesus stands in stark contrast to conventional religion, and the teaching of the professionals.

Jesus was prone to teach – that was His manner. He would often have compassion on the multitudes and heal their sick. At least seven times we read of Jesus healing the sick among certain multitudes (Matt 4:24; 12:15; 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14; Mk 1:34). His great heart was touched with the human condition.

However, Jesus was at His peak when He was teaching – expounding the kingdom of God, acquainting people with God, and opening the Scriptures. It is written that He “*taught in their synagogues*” (Matt 4:23), taught and preached in their cities (Matt 11:1), taught daily in the Temple (Matt 26:55), “*taught by the sea side*” (Mk 4:1), taught in the villages (Mk 6:6), taught in the regions on the other side of Jordan (Mk 10:1), taught on mountains (Matt 5:1), taught by a well (John 4:6-32), and taught in houses (Matt 9:10-17; Mk 7:17). He also “*taught His disciples*” in special ways (Mk 9:31).

This is an aspect of Jesus that has been largely lost in our day. Teaching simply does not blend well with an institutional emphasis and catering to the whims of the crowds. This is, however, one of the distinctions of the “*day of salvation.*” Isaiah prophesied, “*And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways*” (Isa 2:3). “*And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD ; and great shall be the peace of thy children*” (Isa 54:13). Jesus referred to this prophecy, associating it with His own matchless ministry (John 6:45). Before Jesus returned to heaven, He told His disciples He would send the Holy Spirit to them, who would “*teach*” them of “*all things*” (John 14:26). Those who are in Christ Jesus are told of His teaching ministry to them now: “*But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by Him , as the truth is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:20-21).

Teaching is like a two-sided coin. One side is communication, and the other is reception. Jesus said of the “*teaching*” of the prophesy of Isaiah, “*And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of [from] the Father, cometh unto me*” (John 6:45). Here, Jesus is communicating – bringing matters of the kingdom within reach of the people. In order for the communication to be effective, it remains for the people to receive what He is saying.

THE LAND AND THE SEA. Earlier, Mark says the people “*resorted*” to Christ by the sea side, and He taught them (Mk 2:13). Another time the people gathered to Him when was “*by the sea*” (Mk 5:21). Still another time a multitude listened to Him by “*the sea of Galilee*” (Mk 7:31). There is a sort of parable here – a likeness to Divine realities. The truth of God is, indeed, like “*a great deep.*” As David confessed, “*Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep*” (Psa 36:6). On the one hand, they are high and lofty like mountains, so that they extend beyond out vision. On the other hand, they are like a profoundly deep sea that goes far beneath the surface, and can only be grasped by extended thought and effort. How appropriate that Jesus often taught by the sea.

HE TAUGHT THEM MANY THINGS. Note what is said of Jesus’ teaching. It consisted of “*many things by (or in) parables*” – many different facets of truth, showing them different perspectives of the kingdom. This was called “*His doctrine.*” He did this “*in parables,*” or comparisons, figures, and proverbs. **In this approach, He was actually drawing out those hidden amongst the multitudes** – those who would not be satisfied with mere “*parables.*” Later He will tell His disciples He did this because it was “*not given*” to the multitudes to “*know the mysteries of the kingdom*” (Matt 13:10). He spoke “*in parables,*” to “*them that are without*” (Mk 4:11). Thus, they were exposed to the truth, yet knew not one whit about it unless they inquired for further instruction. **This is a kingdom manner that ought to be duly noted by all men – a manner that**

ought to provoke earnest inquiry.

“ 3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.”

HEARKEN; BEHOLD. Jesus calls for the attention of men! If men are to profit from Him and His teaching, He must have their special care or consideration. This involves the focus of mental faculties, and the alertness of the heart. **Distracted souls will neither be blessed nor profited by the teaching of Jesus – no matter marvelous it is, or what liberty it promises.**

To “*Hearken*” is to listen, or pay attention to. It is to be keenly aware of, so that every word is taken in, and preparation made to give due consideration to that word. It also means to perceive the sense of what is said. The word “*Behold*” means much the same: to see or look, with the attention aroused. It is to view something with a mind to see beyond the surface, and to gain some benefit from it: to observe with a keen interest. Here, then, is what Jesus means by these two words. “Come close to Me. Listen carefully to what I am going to say. Remove all distracting thoughts from your minds, and focus on what you will hear from my lips. Do not treat these words as though they were incidental, or had nothing to do with you. Marshall all of your thoughts! Be alert and attentive! Look with earnest intent into my words, and make every effort to discern them.”

Fourteen times Jesus said, “*Take heed!*” Nine times the epistles also contain these words. They precede a warning about God possibly not sparing us (Rom 11:21). Those who labor for the Lord are to take heed HOW they build upon the foundation (1 Cor 3:10). Throwing stumbling blocks in front of brethren can only be avoided by taking heed (1 Cor 8:9). We are to employ this response to keep from falling (1 Cor 10:12). Wrangling brethren are to take heed to avoid being consumed (Gal 5:15). Those with a ministry are to have this frame of mind (Col 4:17). Believers are to assess themselves in this manner (1 Tim 4:16). An evil heart of unbelief can only be avoided by this kind of focused attention (Heb 3:12). Spiritual growth requires undivided attentiveness (2 Pet:1:19).

Lest we be tempted to view this in a kind of academic way, this is the thoughtful environment in which of **all** profitable kingdom activity is conducted. Every aspect of this great salvation that brings benefit is conducted in such an environment. Distracted minds cannot take hold of the Word of Christ. Those with scattered thoughts, who cannot dwell on anything for very long, will gain nothing from the testimony of the truth of God. This is one of the great liabilities of a religion that pipes and plays to the human emotion and fleshly preferences. Too much of the religion of our time has nothing upon which hungry and thirsty souls can focus. Often there is little to which people can “*hearken*” and “*behold*.”

A SOWER. Observe, the attention is immediately drawn to a person. It is the **person** that makes the activity relevant. The “*doctrine*,” as Mark refers to it (4:3), primarily concerns one who is engaged in a meaningful activity. This is not a person who is making himself available to the masses, but who is engaged in purposeful and focused work. Whatever is said in this “*parable*” finds its meaning in this “*sower*” who went out “*to sow*.” This was not a tangential activity of the “*sower*,” nor something that was done in his leisure. **SOWING.** There is also a premier activity of this person – something is being done that involves an objective, activity, and a desired response. He obviously has something to sow – some seed that he himself owns. The manner in which he sows confirms that the seed is not sparse but plentiful.

DIFFERING KINDS OF SOIL. The “*wayside*,” or “*pathway*.” This is an area where there is a lot of activity, but nothing of substance results from it. The “*seed*” will discover the hardness of

such soil. The “*stony ground*,” that is not what it appears to be. It is soil with a ledge of rock beneath, hidden by a thin layer of soil that will not allow for any harvest from the seed. The true nature of the soil will be discovered by the seed.

COMPETITIVE INFLUENCES. There are also competitive influences external to the soil itself – influences that bear directly upon the success of the seed. The fowls of the air, who are looking for an opportunity. The hidden rock that allows for no growth. The sun that sends out a blast of heat that cannot be endured by plants with no root. The sower sows with all of these influences in mind. He does not avoid soils that are inhibited by these factors. The seed itself will confirm the condition of the soils. He will not philosophize about the possibilities of the soil. The seed will do the work of discovery. Wherever the seed cannot grow, the soil is bad – absolutely bad, without any equivocation whatsoever.

“ 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus is acquainting the multitudes with the manner of the Kingdom. It does not deal with mere novelties. Jesus is actually interpreting His own teaching, announcing to them that He is knowledgeably sowing where He will gain no lasting harvest.

A DIFFERING KIND OF COMPETITIVE INFLUENCE. Some of the soil was rich enough to be productive. It was not a mere path, trodden by men, and never intended to produce a crop. Nor, indeed, was it nothing more than thin soil that covered a ledge of rock, that roots could not penetrate.

This is soil in which other corrupt and unfruitful seeds already existed. Luke says “*the thorns sprang up with it , and choked it*” (Lk 8:7). The thorns, then, were not apparent when the seed fell upon that soil. However, the seed eventually discovered the situation. The ground was incapable of producing a harvest.

The first soil had the seed removed from it by birds external to it. The second soil was blasted by the noonday sin, and “*withered away, because it lacked moisture*” – moisture that could only be obtained by deep roots (Luke 6:6). But this soil had corrupting influences within it – foreign and damaging seeds that would not allow anything to grow but themselves! God’s work is being done in an intensely competitive environment.

“GOOD GROUND.” This was ground that was not hard from unrelated activity. It was ground upon which men did not traffic. It was also ground that had depth, with no inhibiting rock beneath the surface. What is more, the soil had been adequately prepared, with all competing seeds being removed by breaking up the fallow ground.

Something about this “*good ground*” that is noteworthy: the seed “*did yield fruit that sprang up and increased.*” Matthew says “*it brought forth fruit*” (Matt 13:8). Here, then, was the whole point of sowing the seed – **to obtain fruit, or a harvest.** Seed without fruit is pointless. What is more, the parable confirms there are places where the seed will not grow and produce fruit – even if it is sown by the sower himself, and in copious quantities! Paths that are traveled heavily by men will **not** produce a harvest! Soil that has no depth, but has a layer of hard rock beneath the surface will not produce a harvest. There may be some initial growth, but it will

not endure the heat of the day. Soil that has competing seeds in it, lurking beneath the surface, **cannot** produce a harvest, even when the seed itself is good, and was sown by the master sower himself.

The “*sower*” did not attempt to re-gather the seed sown on the pathway, thinking to sow it at a more opportune time. He did not pull up the tender shoots on the rocky ground, and make an effort to transplant them in soil that was better prepared. Nor, indeed, did he attempt to weed out the “*thorns*” that grew up “*with*” the plants from the “*good seed*.” **Only** the seed in the “*good soil*” brought **any** profit to the sower.

ABUNDANT FRUITFULNESS. The harvest was not a meager one – and keep in mind, this is the **only** harvest that was realized! There was **no** harvest from the “*wayside*.” The seed was forthrightly devoured by the birds. There was no harvest from the rocky soil. The plants soon withered away in the heat of the sun. There was **no** harvest from the soil in which “*thorns*” sprang up “*with*” the good seed. Not so much as one ripe fruit was gathered from those first three soils! But what of the “*good*” soil?

Matthew accounts for the fruitfulness from the greatest to the least: “*some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold*” (Matt 13:8). Mark accounts for it from the least to the greatest: “*some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred*” (Mk 4:8). Luke simply says, “*and bare fruit an hundredfold,*” or “*a hundred times more than was sown*” NIV (Lk 8:8).

This is a most remarkable thing! You may recall that Jesus spoke of faithful stewards who returned more than they received. One man received “*one pound*” and returned “*ten pounds more*” – a **thousandfold** increase (Lk 19:16). Another man received “*one pound*” and returned “*five pounds*” – a **five-hundredfold** increase (Lk 19:18). One man received “*five talents,*” and returned an additional “*five talents*” – an hundredfold increase. Another man received “*two talents,*” and returned an additional “*two*” – an hundredfold increase.

LET HIM HEAR! Here, the Lord is calling out for tender hearts to consider what He has said. **As we will find, it is not possible to reason from a parable to the reality.** A person can only discern the parable when it is explained – or the light of reality is shined upon it. One can only imagine what men would have pulled out of this parable had Jesus not explained it. Now, we will see how the disciples pressed to know the meaning of this word.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 37

“ Mark 4:10 And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. 11 And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: 12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. 13 And He said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?” (Mark 4:10-13; Matt 13:10-17; Luke 8:9-10).

INTRODUCTION

In order to walk acceptably with God and bring forth fruit to Him, understanding – spiritual understanding – is imperative. God is not glorified by ignorance – in fact that is what alienates men from Him (Eph 4:18). Although spiritual simplicity and unfamiliarity with the things of God are quite common in our time, such conditions are wholly unacceptable. Since the advent of Jesus and the appearance of the grace of God (Tit 2:11), moral and spiritual darkness have had to give way to the illuminating and healing “*Sun of righteousness*” (Mal 4:2). Wherever that darkness remains – especially if it is in a professed “Christian” environment, a great abnormality exists. And, it is an intolerable one, even though men have grown accustomed to it. If eternal life is knowing God and Jesus (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20), then being fundamentally ignorant of Them and Their ways is equivalent to death. It is always serious when people have been exposed to the words of the Lord – however vague and mysterious they may appear to them – and go their ways without pursuing and gaining an understanding of them. The commonness of this circumstance does not make it right or acceptable.

If it is true that Jesus has come to “*give us an understanding*” (1 John 5:20), then something is fundamentally wrong if ignorance continues. Those who are the real children of God will **not** be content to remain “*unlearned*” in the ways of the Lord. Like Paul, they will relentlessly press forward to “*know*” the Lord and His ways (Phil 3:10).

“ 4:10 And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable.”

Jesus has just delivered the parable of the sower to the multitudes, and it will prove to be a means of discovering what type of hearts the listeners had. The parable itself will be lived out as the hearts of men are exposed by the words of the Lord Jesus.

WHEN HE WAS ALONE. Jesus had concluded the parable of the sower with these words, “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*” (Mk 4:9; Matt 13:10). Luke says He “*cried*” out, or “*called out*” NIV these words, shouting them, as it were, toward the multitudes (Lk 8:8). Now Mark says “*He was alone.*” Either He left the multitudes, sent them away, or they departed of their own accord.

It appears from our text that the people left Him. They made no further inquiry concerning the parable, but were like a lot of “church” people who were content to hear, but not understand.

In this case, those who left did not have “ears to hear.” That is why they had no further interest in what Jesus said. For those with “ears to hear,” there is an arresting tone in the words of the Lord – something that calls out for further inquiry, awaking a desire for understanding and discernment. As Jesus speaks in this text, it will become apparent that everyone has not been given “ears to hear.” This is not a natural aptitude, or a capacity with which men are born naturally. I will develop this thought more fully in verse twelve.

THEY THAT WERE ABOUT HIM WITH THE TWELVE. Matthew says, “*And His disciples came,*” indicating that while He was “alone” they sought Him out (Matt 13:10). The NASB reads, “*And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve,*” indicating that they were waiting for an opportunity to be more fully taught by Him.

This remains a consistent trait among those who have truly “tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet 2:3). They press to hear more from the Lord, and are not content with what He offers to the masses. This nature of the kingdom is not generally known – that Jesus does not speak the same to everyone. The multitudes did not hear such discourses as Jesus delivered to the woman at the well (John 4:13-14,21-23), Nicodemus (John 3:3-21), the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:25-27,32), or Peter, James, John, and Andrew (Mk 13:3-37). There were many other occasions when Christ’s disciples – those who willingly sat at His feet to learn – were vouchsafed special understanding (Mk 8:34; 9:31; 12:43; Lk 11:1).

Redefining Seekers. Right here it is necessary to redefine “seekers” – a word that has been greatly corrupted by the religious opportunists of the day. Ordinarily, this term is used to describe those who are fundamentally unlearned, and have only a casual interest in the things of God. For them, it is thought the best strategy is to tone down the things of God, and eliminate a lot of references to the Word of God. However, in this text, the **real** “seekers” are made known. These are the ones who come to Jesus after the multitudes have left, and inquire further into the things of God. A real “seeker” is in the process of seeking!

Seekers are described as pursuing the Lord with “*all their heart, and all their soul*” (Deut 4:29; Psa 119:2). Such souls “*shall praise the Lord*” (Psa 22:26), for they are actually not seeking mere information, but the “*face*” of the Lord (Psa 24:6). God ONLY rewards those who “*diligently seek Him*” (Heb 11:6).

The real “seekers” are the ones to whom Jesus opens the things of the Kingdom. In this way, God is rewarding those who “*diligently seek Him,*” and fulfilling the promise that He spoke through His Son: “*For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*” (Matt 7:8).

ASKED OF HIM THE PARABLE. Matthew says His disciples asked Him, “*Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?*” (Matt 13:10). Luke reports that they asked, “*What might this parable be?*” or “*What does this parable mean?*” NKJV (Lk 8:9). Mark says they “*asked Him about the parable.*” NKJV

All of these representations are true, indicating that the disciples actually engaged in a conversation with Jesus. First, they wanted to know what the parable meant. Also, they inquired why he delivered it to the multitude in the first place. They knew they did not understand its meaning, and were certain the multitudes to whom it was spoken did not grasp its meaning either. Why, then, speak the parable at all? Why should the Master deliver a word

to the people that they could not understand? To the carnal mind, this makes no sense at all. However, Jesus was casting “seed” upon a variety of soils – including His own disciples. The disciples were doing what “good ground” does. That is, before the “seed” can grow, it must first be tilled and nourished with holy interest and energetic pursuits. This is the very point in which the vast religious multitudes are eliminated.

“ 11a *And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God . . .*” Other versions read, “*To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God,*” NKJV “*To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God,*” NASB “*The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you,*” NIV and “*To you has been entrusted the mystery of the kingdom of God [that is, the secret counsels of God which are hidden from the ungodly].*” AMPLIFIED Matthew and Mark record this identical saying, with the exception of saying “*mysteries of the kingdom,*” rather than “*mystery*” (Matt 13:11; Lk 8:10). Mark provides us with a grand overview of the kingdom, while Matthew and Luke speak of its details. What is said of the whole of the kingdom is therefore true of its individual parts, or various aspects and levels of involvement.

UNTO YOU IT IS GIVEN TO KNOW. In His response Jesus explains why some people discern the things of God, while others do not. It is not that some are intellectual, while others are not. It is not that some are more disciplined students than others, or that some have had a better upbringing than their peers.

The perception of Divine purpose and workings (“*the mystery of the kingdom*”) is not intended to be known by everyone. The Lord does not scatter “*the precious things of heaven*” (Deut 33:13) among the sons of men indiscriminately.

On one occasion Jesus thanked God for this kingdom arrangement – namely that some people could, and some people could not understand the things of God. “*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou . . . hast revealed them unto babes*” (Matt 11:25). Thus He said to His disciples, “*But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear*” (Matt 13:16).

One notable example of this blessing is seen in Peter’s discernment of the Person of Christ. When He said of Jesus, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,*” Jesus replied that it had been “*given*” to him to know this truth. “*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt 16:17). Such a thing, Jesus affirmed, is good in God’s sight. “*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou . . . hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight*” (Luke 10:21).

Paul said he had been blessed to know “*the mystery of*” God’s “*will.*” “*Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to his good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself*” (Eph 1:8-9).

The secret to spiritual understanding, therefore, is not a user-friendly version of the Bible! Nor, indeed, is the secret found in knowing, what is called, “*the original*” Hebrews and Greek texts. The advantage in understanding is not found in anything men have done or can do. **If God has not “given” the privilege of understanding to a person, there is no way by which it can be attained.**

For some, this is too difficult to receive, for it pounds the flesh down into the ground. However, the reluctance of men to receive this truth has no bearing whatsoever upon the facts

in the case. Further, we should not stumble at this kingdom reality. God has unveiled the kind of heart to which He is inclined, and we do well to ingest these words.

God focuses on the soul that is sensitive to Him. “ . . . *to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word* ” (Isa 66:2).

God dwells with the person who is offended by sin. “*I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit , to revive the spirit of the humble , and to revive the heart of the contrite ones* ” (Isa 57:15).

God will reveal His secret and His covenant to those who fear Him. “*The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him ; and He will show them His covenant*” (Psa 25:14).

God respects the person who considers himself lowly. “*Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly . . .*” (Psa 138:6).

God rewards those who diligently seek Him . “ . . . *He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him* ” (Heb 11:6).

Such souls will not have the mystery of the kingdom of God hidden to them!

THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM. The manner of the kingdom of God – His rule and the objective of that rule – is a total mystery to the flesh. There is no form of human wisdom that can discover the workings of the Lord. It is something that must be revealed. Otherwise, it cannot be known. This is not a mystery because it IS NOT known, but because it CANNOT be known independently of God giving people the right and ability to know such things. God is in total control of every facet of His kingdom.

“ **11b . . . but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: 12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. 13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?**”

In this text Jesus reveals the cause of continued spiritual ignorance – even after the Lord of glory Himself speaks to the people. Matthew provides additional details about Jesus’ response, affirming those who did not possess understanding, even though truth was given to them, would have taken from them even what they possessed. He said that was why He spoke to them in parables (Matt 13:12-13). He went on to say that this fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who said the people would see, but not perceive (Matt 13:14-15; Isa 6:9-10).

THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT. Jesus refers to the Jewish multitude as “*them that are without.*” They were included among the Jews according to the flesh, but excluded according to the spirit, for “*he is a Jew which is one inwardly*” (Rom 2:29). In this case, those who are not “*given to understand the mystery of the kingdom*” were “*without.*” If that was not the case, God would have allowed them to see the matters of the kingdom.

NOT PERCEIVING AND NOT UNDERSTANDING. Jesus affirms that it is possible to be exposed to the truth of God, and yet realize not one whit of profit from it. Such can see Jesus and hear His words, yet utterly fail to perceive who He is or what He means.

This was a people who were stubborn and hardhearted, but that is not what ultimately concealed the truth from them. That condition led to their ultimate blindness of heart which was imposed upon them by God Himself. Isaiah described this judgment: “*For the LORD hath*

poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath He covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed” (Isa 29:10-11). Matthew presents Jesus as quoting this text in His answer to His disciples (Matt 13:15). There the people are said to have closed their own eyes. That is, their choice to reject God’s Word is what led to God’s judgment upon them.

It is a most serious matter when there is a lack of spiritual understanding within the professed church. It is an indication of a most sobering circumstance. We ought not imagine that God has ceased closing peoples’ eyes, hardening their hearts, and causing their spiritual leaders to be blind. When men do not take His salvation seriously, judgment is on the way. As it is written, *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”* (Heb 2:3).

LEST AT ANY TIME. This is a most arresting word: *“lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”* Matthew reads, *“lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them”* (Matt 13:15). This clearly affirms that there are some people whom God will not allow to be converted! Do men think they can play with God, dabbling in sin and refusing to respond to His call? Let them think again! This is equivalent to being unable to renew someone to repentance, *“seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame”* (Heb 6:4-6).

These are not conditions that men can discern, and it is not their business to attempt to diagnose peoples’ ultimate spiritual destiny. However, this condition does exist, and there is not one thing men can do about it. If God does not give people eyes to see, they will not be able to do so. When Israel displayed a lack of interest in the words of the Lord, Moses told them, *“Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day”* (Deut 29:4). I do not doubt that many of us have faced the same kind of situation – one in which people could not understand. The existence of such a state ought to cause men to shudder with great fear. How appropriate are the words of both Moses and the Lord Jesus, *“Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”* (Deut 6:16; Matt 4:7).

HOW THEN WILL YE KNOW? We catch a glimpse of the heart of the Lord here. There is a certain abrasiveness to the ignorance of men. *“Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable”* NIV Jesus’ meaning is that this parable is so obvious and understandable, that they would surely be stymied by sayings of even deeper import. **What is obvious in the Spirit is not at all obvious in the flesh!** This explanation of human response to Divine truth could not be discerned by Christ’s disciples at that time. But when the Spirit would come, He would show them the truth in all of its grandeur, and they would be able to see the truth (John 16:13). Jesus will not have to speak to us in such a manner if we walk in the Spirit and live by faith.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 38

“ Mark 4:14 *The sower soweth the word. 15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts*” (Mark 4:14-15; Matthew 13:18-19; Luke 8:11-12)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has delivered the parable of the sower to the multitudes. Sensing that truth is folded into this parable, yet unable to perceive it, the disciples have asked **why** He spoke to the multitudes in parables (Matt 13:10). They have also inquired concerning the **meaning** of this parable (Mark 4:10; Lk 8:9. Speaking as a King would speak, Jesus affirmed that some people were given the privilege of explanations, and some were not (Mk 4:11-12; Matt 8:11-16). This was a determination made by the Lord Himself. He also told them, *“For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them”* (Mat 13:17). The **condition** of the hearers was the issue in Jesus’ day, but prior to that there was also the matter of the fulness of time, which had not yet arrived. There had been prophets and righteous people who yearned to know *“the deep things of God”* (1 Cor 2:10), yet they were living in a time when such things could not be made known. Peter affirms that the prophets made diligent inquiry into the prophecies they were given to speak, only to be told they were not for them: *“Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into”* (1 Pet 1:12). What a unique privilege was vouchsafed to the disciples – to live in the time when these things **could** be known, and to have hearts to which the Lord was attracted, and disposed to expound truth that was formerly hidden. It is imperative that we learn from this to place a high value on the time in which we are living – *“the day of salvation”* and *“the accepted time”* (2 Cor 6:2). This is the time when these things can be comprehended. It is also the time when *“newness of life”* is available.

“ 4:14 *The sower soweth the word.*” Another version reads, *“What the sower sows is the Message.”* WEYMOUTH That is, *“the word”* is a the articulation of a communication with a theme and a purpose. In this case, *“the word”* makes known a reality that cannot be perceived with natural abilities. Thus we read of *“the word of the kingdom ”* (Matt 13:19), *“the word of this salvation ”* (Acts 13:26), and *“the word of His grace ”* (Acts 14:3). Such a word makes known and expounds the Kingdom of God, the salvation of God, and the grace of God. It is more than merely quoting or reading the Scripture, or piecing together various texts in a sort of collage. Here *“the Word”* has primary reference to the Gospel, and matters relating to its reality, purpose, and provision.

SOWING THE WORD. Mark emphasizes the **process** – *“ soweth the word.”* Sowing the Word is equivalent to preaching *“the word”* (Mk 2:2; 2 Tim 4:2), preaching *“the Gospel”* (Lk 20:1),

preaching “*Christ*” (Acts 8:5), and declaring “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). Preaching and teaching is more like sowing seed than marketing an idea. It is not an act of salesmanship, but one of scattering seed that will sprout and grow in good ground.

Jesus spoke of the growth process of a sprouting seed. He taught that there are forces at work behind the scenes. “*And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how . For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*” (Mark 4:26-28).

Those who “*sow the seed*” are scattering a message – a message that speaks of Divine intention and purpose. They are dispensing that word among the sons of men – making known the counsels, purpose, and provisions of the Lord. This is involved in the church being “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15).

THE SOWER. Matthew emphasizes the one scattering the seed – “*the sower.*” “*Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower*” (Matt 13:18). Some versions use the word “*farmer.*” NIV This, however, is not a proper word. A “*farmer*” tends the vineyard, cultivates the field, and harvests the crop, as well as planting the seed. Here, the emphasis is not on the care of the seed, but on the **distributing** of the seed. The “*sower*” has more in mind than producing a productive field. He is also discovering acceptable soil that will yield a productive harvest. That is precisely why he sows the seed indiscriminately, upon all kinds of soil.

In a sense, this is similar to the word of Solomon, which spoke of lesser matters. “*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days*” (Eccl 11:1). Solomon was teaching that we should sow good deeds without regard to reaping immediate benefits from them – like throwing bread on the surface of a flowing stream. The deed itself was the point. So it is with a sower sowing seed. **Here, the point was the sowing itself**, which is an integral part of the work of the Lord. Even if it appears that nothing is coming from it, the seed will discover all manner of things, including “*the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb 4:12). Those who are laboring together with God will be copious sowers. They will have a lot to say, much to declare, and will be noted for their words.

THE SEED. Luke focuses on the seed itself – “*the word of God.*” “*Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God*” (Luke 8:11). The phrase “*the word of God*” means the word that comes from God – the word that God has given. It is the message that He has delivered, the “*record*” He has “*given of His Son*” (1 John 5:10). At the heart of the matter, this is the Gospel of Christ, through which faith comes (Rom 10:17) – the message that is “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16). Matthew refers to the seed as “*the word of the kingdom*” (Matt 13:19) – a message that speaks of Sovereign rule and purpose, of Divine accomplishment and provision.

The message that distinguishes the good from the bad, and the receptive from the unreceptive, is **not** a message of rules and regulations, like the Law. It is **not** a message about how to make society better, or how to succeed in life. That is **not** the “*seed*” of God’s kingdom. It is **not** what discovers the nature of men’s hearts, and produces and sustains spiritual life. Rather, it is **the Gospel** that announces that God, unable to find a suitable deliverer among the sons of Adam, has Himself wrought salvation. This is according to the promise of Isaiah. “*And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me ; and my fury, it upheld me*” (Isa 63:5). That is core of the true message. **The significance of every other word is measured by how it integrates with the Gospel of Christ without distracting from it.** This is an indispensable lesson to learn: “*The seed IS*

the word of God!"

“ 15a And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard . . .” Notice how Jesus focuses our attention on those who are *“BY the way side.”* The idea is that they are near the road – like the shoulder of modern highway. Other versions read, *“by the road .”* NASB *“along the path,”* NIV *“on the path.”* NRSV Luke reads, *“Those by the way side are they that hear . . .”* (Luke 8:12).

BY THE WAY SIDE. Think of the *“way side”* as *“the broad way that leadeth to destruction”* (Matt 7:13). Here, Jesus is speaking of people who are standing or walking close to that road – *“by”* it. These are not *“enemies of the cross”* (Phil 3:18), purposely distorting the message, and avowed haters of God. These have not taken an open stand against the Gospel, They are not such as have descended into the quagmire of reprobacy. They are not in the center of the way to hell, but are, as it were, walking leisurely along the side of the road. The people they see the most, and with which they are the most familiar, are headed for perdition. They occupy a place where life is not springing up to any productive degree. If a sprout is found here or there, it is unusual, and no one expects anything to come from it.

These are people whose hearts are like a footpath, beaten down and hardened by fleshly thoughts, interspersed with occasional intentions that appear noble. They lead lives in which nothing good and spiritually productive can really grow, and by virtue of their choice of direction, the Gospel has no real attraction to them.

The path *“by the wayside”* is uncultivated. It is not intended to grow anything, but is a mere convenience for those who have chosen the *“broad way.”* Travelers to perdition may seek to briefly pursue some noble thing, taking a rest from their rapid descent to perdition. But they have no mind to remain here – on the side of the road. These are people whose hearts and minds are not prepared to receive the Word of the Lord. Those walking *“by the way side”* are not outwardly wicked, but they have no capacity to think upon the good word of God. This world has their attention, and they are moving along with it to destruction, even though they are walking at a more leisurely pace along the side of the road.

These are people like Felix who, upon hearing the word of the Lord responded, *“Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee”* (Acts 24:25). He was *“by the wayside,”* and thus could only muster a momentary curiosity for the things of God. Way side people are also like Agrippa who said, *“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”* (Acts 26:28). Their minds are so beaten down and hardened with worldly activity, that the seed can do nothing more than lie on the surface of their hearts.

It is with great sadness that I must acknowledge I have found such hearts within the professed church. In fact, lamentable as it may be, preaching the Word in many churches is like sowing the seed on all four soils mentioned in this parable.

UNDERSTANDETH NOT. Matthew provides a further explanation of these people. *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not,”* or *“does not understand it,”* NKJV or, *“does not grasp or comprehend it”* AMPLIFIED (Mat 13:19).

Here we see the effect of hard soil – soil that is walked upon, but never really prepared for holy planting. We do not need to speculate about the results that hardness yields. Here it is spelled out for us. This kind of people **hear** the word, but *“understandeth it not.”* It makes no sense to them. They see nothing in it to pursue, nothing that provokes inquiry, nothing that alerts them to a dangerous condition. They do not hear the tone of promise or the trumpet of warning. They cannot

hear any description of themselves or their condition. They cannot perceive that God is speaking to them, or that He has provided for them. Hearing the Word is no different than hearing some form of childish gibberish, or a language that they do not understand.

Matthew says they did not understand “*the word of the kingdom .*” To them, the message was not about an essential and profitable kingdom. It did not speak of a king to which they were accountable, who upheld all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). To them, “*the word of the kingdom*” was nothing more than a novelty, and not even an interesting one at that. They were like the horse and the mule “*which have no understanding*” (Psa 32:9). These are a “*foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not*” (Jer 5:21). They cannot “*handle accurately the word of God*” (2 Tim 2:15), because it makes no sense to them. They imagine that it has no relevancy, and is not important. Even though it is properly called “*the word of life*” (Phil 2:16), they see absolutely no association of that word with their life. The realm they have chosen to occupy has made them hard, and they cannot even prepare to hear the word. It is the Word itself that discovers their miserable condition.

“ **15b . . . Satan cometh immediately , and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.**” Matthew reads, “ then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (Mat 13:19).

IMMEDIATELY. The “*immediately*” of Mark is the “*then*” of Matthew and Luke. Other versions read, “ as soon as they hear it,” NIV “*straightway,*” ASV “*Satan comes at once .*” NAB The word “*immediately*” means precisely what comes to your mind when you read it: “right away, at once, and right after that.” FRIBERG The idea is that **they never got beyond hearing** . As soon as they heard it, from a practical point of view, they forgot it. It meant nothing more to them than the ordinary sounds that filled the air all about them. Remember, this **IS** what takes place in those who hear the word of God and have no understanding of it – particularly the Gospel, which is God’s word concerning Jesus Christ and His salvation.

TAKETH AWAY THE WORD. “*Satan cometh immediately , and taketh away the word.*” Matthew says “ the wicked one catches it away.” To “*catch away*” means to pluck it up by force – like fowls of the air who “*devoured it up*” (Matt 13:4; Mk 4:4; Lk 8:5). Luke says “ the devil . . . taketh away the word.”

There is no question, therefore, about WHO is taking the action. The devil, like hovering and stalking birds, is close to the hard places, where worldly commerce is the activity, and no thought is given to the Lord. Even as the devil was found by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:1), so he is near the broad road that leads to destruction. The closer one is to the world, and the more one is involved in the affairs of this world, the more prominent Satan will be!

When the devil takes away the word of God, the individual cannot think upon it, recall it, remember it, or ponder it. For all practical purposes, it is just as though the word was never heard at all. The conscience of such people does not smite them. They are not convicted by the Holy Spirit, and it is **not** hard for them to “*kick against the pricks*” (Acts 9:5). The devil is licensed to operate in such people, having been given a free hand with them. **If men have no heart for the truth, God will not protect them from the devil.**

Men should not imagine that because they have heard the good word of the Lord they can recall it whenever they want, revisiting it when they have a more convenient time. Nor, indeed, should they allow themselves the luxury of thinking they can be indifferent to the

sound of the truth. Satan will waste no time in pulling the word out of the hearts of those who do not understand it – those who have no heart for it, or capacity to receive it.

SOWN IN THEIR HEARTS. Note that the word is not said to have been sown in the mind, but “*in their hearts.*” All three Gospel writers make a point of this: “*in his heart,*” “*in their hearts,*” “*out of their hearts*” (Matt 13:19; Mk 4:15; Lk 8:12). Luke is most precise in his expression: “*taketh away the word out of their hearts .*” This is the opposite of the word of Christ dwelling “*richly*” in the heart (Col 3:16). The sower sowed the seed. The seed fell into the heart. The heart did not embrace it. The devil took it out of the heart! It was not there anymore, and thus the person gave no further thought to it. This hearer did not merely forget, but the word was **taken** out of his heart. This is an action those on the way side **cannot** stop – in fact they have no desire to do so. It is dreadful to consider that this may be an explanation for why many never have a serious thought about the Lord.

LEST THEY SHOULD BELIEVE. “ . . . *then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved* ” (Luke 8:12). Luke assigns a **cause** to taking away of the word “*out of their hearts.*” The word is so powerful, that if it remains in the heart, it **will** do a gracious work. As it is written, “*the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (1 Thess 2:13). That working, however, presumes the heart is “*broken and contrite*” (Psa 51:17), and that the “*fallow ground*” has been broken up (Jer 4:3; Hos 10:12). As powerful as the word is, it will NOT work in a “*way side*” heart! In fact, it will not be allowed to remain there, but will “*immediately*” be removed. **That is, the means through which believing and being saved are accomplished will be removed!** Here is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s word – a word of judgment against the hardhearted. “*And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*” (Isa 6:9-10). This is what Jesus’ word – His parabolic sayings – did to the departing multitudes. It made their hearts more calloused. It made the things of God more difficult to understand. It pushed them backward more and more, until they finally fell, rather than understanding, being converted, and being healed (Isa 28:13).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 39

“ Mark 4:16 *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.*” (Mark 4:16-17; Matthew 13:20-21; Luke 8:13)

INTRODUCTION

In this parable, Jesus is not expounding human duty, but revealing the cause for various responses to the Gospel. He is explaining why some people have no preference for the Gospel at all. Their hearts are like a path that is close to the way leading to destruction. There is so much carnal activity in their hearts and minds that even the Gospel of salvation sounds unimportant and irrelevant. How we ought to thank God for tender hearts that are sensitive to the Good News of salvation! Such are hearts that have been opened by the Lord, and upon which the Holy Spirit has brooded and worked, even as He did upon the “*face of the deep*” in the creation (Gen 1:2). The teaching to which we are being exposed was not intended for the multitudes, and that is why it was not given to them. This word is for the seekers, who dare to press in and inquire within the Lord’s temple (Psa 27:4). The Lord Jesus is forward to divulge His truth to those who have a love and appetite for it. If it is true that “*the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant*” (Psa 25:14), what will be the experience of those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, been made a “*new creation,*” and are now reconciled to God! We must come to this text with ready hearts, expecting our Lord to open up matters that would otherwise be a mystery to us, even as they were to those who left after He had spoken to them the parable. Let us cultivate inquiring hearts and minds that are not content with shallow and momentary exposures to the truth of God. May we have hearts that demand spiritual depth.

“ 4:16 *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness.*”

THEY LIKEWISE. This reference is to the “*seed*” that is sown – “*the ones sown upon.*” **AMPLIFIED** In this parable, therefore, Jesus is not commenting on people, but explaining why the Word of God is productive, and why it is not. In all of these cases, the Word is accomplishing what God has sent it to do. As it is written, “*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*” (Isa 55:11). In the verses before us we have another explanation of why the Word did not bear fruit. There are some soils, or “*ground,*” in which it **will not** bear fruit – and that is by Divine determination.

STONY GROUND. Other versions read “*rocky places*” NASB/NIV and “*planted on rocks*” IE Matthew views the one receiving the Word, while Mark speaks the Word itself. Matthew refers to “*stony places*” (Matt 13:20), or “*rocky places.*” NASB Luke is even more precise in his

expression: “*on the rock*” Lk 8:13). This is ground where there is more rock than soil. The rock was beneath the soil, and not apparent to the eye. It probably refers to a ledge of rock – a large layer of rock covered with a thin layer of soil. It could also be all manner of rocks that amounted to an impenetrable area beneath the ground.

This speaks of people with fundamentally hard hearts, yet which have a veneer of sensitivity, although it does not go deep into their spirits. The Word cannot “*sink down*” into their ears (Luke 9:44). Their interest in the things of God cannot be sustained because of the condition of their hearts. Their hearts are, in fact, “*firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of nether millstone*” (Job 41:24) – even though a cultural veneer covers those hard hearts.

WHEN THEY HAVE HEARD THE WORD. The “*stony ground*” hearer does have a capacity to hear the Word of God, and to do so with some degree of frequency. This person is a little better than the “*by the wayside*” hearer, who cannot entertain a single sustained thought about the things of God. These are able to do something with the Word when they hear it, and thus the devil does not immediately take it from them.

IMMEDIATELY RECEIVE IT WITH GLADNESS. As soon as this person hears the Word of God, he receives it with gladness. It sounds good to him. He hears a message that promises more happiness, more success, and greater ease in life. “*At once,*” he receives the Word “*with joy.*” NIV This is the answer to his problems. At last he has found the secret to happiness and success! Matthew says, “*and anon (immediately) with joy receiveth it*” (Matt 13:20). Luke reads, “*when they hear, receive the word with joy*” (Lk 8:13a).

These are people who hear the word like Herod heard John the Baptist – a sort of novel hearing that was close to the surface – closer to the intellect and the emotion than to the conscience and will. It is said of Herod, “*For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly*” (Mark 6:20). It is said of the people who listened to Jesus, “*And the common people heard Him gladly*” (Mk 12:37).

Because we live during decadent spiritual times, it might be thought that such hearers are much to be desired, for they are unusual, to say the least. To be faced with those who “*immediately*” receive the word “*with gladness*” does tend to lift the heart. These might be prone to ask such questions as, “*Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life*” (Matt 19:16). He was certainly hearing what Jesus was saying with some degree of interest and joy.

The Gospel of Christ, which is the heart of “*the Seed,*” does have a good sound to it. It speaks of the remission of sins (Acts 10:43), peace within (Acts 10:36), strength for the inner man (Eph 3:16), newness of life (Rom 6:4), and being reconciled to God (Rom 5:10). It announces the destruction of the devil (Heb 2:14), the spoiling of principalities and powers (Col 2:15), and the healing of the brokenhearted (Lk 4:18). It is essentially a good message, and even a surface understanding and casual interest in it will produce joy. There are people who therefore “*immediately receive*” the word “*with gladness.*”

Such people fulfill the objectives of those who imagine that the fundamental thing is to **begin** newness of life. They would write the names of the “*stony ground*” hearers in their books and go on their way, imagining that the main thing had now been fulfilled. However, as we will see, this is not a proper assessment of the case. **These people are not ultimately acceptable to God.** They hear the Word, receive it immediately, and do so with gladness. But that is not enough, and we dare not imagine that it is. A considerable amount of sustained activity is expected to

take place **after** the Word is received.

“ 17a And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time . . . ”

Here the Lord explains why the seed does **not** produce fruit in the individual described – even though the word was immediately received with gladness.

NO ROOT! Other versions read, “*no firm root in themselves,*” NASB and “*no real root in themselves.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew speaks of the individual who is hearing: “*Yet hath he not root in himself*” (Matt 13:21). Luke simply says they “*have no root*” (Lk 8:13).

In its downward progress toward stability, the root confronted the concealed “*rock,*” and could not penetrate it. This person heard the word but did not perceive, or probe into, its implications. Their view of the whole matter of salvation is too shallow and too simplistic. These lack commitment as well as understanding, and are content to frolic about on the surface of life as though there were no real dangers or challenges. Who does not know that this is speaking of the vast majority of professing “*Christians.*” In fact, there is a form of religion that has arisen that actually promotes and cultures this kind of hearer. A message is being delivered that is not conducive to deep roots, and such roots are not even expected.

These are persons who can jump and shout, but cannot live unto God. They can praise and worship, but are not devoted to crucifying the flesh or “*comprehending with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*” (Eph 3:18-19). Grace does not effectively teach them to deny “*ungodliness and worldly lusts,*” living “*soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Tit 2:12). They “*have no root in themselves.*”

How important is it to be “*rooted.*” Is salvation calculated to produce an “unrooted” situation? Is having “*root*” something that is optional? Does the salvation and grace of God allow for people to be perpetually unrooted, living only on the surface of spiritual life? Is that really acceptable to the Lord? Will He bless such a person, or conform them to the image of His Son? Will the Lord work “*to will and to do*” in a person which who “*has no root in himself?*” Is there the slightest suggestion in this explanation that such postulates are true?

Is not salvation described as being a “*partaker of the ROOT and fatness of the olive tree*” (Rom 11:17). Is not the revealed aim of God in Christ Jesus that we might be “*rooted and grounded in love*” (Eph 3:17). Are we not solemnly admonished, “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*” (Col 2:6-7)?

What would lead any person to imagine that “*having no root*” is not a dangerous condition? What kind of understanding would lead a person to think that nothing was wrong with being unstable, ungrounded, and without a deeper understanding of the things of God? Where did such a notion originate?

FOR A TIME. And what is the outcome of “*having no root?*” There is no question about this, nor is it possible for this word to be successfully contradicted. Such people “*endure but for a time,*” or “*are only temporary,*” NASB or “*last only a short time.*” NIV Do you wonder why the book of Hebrews solemnly admonishes us to “*go on to perfection,*” becoming “*rooted and grounded?*” **It is because immature spiritual life will eventually die.** It cannot last! The person with no roots **will** fall away, and the cause of their falling is their lack of deep roots. Matthew says of such a person, “*but endures only for a while*” (Matt 13:21). Luke is even more specific:

“*which for a while believe*” (Lk 8:13).

So much for the heresy that “once” we are saved we are “always saved.” Faith does not continue on its own, and once you believe, that “*believing*” does not automatically continue. If a person does not “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet 3:18), that person will eventually stop believing! He will fall into the category of those who “*for a while believe.*”

I do not believe this is generally taught, and it is certainly evident that it is not the persuasion of many professing believers. **Infantile faith cannot be sustained. There is nothing about salvation, the grace of God, or the Spirit of God that will allow a person to remain on the surface of spiritual life.** Everything is calculated to cause the believer to “*take root downward*” (Isa 37:31). If this does not happen, believing, at the very best, is only temporary – and who is the person who can find a single syllable of good promise to the person who believes only “*for a while.*”

Jesus is speaking of a “*Word*” that tends to produce deep roots. Only “*rock*” can stop this from happening. Let me be quite clear about this. A message that produces shallow Christians is **not** the Gospel of Christ. It is a spurious word that has **not** come from God. The Gospel message itself is the “*seed,*” and it is calculated to grow deep roots.

“**17b . . . afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.**”

Here Jesus comes to grips with the means of discovering the “unrooted” condition. Spiritual life is so designed as to ultimately uncover unacceptable deficiencies. If a person *has* “*no root,*” it will be discovered. Something will occur in that individual’s life that will cause the absence of root to become very apparent. It is not possible to avoid this happening.

AFTERWARD. Although this word is omitted in several translations, it does belong in the text: “*afterward.*” This addresses life **after** receiving the Word “*with gladness.*” **It is what follows our spiritual beginning that tells the real story.** Men keep logs of those beginning the race. The heavenly role lists those who **finish** it, for, with God, **an unfinished race is not a race at all.** Now, there are certain things that **do** happen “*afterward.*”

AFFLICTION AND PERSECUTION. Matthew says “*tribulation or persecution ariseth*” (Matt 13:21). Luke says this is the “*time of temptation.*” This is the world’s reaction to the person who received the Word of God “*with gladness.*” It means that it has become apparent to the world that the individual who receives the Word is at a variance with the world – even in an immature state. If God is really taking a people “*out of the world*” (John 15:19; 17:6), you may be sure that it will be sensed by that world, and they will eventually do something about it. The world will be aggressive against the believer, causing trouble, affliction, burden, and anguish. They will attack the person who receives the Word, persecuting, opposing, and maligning. That is how the world responded to Jesus, and it does the same to those who believe on Him. Thus Jesus said, “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you*” (John 15:18).

As Luke affirms, this is the “*time of temptation*” – a time when the person is being tested to see how precious the Word of God really is to him, and how deeply it has been rooted in the heart. The real condition will be discovered by “*affliction and persecution.*”

FOR THE WORD’S SAKE. Jesus is very specific about the reason for the opposition. This is not simply a clash of personalities. The conflict has arisen “*for the Word’s sake,*” or “*because of the Word*” (Matt 13:21). It is the Word that aggravates the world, for it is a “*discerner of the thoughts*”

and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). All of this presumes that the person is talking about the Word, in some way sharing what has been received “*with gladness.*”

THEY ARE OFFENDED. Their falling was as quick as their reception of the Word: “*immediately they are offended.*” Other versions read, “*immediately they stumble*,” NKJV “*immediately they fall away*,” NASB “*they quickly fall away,*” NIV and “*they immediately are offended (become displeased, indignant, resentful) and they stumble and fall away.*” AMPLIFIED Luke says that in that time of temptation they “*fall away*” (Lk 8:13).

To be “*offended*” is to be enticed to return to sin by means of a stumbling block – something the person is not able to resist. Thus, the person who, because of the Word, is subjected to displeasure, inward and outward pain, and any other unfavorable experience, is moved to abandon the Word, and crucify Jesus afresh. To such a person, receiving the Word is not worth such pain and hardship. It is not worth losing a friend, or being ignored, or being treated as an enemy. It is not worth being rejected, or having to give up a close friendship. For such a person, believing would be fine if it only involved pleasantries. But, alas, it is not worth being treated and rejected as a fool – or so the unrooted person reasons.

This experience is so common in our day, that “church” people have grown accustomed to it. However, we dare not fall into such indifference, for falling away is the prelude to hell! It is a state that leads to sure condemnation.

Let us not be naive about this situation. Jesus has told us **why** this falling away happened. It is because the people “*have no root in themselves.*” It is because they are immature, and are thus unstable. There is a ledge of rock in their hearts that the Word cannot penetrate. They have affections that make them hard against God and tender and sensitive to the world. When they “*fall away,*” it is not because they made a mistake, or confronted impossible situations. It is because they “*have no root in themselves.*” They have been living on the surface, content with a little exposure to the things of God, that allows them to be uninvolved with Him. Now, God is truly able to “*make*” a person “*stand*” – even when they are “*weak in the faith*” (Rom 14:1-4). But do not imagine that this is a perpetual circumstance. Jesus has affirmed the inevitability of falling away for those in whom the Word cannot become rooted. When someone who has received the Word leaves the faith, ceases to believe, or returns to the world, it is because – and **always** because – they “*had no root in themselves.*” There was a rock in them beyond which the Word could not grow.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 40

“ Mark 4:18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.” (Mark 4:18-19; Matthew 13:22; Luke 8:14)

INTRODUCTION

One of the premier activities of the Kingdom is dispersing the Word of God – scattering it among the sons of men. While the Word of God is powerful, and able, when “*engrafted*,” to “*save the soul*” (James 1:21), there are certain factors that neutralize its power. These factors are not discovered by research, trial-and-error, or some form of human diagnosis. It is the Word itself that discovers the condition of men, and uncovers the content and direction of their thinking. As it is written, “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb 4:12). One of the reasons for the injunction “*preach the Gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15) and “*preach the Word*” (2 Tim 4:2) is that it discovers the real condition of people. On the surface, men may appear to be noble and good, while wickedness has actually found a home in their hearts and minds. There are also precious souls who have strong longings to be accepted by God, who have a deep sense of their own inadequacies, and yearn for the grace and favor of the Almighty. All of this will be discovered by the Word of God – particularly the Gospel of Christ. As this Word is declared in power the real condition of the people begins to surface. Some will immediately become occupied with other things, and their interest in “religion” will begin to wane. Others will press to come closer and hear more. Their interest is awakened, and distracting thoughts are subdued in favor of obtaining the blessing of the Lord. Men are not moved toward the Lord by impressive appearances, but by the Gospel of Christ. It alone is a precious seed that uncovers the nature of men, and yields an abundant harvest to God.

“ 4:18a And these are . . . such as hear the word.”

This teaching is a Divine commentary on those who **hear the Word of God** – hear it declared, and are exposed to the good news of God’s provision for sinful man. All of the Gospels containing this exposition make a point of this. “. . . *but when they have heard* WAYSIDE . . . *when they have heard the word* ROCKY . . . *such as hear the word* THORNS . . . *such as hear the word* GOOD GROUND . . .” (Mk 4:15-20). “*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom* WAYSIDE . . . *he that heareth the word* ROCKY . . . *he that heareth the word* THORNS . . . *he that heareth the word* GOOD GROUND . . .” (Mat 13:19-23). “. . . *they that hear* WAYSIDE . . . *when they hear* ROCKY . . . *when they have heard* THORNS . . . *having heard the word* GOOD GROUND . . .” (Luke 8:12-15).

This teaching has no application to the response of men to worldly-wise counselors. It does not apply to how men respond to the “*tradition of men*” (Col 2:8) or the “*doctrines of men*” (Col 2:22). Technically, this is not about man’s response to the Law, the Ten Commandments, or the

wise proverbs of Solomon. In this parable, “*the Word*” refers to, as Matthew says it, “*the word of the kingdom*” (Matt 13:19). It is the “*word*” that “*began to be preached by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him*” (Heb 2:3). It is, in fact, the announcement and elaboration of the means through which God has provided a remedy for sin. It is the Gospel of Christ. He introduced it “*at the first,*” declaring it as having to do with preaching the gospel “*to the poor,*” healing “*the brokenhearted,*” preaching “*deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,*” setting at liberty “*them that are bruised,*” and preaching “*the acceptable year of the Lord*” (Lk 4:18-19). In His ministry Jesus openly displayed the kind of release He proclaimed by means of His miracles. These introduced the fact that man’s recovery was going to be supernatural – something wrought by God, not by men. Men would not be recovered by a routine anymore than they could be healed of blindness, deafness, dumbness, palsy, etc., by means of a procedure.

How men respond to this message is the point of Jesus’ teaching in this text. This is a vital distinction, and must be seen by every professing believer. The more thorough discovery of the condition of the heart is not how men respond to a command or a Law – although human corruption is made known by that means. However, the Gospel reaches deeper into the heart than the Law, awakening the “*honest and good heart*” to a desire to recover, and a persuasion that God has provided a means by which that desire can be answered.

This is precisely the point of Paul’s rather lengthy comments on the Gospel of Christ, found in the tenth chapter of Romans. There we are reminded that “*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (10:13). It is then affirmed that such a “*call*” is not possible if men have not “*believed,*” and they cannot believe unless they “*hear,*” and they cannot hear unless God sends them a “*preacher*” (10:14-15a). The subject of the preaching is categorically said to be “*the gospel of peace*” (10:15b). Men are depicted as responding to that preaching in these words: “*obeyed the gospel.*” The preaching is also referred to as a “*report,*” as distinguished from the outline of a law or code (10:16). It is then asserted that “*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom 10:17). That “*word*” is the Gospel itself – the “*word of (or concerning) Christ.*” NASB This is the “*word*” that is sown, and the various soils depict how and why men respond as they do to that message.

Should this Gospel be withdrawn from the arena of preaching, so that the message of Christ is replaced by a message of law, tradition, or some cunningly devised routine, the means of recovery has been taken from men. As well, the means of distinguishing “*honest and good hearts*” has also been removed. **The ONLY message that can produce fruit is the Gospel.** That is because it is the **only** message that is, in fact, “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16). It is the only message that reveals what men NEED – the righteousness of God, as well as the means of obtaining it (Rom 1:17).

Christ’s explanation of the parable of the sower underscores that men are held responsible for not only hearing the Gospel, but for **how** they hear it. He opens up to our understanding the inhibitions that thwart the Word.

A WORD OF EXPLANATION. This teaching is not intended to suggest that men are instantly locked in certain state – like the wayside, rocky ground, and now thorny ground. It does not suggest that the heart cannot be “*opened,*” or that conviction cannot take place, or that tenderness can never be realized. This is an explanation of what has inhibited the fruitfulness of the Word, but it does not suggest the seed can never again be sown in that place. That is precisely why the parable speaks of “*sowing,*” which is a **seasonal** activity. Perhaps the very people who hear gracious words from Jesus will actually become His “*murderers*” (Acts 7:52). However, in another sowing

some few months later, they may be brought to “*call upon the name of the Lord*” (Acts 2:37). A blessed contemplation, indeed.

“ 18b . . . sown among thorns . . . and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in . . . ”

Here is another kind of hearer – one in which competing interests are found. The heart is thus cluttered with a hoard of distracting concerns and quests. Here we will learn that, while the Word is “*quick and powerful*” (Heb 4:12), it does not automatically drive out rivaling and antagonistic interests.

SOWN AMONG THORNS. Mark accents the **sower** , saying the seed was “*sown among thorns.*” Matthew emphasizes the **hearer** , saying he “*received seed among thorns*” (Matt 13:22a). Luke emphasizes the **seed** itself, saying the seed “*fell among thorns*” (Lk 8:145a). Here was a parcel of ground that was laden with other seeds that were beneath the surface. We know from the parable that the “*thorns*” were not yet plants. They had not yet evidenced themselves. However, as soon as the “*seed*” was sown, they grew up **with it** , spouting and making their appearance. Jesus made a special point of this, as confirmed in the Gospel accounts of the parable. “*And the thorns sprang up*” (Matt 13:7). “*And the thorns grew up*” (Mk 14:7). “*And the thorns sprang up with it*” (Lk 8:7).

It was not, then, until the “*seed*” fell into this ground that the thorns sprouted and broke through the ground. Although these hearers receive the Word, they have other interests that dominate their hearts, competing with the Word. These are described as inward thoughts, hopes, and desires that pertain to “*this present evil world.*”

Luke points out that, after hearing the Word, the people proceed on with their lives: “*which, when they have heard, go forth*” (Lk 8:14a). One version reads, “*they go on their way.*” NASB They proceeded with life as normal, carrying about in them the seeds of destruction. Their hearts appear to have remained fundamentally the same. Now that they have heard the Word, however, other interests begin to grow with great strength.

CARES OF THIS WORLD. Matthew refers to this in the singular – “*the care of the world*” (Matt 13:22). Luke refers to it as “*cares*” (Lk 8:14). Another version reads, “*the cares and anxieties of the world and distractions of the age.*” AMPLIFIED “*Cares*” project the idea of **distracting** concerns and interests. They may appear on the surface to be harmless, but they are lethal to spiritual life, because they compete against heavenly interests. These are burdens, concerns, agitations, and disturbing thoughts that relate to life in this world. They are thoughts that cause dismay, confusion, consternation, and fear. They disrupt peace, and cause fret and worry. You may recall what happened to Martha with she was dominated by “*care.*” Jesus said to her, “*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful*” (Luke 10:41-42). It is no wonder that believers are admonished, “*Be careful (or filled with care) about nothing*” (Phil 4:6).

DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES. Matthew uses the same expression, while Luke simply says “*riches*” (Lk 8:14b). Another version reads, “*the pleasure and delight and false glamour and deceitfulness of riches.*” AMPLIFIED Riches cannot deliver what men think. They are not the grand resolution to human need! Solomon well said that riches “*fly away*” – they can all be lost in a moment of time (Prov 23:5). Those who want to be rich “*fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts*” which led men into “*perdition*” (1 Tim 6:9). The desire for wealth has led many to neglect their soul, heap to themselves distracting possessions, lie, and even rob God.

Riches are “*deceitful*.” They cannot provide what they promise.

LUSTS OF OTHER THINGS. Other versions read, “*desires for other things*,” NKJV “*and the craving and passionate desire for other things*.” AMPLIFIED “*Other things*” are matters that are external to the things of God, and have nothing to do with eternal life. They are of another order, and are thus called “*other things*.” These are desires, longings, appetites, and cravings that tend to dominate the soul. They are yearnings and passions for the temporary – for things pertaining to the flesh. Some of them appear quite innocent, and yet they compete against the word, moving men to settle for lesser and temporal things.

ENTERING IN. Other versions read, “*come in*,” NIV “*creep in*.” AMPLIFIED All of these things – “*cares*,” “*deceitfulness*,” and “*lusts*” – creep into the heart and mind like a robber in the night. They come in when a “*place*” is made for the devil (Eph 4:27). These enemies do not enter with the sound of an alerting trumpet, waving the flag of caution, or sending forth warning signals. They “*enter*” because the person is living close to the headquarters of these competing desires. The door of the heart is left ajar when the individual journeys through the territory in which the objects of these desires are found. The soul that is not aware of these strong desires is well nigh to being overthrown – if such has not happened already.

“**19 . . . choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.**”

CHOKES THE WORD. Other versions read, “*put a stop to the growth of the Word*,” BBE “*crowd out God’s message*,” LIVING “*stifle the message*,” WEYMOUTH and “*choke and suffocate the Word*.” AMPLIFIED The word “*choke*” means “*to press around or throng one so as to suffocate him*,” THAYER “*overwhelm, take over*,” FRIBERG “*to grow up with plants and cause them to die*.” LOUW-NIDA

There are inward influences that negate the power of the Gospel – a word that is said to be God’s very “*power unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16). It is possible for a man to hear the very words of Christ, be drawn to them, and earnestly inquire, “*Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*” (Matt 19:16). Surely this man was not far from obtaining the blessing! Yet, there were some “*thorns*” in the soil of his heart. When Jesus told him, “*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me*” (Matt 19:21), the young man “*went away sorrowing: for he had great possessions*” (Matt 19:22). What happened? The “*deceitfulness of riches*” entered in and “*choked the Word*.” That deceitfulness caused him to want his temporal riches **more** than he wanted eternal life. The Word was “*choked*” – suffocated by the lust of other things.

When one is exposed to the Gospel and the marvelous implications of it that are expounded in Scripture, the battle is set in array. The Gospel will not allow for a divided heart, and the “*double-minded*” man will not receive a blessing from God (James 1:6-8). If the heart is cluttered with “*cares*,” “*deceitful*” notions about “*riches*,” and “*lusts*” and preferences for “*other things*,” and they “*spring up*,” they **will** suffocate the Word of God. If the Word is believed and preferred, it will enable the individual to suffocate competing desires.

The very thought of the Word of God being “*choked*” ought to strike fear into the heart. If the Word is, in fact, “*the seed*” (Lk 8:11), then nothing of God can grow without it – no goodness, no virtue, no advancement in the faith. Hearts that are cluttered with temporal concerns are places where the truth of God is stifled, suffocated, and deprived of power for the individual. Behold what influence distracting thoughts have. They caused a young man who was traveling with Paul – a man who participated in Paul’s ministry (Col 4:14 | Phile 1:24) – to forsake him, “*having loved this present world*” (2 Tim 4:10).

UNFRUITFULNESS. *“It becometh unfruitful.”* Luke says the seeds sown among the thorns *“bring no fruit to perfection”* (Lk 8:14). The purpose for *“seed”* – all seed – is to produce fruit: to cause something to grow that had not been there before – something productive and useful. Unfruitfulness is something associated with darkness, or the domain of the devil. As it is written, *“And have no fellowship with the **unfruitful** works of darkness, but rather reprove them”* (Eph 5:11). Something that is, of itself, *“unfruitful”* cannot produce anything that transports into *“the world to come.”* It is a thought, a cause, or a purpose that is nailed to this world, and this world alone. Such a thing, in its very best posture, cannot extend benefits beyond death, or the end of the world.

In our text, however, we are dealing with a *“seed”* that is **not** inherently *“unfruitful.”* It has the capacity to yield an increase that can be taken to the other side – like being fruitful in *“the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet 1:8), and being *“fruitful in every good work”* (Col 1:10). When the Word is sown, it at once sets out to bring forth fruit, or a yield of righteousness, called *“the fruit of righteousness”* (Heb 12:11; James 3:18). Here, however, we read of a condition where the word *“becometh unfruitful.”* – a condition described as *“**making** it unfruitful.”* NIV The powerful word is thus *“**made** fruitless,”* DOUAY *“and so it produces **nothing** .”* NJB

Right here we are exposed to a facet of the Divine nature that must be known. Early in human history the Lord said, *“My Spirit shall not always strive with man”* (Gen 6:3). The Noahic flood is an example of the truth of that statement. Our text is another example. Although the powerful word of God was sown in the heart, it was not given the preeminence that it demands. Other competing interests were allowed entrance into the heart, and they so smothered the Word of God that it became fruitless, yielding nothing.

Do you wonder why we are solemnly warned, *“Quench not the Spirit”* (Eph 4:30), and *“Grieve not the Spirit”* (1 Thess 5:19). And how is it that men quench or grieve the Holy Spirit of God? Is it merely by some external action, or by being obviously belligerent? Those things come **after** the grieving – **after** the quenching of the Spirit. The suppression of the Spirit’s influence takes place when men prefer other considerations – other desires and quests. It takes place when men choose to be more concerned about life in this world, than issues relating to the world to come. Such interests suffocate the Word of God!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 41

“ Mark 4:20 *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*”

(Mark 4:20; Matthew 13:23; Luke 8:15)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has delivered a parable to the multitudes – the parable of “*the sower sowing the Word*” (Mk 4:14), and “*the twelve*” have “*asked of Him the parable*” (Mk 4:10). They inquired concerning its meaning (Lk 8:9), and asked why He spoke to the multitudes in parables (Matt 13:10). Jesus is opening to them the very nature of the Kingdom of God. **In Divine activity, there is a discovery of what is within men.** Their inclinations are made known, their preferences, and their deeper longings. All of this is uncovered by the dissemination of the Word of God – in particular, the Gospel of Christ. As this marvelous word falls upon the hearts of men, it draws out of them things that cannot be discovered in any other way. It is ever true, “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb 4:12). Let it be clear, where this Gospel is not preached, the hearts of men, together with their inner inclinations **cannot** be known. As it is written, “*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?*” (1 Cor 2:11). Men may attempt to discover these inner secrets through psychoanalysis, or some other form of human wisdom, but such efforts will not produce the truth of the matter. Only the Word of God can accomplish this work. Even then, it takes a skillful sower who can “*correctly handle the Word of truth*” NIV (2 Tim 2:15). You cannot uncover the nature of the heart by spouting proverbs, delivering human ordinances, and catering to the flesh. There is a God-ordained way to do this work, and it is made known in this parable. It is dispersing the Gospel of Christ.

“ 4:20a *And these are they which are sown on good ground . . .*”

There were three soils that looked the same on the surface – the rocky soil, the soil with thorns, and the good soil. The condition of the soil “*by the wayside*” was more outwardly apparent, being hardened with the traffic of men. Yet, its true nature could only be discovered by sowing the seed upon it.

Now Jesus describes a ground that was unique. It is called “**good ground.**” It is the **only** ground that yielded produce, proving to be profitable to the sower. The word “*good*” is pregnant with meaning. Technically, it means “*sound, whole, excellent, precious, useful, and suitable, profitable, and well adapted to its ends, or purpose.*” THAYER There is soil that is meant to be nothing more than a path. Other soils simply lie fallow and untended, and are

only objects for scenery, and are wandering places for wild beasts. There is, however, only one kind of person who has Kingdom utility – a single type of individual in whom the Word of God will prove productive. Here, such are described as “*good ground*.”

You may recall that in its pure and pristine state, all of creation was described as “*good*” (Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31). Jesus spoke of “*good works*” (Matt 5:16), “*good gifts*” from God (Matt 7:11), “*good fruit*” (Matt 7:19), “*good cheer*” (Matt 9:2), and “*good comfort*” (Matt 9:22). The Epistles speak of “*good report*” (2 Cor 6:8), “*good will*” (Phil 1:15), “*good tidings*” (1 Thess 3:6), “*good hope*” (2 Thess 2:16), a “*good conscience*” (1 Tim 1:15), and “*good behavior*” (1 Tim 3:2). **Those are all things men either receive or produce .** Here, however, men themselves are said to be “*good*” – likened to “*good ground*.” **That is, there are people in whom the Word of God is productive, and through whom God is glorified.**

It ought to be noted that there is a sense in which all of Adam’s offspring are alike. Viewed from this perspective, “*there is none good but one, that is, God*” (Matt 19:17). Again it is written, “*there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (Rom 3:12). **Here, “*good*” is viewed from the standpoint of achievement or accomplishment.** The point is that apart from Christ Jesus and the new birth, men are **not** capable of **doing** good. That is, their works are not sufficient to make them acceptable to God. Their fallen state cannot be offset by anything they **do** of themselves.

This text, however, looks at humanity from a different point of view. Here, “*good*” has to do with **potentiality** , not accomplishment. The accomplishment comes **after** the receiving of the Word. **Prior to conversion, there is a sense in which all men are not the same.** For example, before Cornelius was in Christ, his prayers and alms were recognized in heaven (Acts 10:4). They were not sufficient to save him, but they did reveal his heart was ready to do something productive with the Gospel. Before many of the Corinthians were converted, the Lord said to Paul, “*For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city* ” (Acts 18:10). These people differed from the people in the synagogue who “*opposed themselves, and blasphemed*” (Acts 18:6). Earlier, Paul and Silas had been called to Macedonia by means of a Divine summons through a vision, where some people were ready to receive the Gospel (Acts 16:9). Upon arriving there, they found some who could be called “*good ground*.”

Just as surely as there are people whose hearts are hard and incapable of receiving the Word, so there are people whose hearts are ready to receive the Word. Although there are those who have no depth, and are hard beneath the surface, so there are those who do have depth, in which the Word can take root. Truly, there are some whose hearts are so cluttered with the cares and riches of this world, that every Word of God received by them is finally stifled. However, just as truly, there are those who do not have such smothering influences in their hearts, who **can** receive the Word of God.

The “*good ground*” refers to the people who have a certain discontent with the world, are longing deep within, and are not being overcome with the cares of this world. A sort of preparatory work has already been done in them. Maybe it is an Ethiopian eunuch, riding through the desert and reading the Scripture (Acts 8:27-28). Perhaps it is Saul of Tarsus, trying to “*kick against the pricks*” (Acts 9:5). It could be some Gentiles, searching for the Lord in a Jewish synagogue (Acts 13:48). But rest assured, there **are** such people!

Only the sowing of the Gospel can discover such precious souls! Unlike psychological methodologies that seek to uncover the inner workings of a man, the past is not probed. Such fruitless analyses do not go back far enough. The reason for man’s debility goes back to Adam, not to one’s youth. In order to uncover “*the thoughts and intents of the heart*,” the individual must be exposed to

the Gospel of Christ. That alone can discover whether or not the soil of the heart is “good” – whether or not the Word can grow within.

“ 20b . . . *such as hear the word, and receive it . . .*”

In the parable, Jesus said there was ground in which the seed “*sprang up and increased*” (Mark 4:8). Luke says the seed “*sprang up*” (Lk 8:8). Mark’s description of the response of the “good ground” is nearly the same as that of the rocky ground hearers, of whom it is said, “*when they have heard the Word immediately receive it with gladness*” (Mk 4:16). According to appearance, the immediate response looks much the same as the person who will not be able to endure the heat of trial.

An essential part of growing and bearing fruit is hearing the Word of God and receiving it. No spiritual progress will be made unless this takes place. The “seed,” or means by which spiritual life is initiated and sustained, is “*the word of God.*” **Even “good ground” can produce nothing for God until His Word is sown in it.** It therefore follows that those who choose to deliver stories, news events, social issues, and humorous anecdotes to the people have actually taken away the key of Divine knowledge, hindering people from entering into the kingdom of God (Luke 11:52). By choosing to disseminate the wisdom of men, they have caused the arm of the Lord to be withdrawn, and thus made it obscure to men. Prophesying of the Gospel, Isaiah said, “*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*” (Isa 53:1). Paul refers to this in his sterling defense of the necessity of hearing and believing the Gospel (Rom 10:16-17). Those who diminish the Word in the hopes of appealing to “seekers” have done nothing more than obscure the truth, making real conversion and growth impossible. At the very best, they can only **simulate** conversion through some contrived process – a process God will not honor.

UNDERSTANDING. Matthew provides some further insight on this “good ground.” He states that such a person “*heareth the word and understandeth it*” (Mat 13:23b). Unlike those “*by the wayside,*” the implications of the Word are discerned. Such a person comprehends that those whom Jesus came to save, appropriately describes the hearer himself. He sees himself as a sinner, and Jesus as primarily a Savior. The Gospel makes sense to such a person. It is not heard as something mysterious and incomprehensible, even though it is, in a sense, beyond merely human understanding.

Take, for example, the Ethiopian eunuch. When reading the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah, he understood the matter was relevant, yet did not understand its details. He perceived this was something to be desired, yet was puzzled in his intellect concerning its meaning. However, when a person came along who could handle the Word of God, he found no difficulty at all in receiving and obeying that word. Thus, he heard Isaiah with minimal understanding, because the word itself was introductory. He heard the Gospel with fuller understanding because it revealed more.

HONEST AND GOOD HEART. Luke says of the good ground hearers, “*which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it*” (Luke 8:15b). The word “honest” refers to the **aim** of the individual – an intent, or objective, that is noble. This is the opposite of being overcome with the “*cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things*” (Mk 4:19). An “honest” person has seen the vanity of this world, and has a higher purpose for living than a mere self-fulfillment. A “good heart” is one that desires the right things, even if they have not yet been found. Having seen enough to engage in a quest for lasting realities, a person with an “honest

and good heart” is not content with the paltry offerings of this world. Such a person is like Cornelius, or like the Bereans, who “*were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). They are like the Thessalonians who “*received the word of God . . . not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (1 Thess 2:13).

KEEP IT. The Wayside hearer had the Word removed from his heart by the devil. The rocky-ground hearers found the Word hindered by hardness within, so that they can only believe “*for a while.*” The thorny ground hearer experiences the smothering effects of worldly cares and lusts, and thus the Word cannot remain in him. However, those hearts that are properly prepared are able to keep, or maintain, the Word, letting it “ *dwell richly*” in their hearts (Col 3:16). **The Word of God cannot bless those who do not want it, have no appetite for it, or can easily dismiss it from their thinking.** Just as you cannot have fruit without first having a seed, so there can be no spiritual fruitage where the Word of God is not received by an “*honest and good heart,*” and retrained. Much of the spiritual sterility that is prominent in American churches is nothing more than the result of little or no exposure to the Word of the kingdom – the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“**20c . . . and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.**” Matthew lists the fruit in descending order: “*which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty*” (Matt 13:23c). Luke sites the optimum yield, as though forcing us to think more in terms of possibilities than probabilities: “*and bare fruit an hundredfold*” (Luke 8:8).

THE AIM IS FRUIT, NOT BIRTH! Here Jesus exposes us to the ultimate objective that drives the preaching of the Gospel, or the sowing of the Kingdom seed. The aim is not to, so to speak, merely have a plant, or a tree, or a vine. It is not to get people into the Kingdom – although that is the initiation of Divine purpose. The Word of the kingdom, or the Gospel, is calculated to do more than produce the new birth, even though the Word is the means by which we are born again. As it is written, “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (1 Pet 1:23). **Birth is no more the ultimate objective in salvation than it is in nature!**

God is not glorified by fruitless religion! Jesus said to His disciples, “*Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples*” (John 15:8). Paul reminded us that this is why we have been liberated from sin and the world, being made “*dead to the Law,*” in order “*that we should bring forth fruit to God*” (Rom 7:4). If someone is confused about the importance of “*fruit,*” Jesus said clarified heaven’s view of the matter. “*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*” (John 15:2). It simply is not possible that this word will not be carried out to the finest detail.

The “*newness of life*” is productive life, yielding phenomenal increase. There is “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal 5:22-23), “*the fruit of righteousness*” (Heb 12:11), “*the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name*” (Heb 13:15), and being “*filled with the fruits of righteousness*” (Phil 1:11). Specific products include “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.*” There is also involvement in the “*good works,*” which God “*hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph 2:10). Fruit includes growth in “*grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet 3:18). There is also the “*fruit*” that yields a holy life (Rom 6:22), and much, much more.

This is fruit that is “*well pleasing to God*” – whether it is children obeying their parents (Col 3:20), sharing what God has given to us with others (Heb 13:1), or not entangling ourselves in the “*affairs of this life*” (2 Tim 2:4). There is the “*fruit*” of growing up “*into Him in*

all things” (Eph 4:15), and being changed more and more into the “*image*” of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). When “*faith*” and “*love*” grow “*exceedingly*,” that is “*fruit unto God*” (2 Thess 1:3). Fruitfulness has to do with the life of God expressing itself through the lives – the thoughts, words, and deeds – of those who have been joined to the Lord.

WITH PATIENCE. Luke adds that those being described “*bring forth fruit with patience*” (Luke 8:15b). Other versions read “*with perseverance*,” NASB “*by persevering produce a crop*,” NIV and “*with patient endurance*.” NRSV These withstood the heat of trial that caused the seed-produced plants in rocky-soil hearers to wither and die. They “*denied*” the “*worldly lusts*” that reduced the thorny-ground hearers to fruitlessness. When offences came “*because of the Word*,” they maintained their grasp on the Word, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). They assumed a different posture in the world than the other three soils, living “*as strangers and pilgrims*,” and thus abstaining from “*fleshly lusts that war against the soul*” (1 Pet 2:11).

Those who bring forth abundant fruit are themselves likened to “*good ground*” – but they are working out their own salvation in a hostile environment. In the Spirit, they are in “*heavenly places*,” but in the body, they are presently found in a domain ruled by Satan (1 John 5:19). Their “*inward man*” is gaining more and more strength, but their “*outward man*” is perishing (2 Cor 4:16). This is precisely why fruit can only be brought forth “*with patience*.” The hot blast of persecution, and the frigid winds of rejection are blowing upon the child of God. Outwardly there is oppression, and inwardly we find “*another law*” that wars against “*the law*” of our minds (Rom 7:23). Perseverance is required!

In order to withstand these opposing influences, our roots must be deep, with the Word dwelling in us richly. Invasive lusts and desires must be quickly put to death, lest they smother the holy seed. With determination, we must distance ourselves from the broad road that leads to destruction, else our hearts will become hard, and the Word will be taken from us. All of this is involved in bringing forth “*fruit with patience*.” That is the objective of our Lord, and that is what the Word of God is calculated to do – produce fruit!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 42

“ Mark 4:21 And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? 22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. 23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

(Mark 4:21-23; Matthew 5:15-16; Luke 8:16-18)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has just explained the parable of the Sower, giving His disciples insight into the nature of the Kingdom of God, which was the general theme of His preaching (Matt 4:17; Lk 4:43; 9:2,60). This is a kingdom of purpose in which the objective and working of the Lord are being made known. Nothing is haphazard or by accident. In an environment like this, responsibility is brought to the forefront. All abilities, from speaking to hearing, are to be employed for the glory of God. That is the way in which an orderly kingdom functions. Where there is a lack of responsibility, everything tends to break down – whether in nature, Law, or grace. This being true, it deals a devastating blow to all passive religion, where entertainment and merely maintaining a party line is fundamental. Whatever may be said of an approach to religion that leaves the people ignorant, uninvolved, and disinterested, God is not in such an environment. This is not how God works, and therefore where such conditions are found, it is only proof of His absence. Jesus will make this clear in this text. He will affirm that even thinking men do not set out to do something that is meaningless and yields no benefit. If some kind of improvement is not realized by an activity, it is really vain and pointless. It ought to be apparent that our religion must not be something that merely fills up time. It cannot be a lifeless ritual, or a tedious routine. Those are containers that cannot be filled with Divine influence. He neither lives nor works in such domains.

“ 4:21 And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?”

Matthew informs us that Jesus also said these words in, what is called, “*the sermon on the mount*” (Matt 5:15). Both Mark and Luke present Jesus as also saying this following His exposition of the parable of the Sower. Luke also affirms that Jesus said it again to a crowd following the words of a certain woman who said, “*Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked.*” On that occasion Jesus said, “*No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light*” (Luke 11:27-33). This, then, is a saying that Jesus delivered on sundry occasions. In Matthew 5:15, Jesus applied it to men letting their light shine (Matt 5:16). In Luke 11:33 He applied it to men focusing on the light, and being filled with the illumination (Lk 11:34-36). Here, Jesus is

going to apply the same saying to something entirely different.

This exposes us to the proper use of the truth of God. All sayings do not have static definitions. There are great Kingdom principles that can be applied to many different situations – like the words of this text. That is why the person who delivers the Word is admonished to handle it correctly, or aright (2 Tim 2:15). It is why a wise scribe can bring out of the treasure of his heart “*things new and old*” (Matt 13:52).

This is especially difficult for some to grasp because of the kind of learning that is being promoted in our time. I prefer to call it mechanical learning, where only the intellect is involved. The heart, including the will and the emotion, is not being brought into much of the learning promoted in the contemporary church. Therefore, a generation is being cultured that is not “*skillful in the word of righteousness*” – a condition, we are told, that describes, in the most favorable case, spiritual “*babes*” (Heb 5:13).

THE QUESTION ITSELF. In Matthew 5, Jesus makes a statement about the purpose of lighting a candle. In Luke 8 and 11, He also makes a statement. In Mark, however, **He asks a question** : “*Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?*” NKJV That is, this is something that is very apparent and really does not require an extensive explanation. Meaningless activity of any sort does not make sense to thinking people. Much less does it make sense in the realm of the Spirit.

APPLIED TO HIMSELF. Jesus is actually applying this saying to Himself. He is the One bringing in the candle and placing it on a stand so all can see the light. Here, He is not telling His disciples to let their light shine, but explaining to them why He has declared and expounded the parable. Although He spoke in parables to hide the truth from the disinterested, His **primary** purpose for speaking was not to obscure the truth. Just as surely as the sower sowed seed to ultimately gain a harvest, so Jesus brought the lamp of truth among men to illuminate, not to obscure. That is, **He was not content to let the truth remain unknown.** In Him, the truth was placed on the ultimate “*candlestick,*” or “*lampstand.*” That light did, in fact, blind some men – but that was not its primary purpose, just as the primary purpose of the sower was not to scatter seed by the wayside, on rocky ground, or where the seeds of thorns and thistles existed.

Jesus spoke the parable to the multitudes, and they went away. The higher reason for the saying, however, was to provoke His disciples to make further inquiry into the matter. Now, as he was explaining the parable, a higher and eternal purpose was being served. In other words, Jesus intended for this parable to be understood – that is why He brought its light forward. However, He first excused those who could not bear the light in order that He might get to the business of expounding the truth.

ENTERING IN. Luke adds this insightful sentence to the report of Jesus’ saying: “*but setteth it on a candlestick, that **they which enter in** may see the light*” (Luke 8:16). By asking Jesus about this parable, the disciples were “*entering in*” that they might “*see the light.*” The purpose of God is not fully served by the obscuring of the Gospel light. This is why Paul, **having the mind of Christ** , declared His mission as “*to make all men **see** what is the fellowship of the mystery*” (Eph 3:9). He did not minister primarily to obscure the truth, but to make it known. The “*room*” in which the truth is placed is the Person of Christ Himself. In Him all “*the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” are hid (Col 2:3). That is, the truth that sanctifies (John 17:17) and makes free (John 8:32) is made accessible to us in Christ. Jesus WILL teach those who forsake all and come to Him (Luke 14:33). Those who leave Jesus, like the multitudes who left following the parable, have **not** entered the room, and therefore will not see the light. While it is true that the parable was

designed to send them away, it is also true that its ultimate design was to bring the disciples in!

“ 22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.”

ANOTHER COMMON SAYING. This is another one of our Lord’s common sayings. In Luke 12:2, Jesus applies it to the uncovering of the hearts of men. “ *Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetop*” (Luke 12:1-3). Matthew 10:26 contains the same use of this saying – namely that of uncovering the inner corruption of men that is presently hidden from view.

Here, however, the saying is applied quite differently, yet in perfect accord with the truth and purpose of God. **The general principle is that there is nothing that is presently hidden that will not eventually, and in a timely manner, be made known.** What men hide will be made known, and what God has hidden will also be made known. Every secret counsel of the heart is scheduled to be manifested, or revealed. As it is written, God will “*both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts*” (1 Cor 4:5). For men, the ultimate thing being hidden is their hypocrisy. For God, the ultimate One being hidden is the Lord Jesus, whom He will “*show*” in due time (1 Tim 6:15). You may rest assured that there is NOTHING presently hidden – be it good or evil – that will not eventually be made known.

AS USED HERE. As Jesus uses the saying here, it applies to the truth He declared among men. He was saying truth that is presently hidden is not intended to **remain** hidden. This being the case, those who inquire into the truth, seeking to know its meaning, are in the center of the will of God. **Truth is meant to be known!** That is why Jesus said to His disciples, “*What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops*” (Matt 10:27). The truth of the Gospel, though hidden at the time would eventually “*come abroad,*” being made known throughout the world. Therefore, before Jesus ascended back into heaven, He said to His disciples, “*shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

PAUL’S WORD. Knowing this Divine principle – namely that what is hidden is intended to be made manifest – Paul defined his ministry as making “*all men see*” (Eph 3:9), making the preaching “**fully known**” (2 Tim 4:17), and declaring “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). Those who withhold the truth from people who desire it are the enemies of God. They, like the teachers of the Law of old, “*have taken away the key of knowledge,*” and thus “*hindered*” those who “*were entering*” (Lk 11:52).

A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE. Here we are made to confront one of the great transgressions of our time. When men who are charged with feeding “*the flock of God*” major in the personal, domestic, and social issues of the day, they have abandoned declaring the message God has placed in their hands. Their activities, however religious they may appear, have left the truth hidden, and shined the light upon the transitory. Thus the candle of truth has been covered up in order that the lesser things might be given prominence. There is no way to adequately describe the seriousness of this transgression.

JESUS SPOKE ACCORDING TO DIVINE PURPOSE. By opening this parable to His disciples, Jesus was speaking in harmony with the purpose of God. **What God declares to men is intended to be understood!** What has been said to men is not intended to remain obscure, or in the

dark. If the truth sanctifies – and God’s Word “*is truth*” (John 17:17) – then it ought to be clear that it is to be understood. In times past, the intricacies of salvation were “*kept secret*.” Now, however, we are living in the time of “*the revelation of the mystery*” (Rom 16:25). In “*other ages*” this mystery was not made known. Now, however, it has been “*revealed unto His holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit*” (Eph 3:5). The candle has been placed on a candlestick so that all who enter in may see, or understand! **The saints of God are presently experiencing on a larger scale what the disciples experienced when Jesus expounded the parable of the sower unto them.** All of this is according to the purpose of God, who intends that what is spoken to men be understood by them.

How, then, do we account for the staggering ignorance of the things of God that exists within the professed church? It is certainly not because the candle of truth has not been placed within the reach of men! It is not because God has no desire to reveal the truth. It is not because we are not living in the appropriate time. Rather, this ignorance exists because of the condition of men’s hearts. We are being faced with wayside, rocky ground, and thorny ground hearers. God will not allow such hearts to take hold of the truth! But where there is good ground, He will not allow the person to remain in darkness.

“**23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.**” When Jesus first spoke this parable to the multitudes, He said these very same words: “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*” (Mark 4:9). Now He says them again to the inner circle of His followers – the ones to whom it was “*given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God*” (Mk 4:11). Those, therefore, who are exposed to the truth in the embryo must hear, and those who hear it in fullness must hear as well. Both the novice and the mature must hear with earnestness and commitment.

EARS TO HEAR. Men are not naturally born with “*ears to hear*.” Such ears were lost in the fall of man. That is why Moses said to wayward Israel, “*Yet the LORD hath **not given** you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day*” (Deut 29:4). Without these “*ears*,” men hear, “*but understand not*” (Isa 6:9). This is why Jesus said to the criticizing Jews, “*Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye **cannot hear My word***” (John 8:43). It is true in both nature and in the spirit, “*The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them*” (Prov 20:12).

An ear that can “*hear*” is an inward trait of the heart. Such a person can “*understand with their heart*” (John 12:40). They are able to tune in to the heavenly frequency. They can make a conscious association of the word of God with God Himself. For those with ears to hear, there is nothing as important as what God has to say. There is nothing more satisfying than the words of His mouth. Even in Israel, God had given a certain capacity to hear what He was saying to them. In comparison to the new creation, it was very elementary, yet it was enough for them to draw sound conclusions concerning their sinnerhood and their need for a Savior. That is why the Lord said to Ezekiel, “*Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; **they have ears to hear, and hear not** : for they are a rebellious house*” (Ezek 12:2). They had been tutored by the overthrow of their central city Jerusalem, and the Babylonian captivity. They should have ceased their rebellion and listened to the Lord, but they did not.

Now, in Christ Jesus, our spiritual hearing capacity has been raised to an even higher level. Hearing is now more acute than the hearing of Noah. It is of a more lofty order than the hearing of Moses, with whom God spoke mouth to mouth. It is superior to the hearing of David, who got the message of the Law. It is even higher-ranking than the hearing of the disciples who heard the parable of the sower expounded. Now, faith “*cometh by hearing*” (Rom 10:17). In this time we have “*the hearing of faith*” (Gal 3:2,5), which enables us to hear Him who is

speaking from heaven (Heb 12:25). Now, those who are born again have “*heard Him, and been taught by Him, the truth as it is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:21).

LET HIM HEAR. Whether those lesser “*ears*” provided under the Law, or the marvelous hearing capacity of the “*new creation,*” those who possess these “*ears*” are admonished to “*hear.*” Seven times the message is given to the churches – “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*” (Rev 2:7). One of the last things Jesus has to say to us is, “*If any man have an ear, let him hear*” (Rev 13:9).

An “*ear,*” or “*an ear to hear,*” is the capacity to perceive the relevance of the Word of God. It includes an ability to rejoice in it, delight in it, and have a desire to hear more of it. Like all spiritual aptitudes, such an “*ear*” is actually a stewardship. If it is not used, or is buried in the ground of earthly interests, it will be withdrawn – like talent and pound were taken from the unfaithful stewards (Matt 25:28; Lk 19:24). Thus Luke presents Jesus as saying this to those with ears to hear: “*Take heed therefore how ye hear : for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have* ” (Luke 8:18).

I have known people who took delight in hearing God’s Word, and have possessed a capacity to receive and discern it. However, with the passage of time, their interests were turned elsewhere, and they soon lost an appetite for the Word, as well as the ability to profit from it. They stopped hearing, no longer exposing themselves to the “*sound*” of truth.

We are living in a realm where a diversity of “*sounds*” are being directed toward us. Some of them are exceedingly loud, and extremely distracting. In order to avoid their influence we must move away from the world and closer to the Lord’s Christ. When Jesus says, “*let him ear,*” He means the person with ears to hear must come to Him, as the disciples did who inquired concerning the parable. **They must expose themselves to the fullest measure of truth available to them.** If Jesus is present, they must not sit at the feet of Gamaliel! If an insightful prophet is present, they must not submit their ears to lesser men with little or no spiritual insight. The true hearer must choose to listen to the best message. To do anything else is to have ears to hear, yet not really use them to hear!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 43

“Mark 4:24 And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.” (Mark 4:24-25; Matthew 13:11-12; Luke 8:18)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has just completed expounding the parable of the sower to His disciples. He will now elaborate on what they are to do with this explanation, for truth is never delivered to us to merely supply us with information. **In this text we will find that hearing is actually a stewardship.** We have a speaking Jesus, not merely a historical one. We are reminded in Scripture that He is presently speaking *“from heaven,”* and that it is our responsibility to hear Him (Heb 12:25). He is also depicted as effectively teaching His people. *“But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been **taught by Him**, as the truth is in Jesus”* (Eph 4:20-21). The summation of what He is teaching us is stated in these words: *“That ye **put off concerning the former conversation the old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye **put on the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:22-24). Wherever these actions are not being carried out, the individual has **not** been taught by Christ, but is living according to his own wisdom. All of Christ’s teaching, whether personal or collective, can be gathered into one of these three categories: 1-Putting off the old man, 2-being renewed in the spirit of our mind, and 3-putting on the new man. Like every aspect of spiritual life, the gracious benefit of a teaching Jesus cannot be exploited by men for fleshly advantage. **Jesus will not teach people to do or be what is basically out of harmony with His objectives.** His teaching, however, is essential for those who live by faith.

“ 4:24 And He said unto them, Take heed **WHAT ye hear . . .”** Other versions read, *“Take heed what you listen to,”* NASB *“Consider carefully what you hear,”* NIV *“Pay attention to what you hear,”* NRSV *“Take notice of what you are hearing,”* NJB *“put into practice what you hear,”* LIVING

TAKE HEED. The expression, *“take heed,”* is of especial importance. It comes from a single word that means “see, look at, understand, and to carefully look at.” Metaphorically, it means to see with the mind’s eye, or to understand – discern mentally, or perceive. This word is used 136 times from Matthew through Revelation. It is translated *“looketh”* (Matt 5:28), *“seeth”* (Matt 6:4), *“beholdest”* (Matt 7:3), *“saw”* (Acts 12:9), *“beware”* (Acts 13:40), *“Take heed”* (1 Cor 3:10), and *“perceive”* (2 Cor 7:8). In every case it has to do with understanding. It never speaks of a casual glance, or witnessing something with a spirit of indifference. Sometimes it accents understanding what is going on. Other times it places the stress on comprehending dangerous things

to be avoided. Still other times it is seeing beneath the surface – perceiving or discerning.

We can “take heed” to certain conditions; “Take heed lest He also spare not thee” (Rom 11:21), and “take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). There are actions to which we are to take heed: “take heed how he buildeth thereof” (1 Cor 3:10). There are also responsibilities that relate to our brethren: “take heed lest this liberty of yours become a stumbling block” (1 Cor 8:9). Those who labor for the Lord are admonished, “Take heed unto the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord” (Col 4:17).

In all of these, the idea of discernment and comprehension is primary. “Take heed” means more than “give attention to.” It involves understanding the issues and the implications – perceiving the nature of a thing. It is the opposite of walking in darkness – something that is **not** experienced when we follow Jesus (John 8:12). In fact, those who walk in darkness, yet profess they have fellowship with Christ, have lied (1 John 1:6). This has some rather alarming implications when you consider the level of spiritual ignorance that exists in the professed church.

In this text Jesus is urging His disciples to comprehend what they hear – the words and the message to which they are exposed. They were not to dismiss what is said without getting a sense of it – whether it is something to be shunned or something to be embraced.

WHAT YOU HEAR. The immediate meaning of this word is that the disciples were charged with comprehending what had just been spoken to them – i.e. the exposition of the parable of the sower, and the Lord’s word concerning the purpose for light (4:13-23). Like all words from the Lord, they would do them no good unless they were understood. The disciples, then, were being strictly charged to make it their aim to comprehend those words.

The secondary, yet vital, meaning of the words is that what we choose to hear is to be carefully selected and comprehended. Thus, when Israel faced prophets who said they would not go into the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah told them, “Therefore **hearken not** unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you” (Jer 27:14). The Lord also told the people “**neither hearken** to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed” (Jer 29:8). They were to choose what NOT to hear, as well as what they DID hear. Solomon told his son, “**Cease**, my son, **to hear** the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Prov 19:27).

Concerning the truth of God, we are admonished, “Therefore we ought to give the **more earnest heed** to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb 2:1), especially applying ourselves to understand the Gospel of Christ.

OBSERVATIONS. It is clear from our Lord’s words that we are held responsible for opportunities of learning. When the truth of God falls upon our ears, an obligation comes along with it. **No word that is given to men by God is intended to remain a mystery to those who believe it.** This challenges our spirits, for what Jesus says is not as obvious as some suppose. His words must be “kept” in order for them to be comprehended and bring benefit to us. Thus Jesus speaks of those who “have” His commandments, and “keep them,” and those who “keep” His words (John 14:21,23). These are the people who are taking heed to WHAT they hear – and they will be duly rewarded with understanding and Divine fellowship.

LUKE. Luke provides some further insight into the meaning of Christ’s words. “Take heed therefore **HOW** ye hear . . .” (Luke 8:18). There is a certain spiritual posture found in true

hearing. It is accompanied by a “*readiness of mind*” that earnestly desires to know the truth (Acts 17:11). This involves genuine interest, and the ability to associate the truth with who we are, what we are doing, and where we are going. “*HOW*,” or the manner in which we hear, determines the measure of profit we gain from the word of truth.

“ 24b . . . what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.”

Here is another common saying, used by the Lord in describing differing circumstances. In Matthew, Jesus says these words in a warning about becoming hypercritical of others. “*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*” (Matt 7:2). If, therefore, we are harsh in our judgment of others, both God and men will be harsh in their judgment of us. If we are merciful and considerate, that is the kind of judgment that will be toward us. In this text, however, the principle of receiving in kind is applied to **what** we hear, and **how** we hear it.

WHAT MEASURE YE METE. Other versions read, “*the same measure you use,*” NKJV “*your standard of measure,*” NASB “*the measure you give,*” NRSV and “*the measure [of thought and study] you give [to the truth you hear].*” AMPLIFIED The idea is that there is a certain frame of mind that characterizes true hearing. There can be intense interest and a desire to understand, or there can be indifference and no concern at all for understanding. People can be intrigued or bored with the truth of God. What is spoken by the Lord can be perceived as highly relevant, or seen as completely irrelevant. Our attitude has no bearing whatsoever on the truth itself. It does, however, have a direct bearing upon the profit we gain from the truth.

MEASURED TO YOU. Other versions read, “*will be the measure you get,*” NSRV and “*will be the measure [of virtue and truth] that comes back to you.*” AMPLIFIED Speaking metaphorically, if we put one ounce of ourselves into listening to the Word of God, we will not get a pound of benefit from it. If we do not give ourselves to the work of understanding the Word of God, we should not be surprised if we remain fundamentally ignorant of it. If Mary sits at Jesus feet, she will receive benefit, and it will not be taken from her. If Martha chooses to serve tables instead, she will not receive the benefits Mary enjoys (Luke 10:41-42). If Peter and the disciples say of Jesus’ teaching, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68), they will be given special attention. If the multitudes choose to go “*back,*” and walk “*no more with Him,*” they will not receive any attention at all (John 6:66). If your hand is small, not much will fit into it. It is really that simple.

The Lord Jesus is very precise on this matter. Those who give little of themselves to Him will receive little from Him, if indeed, they receive anything at all. **You cannot come to Jesus with a thimble to receive, and go home with a barrel filled with blessing.** If you do not run to Him, He will not run to you. If you do not listen to Him, He will not listen to you. However, if you hear Him, He will hear you. Azariah the prophet put this into words when he addressed king Asa: “*The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you*” (2 Chron 15:2). Zechariah spoke more directly to the matter of hearing, and its criticality in our dealings with the Lord. “*Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear , saith the LORD of hosts*” (Zech 7:13).

This answers the questions that arise concerning the continued and extensive spiritual ignorance of professing Christians, as well as the remarkable growth and advancement in others. How is it that some can make great advancement in the faith, while others stumble

along in a perpetual state of weakness and deficiency? It is because some have given little of themselves to God, while others have presented their bodies as a living sacrifice unto God (Rom 12:1-2). Those who gave little received little, for that is the law of the kingdom. Those who gave much of themselves to the Lord received much from Him, for that is also the law of the kingdom.

MORE WILL BE GIVEN. Here is the pledge of the Lord, and it is not possible for it to fail of fulfillment: *“unto you that hear shall more be given!”* There is no point in the walk of faith where this word becomes obsolete – even if you are the seasoned apostle Paul! If you will listen to the Lord, He keep speaking, revealing, showing, and unveiling. **In this regard, your only limitation is your decrease in attentiveness.**

This means that the Lord is looking for those who will listen to Him, take Him seriously, and ponder what He says. He says of such people, *“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant”* (Psa 25:14). If you are growing in the grace and knowledge of *“our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet 3:18), it is because you are a good and attentive listener! He is doing for you precisely what He said He would do – giving you *“more.”* It is not possible to hear Jesus with the ears He has given you to hear, taking heed to His words, without receiving *“more.”* That is the law of the Kingdom, and it simply is not possible for it to be broken or nullified.

“ 25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.”

HE THAT HATH. Who is *“he that hath,”* or *“those who have?”* NRSV This is not the one who merely heard, but the one who **heard and retained**, or kept, the Word given to him. It is no wonder Jesus said to a woman who pronounced a blessing upon His mother, *“Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it”* (Luke 11:28). Here, to *“keep”* means to guard, watch over, and have an eye upon, lest it be snatched away. It is the opposite of those who heard the Word, did not understand it, and the devil took it out of their heart (Matt 13:19). Those who have *“no root in themselves,”* believing only *“for a while,”* are excluded from this number, for the Word does not stay with them (Matt 13:21; Lk 8:13). Those who are overcome with *“the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things”* are also excluded from this category of people, for the Word did not stay with them either (Mk 4:19).

“He that hath” refers to those who are like *“good ground”* in which the Seed of God’s word takes root and bears fruit. They could not forget the Word of the King, nor be turned aside to lesser things. Without exception, there is a certain way such souls will be honored.

SHALL BE GIVEN. Other versions read, *“more will be given,”* NKJV *“he will be given more.”* NIV And, what is this spiritual commodity of which he will be given *“more?”* It certainly is not the *“riches of this world,”* for they are *“deceitful.”* Such a person will be given more Word, more teaching, more insight, and more *“spiritual understanding.”* The horizon of truth will extend, the vista of spiritual discernment will expand. *“More”* of God will be known. *“More”* of Jesus will be comprehended. *“More”* This will all be *“given”* by the Lord.

In order to receive *“more,”* there is a sort of spiritual inventory that is taken by the Lord. If the individual has not been a *“forgetful hearer”* (James 1:25), but has chosen to hide God’s word in his heart (Psa 119:11), *“more”* will be given. In this world, this is not the mode of operation. Men receive *“more”* when they have run out of the particular commodity they seek. However, this is not the manner of the Kingdom. Those who have maintained a good supply of truth within, retaining in their thoughts what they have heard, *“Shall be given more.”* The inventory of truth in their *“bag”*

will be increased, and it will become apparent to others (Matt 13:52).

HE THAT HATH NOT. But what of that miserable soul who, upon being confronted with the truth, “*straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was*” (James 1:24). What of the one who has “*forgotten he was purged from his old sins*” (2 Pet 1:9). What should we expect the person to receive who has neglected the truth that has been proclaimed to him, and who has chosen to give his attention to lesser things? What will the Lord do when he comes seeking fruit, and finds none? What will be the reaction of the Savior to a blossoming fig tree that has “*nothing but leaves*” (Mk 11:13)?

FROM HIM SHALL BE TAKEN. Jesus is quite clear on this matter: “*even what he has shall be taken away from him.*” NASB “But,” the novice retorts, “is this not a contradiction? On the one hand Jesus says he “hath not,” but now He says what he does have will be taken away?” Such questions expose us to the ignorance of men, for there is a sense in which men can “*have*” and “*have not*” at the same time. Luke clarifies the statement: “*from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth [or “thinks” himself NIV] to have* ” (Luke 8:18b). The idea is that what he “*seemeth to have*” is what he has access to, yet is not taking advantage of it. Such a person has a key to the storehouse, but is not appropriating what is in it. The **source** of the gift will thus be removed. That is, God will remove the seers, and dry up the prophets, according to His word through Isaiah. “*For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed*” (Isa 29:10-11). It is the same as Amos’ “*famine . . . of hearing the words of the Lord*” (Amos 8:11).

This is what happened when the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel that Paul preached to them. Paul answered them, “*seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*” (Acts 13:46). What they seemed to have was taken away from them, leaving them with nothing.

When the truth is exceedingly sparse, it may very well be that God has visited the people and, finding no inventory of the truth within them, has taken from them that which they seemed to have. How appropriate is the word of Solomon: “*Buy the truth, and sell it not*” (Prov 23:23). Do not barter off the truth in a quest to obtain “*other things!*”

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 44

“Mark 4:26 And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” (Mark 4:26-29)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). This was the “glad tidings of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1). Philip preached things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12), and Paul did as well (Acts 20:25; 28:31). This was not the word of a new Law, or a secret procedure that was guaranteed to produce successful living. This news did not concern the kingdoms of men, but the kingdom of God. It was not a message focusing upon human requirements or achievements, but upon the accomplishments of God Himself, who works all things according to the counsel of His own will. In this parable, Jesus briefly expounds an aspect of God’s kingdom. He will clarify how God works to accomplish His purpose, and how that working appears to men. In speaking of the kingdom of God, we ought to expect certainty and productivity to be associated with whatever is done, for God cannot work in any other way.

“ 4:26 And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27 should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.”

This parable is only recorded by Mark. It is a sort of overview of the entirety of God’s kingdom – from its initial revelation among men until its full revelation. In a nutshell, God’s kingdom is likened to the deliberate and expectant sowing of a seed into the ground. The Kingdom grows and advances according to Divine purpose, and finally yields a God-glorifying crop – one of the fundamental purposes for which it was placed among men.

SO IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The ability of the Lord to liken the Kingdom of God to certain things in this world, confirms that the world was made with the working of God’s kingdom in mind. This is precisely why the Scriptures start with the words, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1). This was not a Divine experiment, for God purposed what He would do in the earth “before the world began” (2 Tim 1:9). He determined to have a people for Himself, the work of His own hands, “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4). The centerpiece of redemption, the Lamb of God, was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet 1:20). The working out of His “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11), which is nothing less

than the revelation of His Kingdom, was “*ordained before the world*” (1 Cor 2:7). “*Eternal life,*” which is our ultimate participation in God’s Kingdom, was “*promised before the world began*” (Tit 1:2).

Thus, when God “*created the heavens and the earth,*” that creation reflected the purpose He conceived before the creation. Likenesses of the outworking of His purpose were woven into the fabric of creation, as well as into the various activities of men within that creation. Man was made, and the various employments required by life in this world, were all intended to reflect various aspects of the Kingdom of God. That is precisely why it is likened to a mustard seed (Mk 4:30), leaven (Mk 13:20), sowing seed (Matt 13:24), a king taking account of his servants (Matt 18:23), and a marriage supper (Matt 25:1). It is why it is likened to a treasure in a field (Matt 13:33), a merchant seeking goodly pearls (Matt 13:45), a fishing net cast into the sea (Matt 13:47), and a man who is a householder, or head of a household (Matt 13:52). Properly seen, this world and the legitimate activities within it reflect a higher order and an “*eternal purpose.*” Those parallels are not mere coincidence, but are the result of Divine purpose and order. This is also why “*the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork*” (Psa 19:1). They do not merely testify to the existence of God, but to the fact that He is a purposing, working God.

All of this suggests that God desires His will and purpose to be known, else He would not have structured the world, man, and his activities to reflect that purpose. In God’s Kingdom, all likenesses and parallels are intentional.

HE KNOWETH NOT HOW. From the perspective of men, even while they are **not** working, God is working. Man sleeps and rises, day after day, and it does not appear as though the seed is growing – **but it is!** Men sleep and rise because they know this is what will take place. Beneath the surface, where human eyes cannot see, the mighty God of heaven is working out His purpose in the most precise and effective way. His purpose is advancing, not being dependent upon men. The Kingdom of God moves on though man “*himself does not know how.*” NKJV

The purpose of God, and the Kingdom through which it is being carried out, is not theoretical. Just as surely as seeds grow, so the Kingdom of God advances, fulfilling its design. It grows even when men are not aware of it. Nor, indeed, when they **are** aware of it can they explain it. It is this precise point that the Psalmist accents when he writes, “*Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known*” (Psa 77:19). Paul also refers to this nature of Divine working: “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!*” (Rom 11:33). God is doing “*according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,*” although that working, until it is revealed by God, is hidden from men (Dan 4:35). Those who attempt to trace the working of the Lord by human wisdom are like fools who set about to chart the path of a ship in the water the day after it has passed their way.

The bane of human systemization. Right here we ought to note the bane, or scourge, of man’s propensity to systematize the working of the Lord. By this, I mean that they develop patterns and methodologies of their own that are used to explain what God has done. When you consider the poverty of human wisdom, this will be seen as a very dangerous practice. Yet, it is the foundation of all denominationalism and sectarianism.

“ 28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”

Here Jesus will speak of the effectiveness of Divine working – the “*Kingdom of God.*” As with seed sown in the earth, the advancement of the Kingdom is not by happenstance. It moves

forward in an orderly manner, and according to Divine objective.

OF HERSELF. Here, “*fruit*” is equivalent to a crop, or harvest. That harvest is in consistent and progressive stages. Another version reads, “*The soil produces crops by itself.*” NASB The point here is that the Kingdom advances **without** the power of man. Man, being himself created, cannot “*cause*” anything of an eternal nature – and this is an eternal kingdom (Matt 6:13). Ponder the vast and magnificent forests and fields of the world that have neither been planted nor tilled by men, to say nothing of the extensive plant life on the bottom of the ocean. The earth brought it forth without man – “*of herself.*”

So it is with the Kingdom of God. The things resident within it – like righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17) were produced by the Kingdom itself. This is also true of all kingdom “*fruit*” – appropriately called “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal 5:22-23). We are pointedly told that “*the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*” (1 Cor 4:20). In this case, “*word*” refers to what comes from man, while “*power*” refers to what comes from God. It is another way of saying the Kingdom of God produces fruit by itself.

FIRST THE BLADE. Another version reads, “*first, the stalk.*” NIV The “*blade*” is the first appearance of plant life above the ground, when life breaks through the crusty soil, though it is most tender at the first. The very appearance of a tender shoot above hard ground is evidence of a working with which men have nothing whatsoever to do. This first life is fragile from one point of view, yet robust from another. From the human point of view, it does not appear as though anything can come from it. From the Divine viewpoint, it is the beginning of a most remarkable project – one that **will** be brought to completion.

From the overall view, this “*blade*” can be seen as the period of time from Adam to Moses – a time when the world was introduced to Divine workings. At that time the purpose itself was very vague, and the intended result of this initial work unknown. Just as surely as a tender green sprout bears no resemblance to a heart stalk of grain, so the Kingdom of God was not apparent during the 2,500 years spanning from Adam to Moses.

From the personal standpoint, the “*blade*” is like the “*newborn babe,*” who first is translated “*into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son*” (1 Pet 2:2; Col 1:13). From the standpoint of the church, it is like the bursting forth of collective life in the book of Acts – a time of spiritual tenderness and seeming weakness.

THEN THE EAR. Other versions read, “*the head.*” NKJV This is the formation of the head on a stalk of grain. It is separate from the stalk, yet has no grain in it. As the stalk moves upward, it begins to mature, so that the purpose for which the seed was sown may be fulfilled. This is the time when a natural capacity to contain fruit is developed.

From the overall view, “*the ear,*” or “*head,*” was fulfilled during the time of the First Covenant – from Moses to Christ. During this period, an environment was Divinely produced by God in Israel. They were the “*head*” in which the Lord’s Christ would be revealed (Rom 9:5). The rich promises that announced the coming Savior and the great salvation He would accomplish were given to this people (Rom 9:4). Those promises were like containers in which precious fruit would be found.

From the personal standpoint, “*the ear*” speaks of the development of spiritual capacities – i.e. faith, the love of God, and hope. It is the development of the “*new creation,*” which is to be fully conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18).

THE FULL CORN IN THE EAR. Other versions read, “*full grain in the head,*” NKJV

“*mature grain in the head,*” NASB and “*full kernel in the head.*” NIV This is what is harvested, fulfilling the purpose for which the seed was sown.

From the overall view, this is the church presented to Christ “*not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*” (Eph 5:27). This is the people of God becoming a suitable “*habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Eph 2:22). It is the church being an appropriate means through which God’s manifold wisdom is made known to angelic hosts (Eph 3:10).

From the personal standpoint, this is the believer “*conformed*” to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). It depicts the time when the reason for being joined to the Lord begins to take place – “*that we should bring forth fruit to God*” (Rom 7:4). It is the time when believers are brought to “*walk in the light as He is in the light*” (1 John 1:7).

“**29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.**”

THE FRUIT IS BROUGHT FORTH. The ultimate purpose for the seed being sown is the time when “*the harvest is come.*” The field is not sown only so passers-by can pluck a few grains here and there when they are hungry – like Jesus’ disciples once did (Matt 12:1). The sower does not sow his seed with the expectation of nibbling on the produce from day to day – even though some of that might be done. Rather, the purpose is a bountiful harvest, when a plentitude of fruit is reaped at one time and gathered into the barn to serve his purposes.

So it is with the Kingdom of God. Its ultimate purpose is not to serve an occasional demonstration of the presence and blessing of the Lord before men. While we are to let our “*light shine before men,*” that is not the ultimate purpose for which we have been re-created in Christ Jesus. Collectively, the people of God are “*the bride of Christ,*” and they are being cultured in order to be presented to Him (Eph 5:27). While they conduct themselves honorably before men, and for the glory of God, what they are really doing is making themselves “*ready*” for their grand presentation to Christ (Rev 19:7).

From the personal point of view, the believer is preparing to be “*present with the Lord*” (2 Cor 5:8), and to be among those who are “*gathered*” to Him (2 Thess 2:1). The “*fruit is brought forth*” when we “*grow up into Him in all things*” (Eph 4:15). It is realized when we come to the point where we can be presented “*perfect in Christ*” (Col 1:28) – spiritually mature. Fruit is “*brought forth*” when God is “*working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ*” (Heb 13:21).

THE SICKLE AND THE HARVEST. The earth itself is going to be reaped. It is a great field in which the children of God have been sown, cultured, and matured. This harvest is portrayed in the Revelation, and it is marvelous to consider. “*And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped*” (Rev 14:15-16). Elsewhere this reaping is described in other words. “*I will come again, and receive you unto Myself*” (John 14:3). The actual reapers of the harvest will be the angels, sent forth by the Son of God Himself. They are like the “*sickle.*” As it is written, “*the reapers are the angels*” (Matt 13:39) . . . *And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*” (Mat 24:31). Jesus also reminded us, “*the harvest is the end of the world*” (Matt 13:39).

Here is the reason for the creation of the world in general, and man in particular – “*the harvest.*” This is why God called Abraham and developed and cultured a nation through him. Here

is why He sent His Son into the world, commissioning Him to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17-18). This is the purpose for which Jesus, once He had been exalted, sent forth the Holy Spirit to inhabit and direct His people. This is the ultimate reason for all spiritual gifts, and the church itself. It is the reason for the remission of sins, the “*new man*,” faith, and the “*hope of glory*.” It is the harvest! **The harvest!** If this was not the case, the heavens and the earth would not be appointed to “*pass away*” (Matt 24:35). They will be terminated because God has appointed a “*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*” (2 Pet 3:13).

In a grand view of the Kingdom, God revealed to Daniel His ultimate intentions for the earth. In the days of worldly monarchs – when earthly glory and power had reached its apex – He would “*set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed*.” That kingdom would have no successors – i.e. it would not be “*left to other people*.” Instead, it would “*break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever*” (Dan 2:44). After 4,000 years of preparation, the announcement of the setting up of that kingdom was delivered by John the Baptist (John 3:2). Jesus also announced the revelation of that kingdom was close at hand (Matt 4:17; Lk 21:31). That is, the fuller revelation of it was about to take place – a time when the corn would be formed in the ear. Now, believers are put into that kingdom (Col 1:13). Yet, the fulness of it will not be realized until “*the harvest*,” when we will “*inherit the kingdom*” prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34).

At this present time, everything is moving toward the harvest in an orderly manner. The grain is being formed in the ear, and it is being formed in anticipation of the appointed harvest. The only issue is whether or not that work is being done in us.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 45

“ Mark 4:30 And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

(Mark 4:30-32; Matthew 13:31-32; Luke 13:18-19)

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus spoke, there was a certain priority reflected in what He said. You will never read of Jesus getting caught up in the affairs of the day – political, national, or domestic issues. Whatever may be said of such involvements, the Son of God did not give Himself to them. He never extended Himself to comment on the despotism of Pilate and Herod, pawns of the Roman Empire. He never championed a cause that called for the liberation of the Jews from Roman tyranny. Nor, indeed, did He become affiliated with the leading teachers of the day. His public life was of an absolutely unique nature. People did not class Him with anyone else, unless it be the holy prophets of God (Matt 16:14). He lived out what He taught – a state of being in the world, but *“not of the world”* (John 15:19; 17:14,16). He was not a recluse, and yet was separate from the world. This was apparent in His speech, His ways, His choices, and the company that He kept. In this text He unfolds the domain of which He Himself is the primary citizen: *“the kingdom of God.”* The very fact that He speaks in this manner confirms these are things we are to know.

“ 4:30 And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?”

We are learning something here about the thrust of Jesus’ teaching. He did not give lengthy dissertations about the structure of a nation, a region, a city, or a home. You will search in vain for any extended dialog from Jesus on such subjects. As men view things, He did not speak of the ideal form of government, the ideal home, or the ideal career or occupation. Such things may very well exist, but they do not represent the thrust of Jesus’ teaching, and are not of any eternal consequence, as important as they may be. All such things must be considered within the framework of something larger than themselves. That *“something”* is the kingdom of God – a kingdom through which God is working out His eternal purpose, calling and justifying men, and conforming them to the image of His Son.

PREACHING THE KINGDOM. The Scriptures inform us that since the ministry of John the Baptist, *“the kingdom of God is preached”* (Lk 16:16). Jesus Himself *“went about all*

Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom” (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Mk 1:14; Lk 8:1). Philip did the same (Acts 8:12), and Paul as well (Acts 20:25; 28:31). How does a person preach, or proclaim, “*the kingdom of God?*” In this text we are exposed to that precise activity. **Jesus is preaching the kingdom.** In particular, He will declare some of its traits.

THE PRIORITY OF THE KINGDOM. The Kingdom of God is not a novel subject. It is not merely an area of academic study. Jesus did not deal with intellectual trinkets that had no real value, and were of little or no consequence. This is a kingdom that is superior – absolutely superior. Daniel said of it, “*it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever*” (Dan 2:44). **This, then, is the ultimate kingdom.** It has the ultimate Ruler, and serves the ultimate purpose. This is precisely why Jesus said, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Matt 6:33). Those who remain fundamentally ignorant of this kingdom are at the greatest disadvantage, for Christ and His salvation have to do with this kingdom. Those who are acquainted with it and make it their primary objective, as Jesus said, have the greatest advantage. They, and they alone, are being prepared to inherit this kingdom.

It should be of great concern to every believer that so little is being said these days about “*the kingdom of God.*” Scripture informs us that righteousness, peace, and joy, are related to this kingdom (Rom 14:17). It is a kingdom of unparalleled power (1 Cor 4:20). This is the inheritance of the saints (1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Cor 15:50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5). Here is where we have been “*translated*” (Col 1:13). It is the kingdom for which we are working (Col 4:11), and for which we are being “*counted worthy*” (2 Thess 1:5). Those in Christ Jesus are referred to as “*heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him*” (James 2:5).

WHAT IS A KINGDOM? What is a kingdom? From an abstract point of view, or from the standpoint of its purpose, it is a royal rule – a government that is carrying out the purpose of the one who rules it. From a concrete point of view, or its revelation and perceived working, it is the territory, realm, or domain, in which this will is being carried out. The “*kingdom of God*” speaks of a Sovereign God, working out His “*eternal purpose*” within a certain place. The execution of this purpose involves the thorough subjugation of all who oppose this kingdom, and the exaltation of all who are willingly involved in its working. Its aim is to provide an extended commentary of God Himself – to reveal facets of His Being and character that could not be known apart from this working Kingdom.

WHEREUNTO SHALL WE LIKEN THE KINGDOM? Other versions read, “*How shall we picture,*” NASB and “*with what can we compare.*” Luke says, “*whereunto shall I resemble it?*” Matthew reads, “*The kingdom of heaven is like*” (Matt 13:31a). These very words confirm the priority of God’s kingdom. **It is the superior that is compared with the inferior,** and not vice versa. Further, the comparison is not a thorough one, for the inferior cannot completely depict the superior. Jesus is, then, going to make known one of the characteristics of God’s kingdom. He is going to show us one of the manners in which this kingdom works. This does not speak of potential or possibilities, but of the inscrutable workings of the Lord. These are workings that are specifically in the earth, and that is why an earthly, rather than a heavenly, parallel is given. **The earth was created in order to show forth this particular attribute, as well as others.** This is an example of the “*whole earth*” being “*full of His glory*” (Isa 6:3), and His “*eternal power and Godhead*” being seen in the “*things that are made*” (Rom 1:20). In accordance with the Divine nature, something created will reveal traits of what is not created – in this case, “*the kingdom of God.*”

“**31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the**

seeds that be in the earth.”

GOD WORKING IN THE EARTH. It is important to remember that we are speaking of God’s workings in the earth. That is where He has “*set up a kingdom,*” according to the word of Daniel (Dan 2:44). That is, He is working out an infinite purpose in the earth – a cursed world, dominated by a fierce foe, and occupied by fallen creatures. It does not appear to be a likely place for the God of heaven to work, but He is doing so.

LIKE A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED. The plant of reference is quite different from the mustard plant in our part of the world. The great growth described is largely owing to the climate of that region, which is conducive to greater growth. The “*mustard seed*” is said to have been “*remarkably small,*” particularly in comparison to the plant that grew from them. BARNES

The point of this comparison is NOT the beginning of God’s work, but the power and consummation of it. It is the predetermined potential of the Lord’s initial workings among men – that they are never in vain, and always have an intended purpose. This is a high view of the Kingdom, one that sets forth the truth that what He has promised, He is “*able also to perform*” (Rom 4:21). From this perspective it is written, “*For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth*” (Rom 9:28). Even as the purpose of a seed is not found in itself, but in the fruit that comes from it, so the working of the Lord is not an end of itself, but the means to an appointed end.

LESS THAN ALL SEEDS THAT BE IN THE EARTH. The mustard seed is small and unimpressive to the eyes of men. So it is with “*the kingdom of God*” – His purposeful workings among men. The great works of God have an unimpressive beginning in the eyes of men. It may be Adam begetting Seth in his own likeness 130 years after the fall (Gen 5:3). It may be the calling of Noah and the saving of His family – eight souls altogether – from among millions, perhaps billions of people (1 Pet 3:20). Perhaps it is the calling of a single man, seventy-five years old, in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 12:1-4). God once initiated a great work with a seventeen year-old boy named Joseph, whom He sent into Egypt to remain in relative obscurity for thirteen years (Psa 105:17-20). We might also consider an infant only a few months old, carefully put into a basket and placed among the reeds of the Nile River (Ex 2:3). Who can forget the Word becoming flesh, entering into the world as a helpless infant, and immediately thrust into jeopardy (Lk 2:7; Matt 2:16). And, what of the small band of men Jesus called to His side, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach (Mk 3:14). All of these workings were like a tiny mustard seed. They did not draw the attention of men, for they appeared inconsequential.

This is the manner of the kingdom. It is the way God works to fulfill His eternal purpose in the earth. With the exclusion of the creation itself, when God works among men, the larger its beginning, the more temporal it seems to be. If a mighty deliverance occurs in Egypt, with the children of Israel coming out with a high hand in a single night, be sure that it will be overshadowed by an even greater deliverance that did not appear significant at the first (Col 1:13). If men drink water from a rock, from which it gushes like a river, that beginning will be overshadowed by water of another order that will spring up from within individuals (John 4:14). The first day manna fell upon the camp of several million Israelites it was impressive to the eye. But what was that to compare to the day the eternal manna fell upon a small band of 120 people on the day of Pentecost?

Beginnings that have eternal consequences are small – at least that is how they appear to men. People who are looking for big things may not be in a quest of the right thing. Today professed Christians like to begin a church with a lot of people, thinking that big beginnings are a guarantee of protracted success. But, how does that fit into the way in which God works? What kind of glory does God receive from human enterprises that have large beginnings?

This is the way God works *“in the earth,”* and we do well to take due note of it. He begins salvation with a death, which is like a totally unimpressive mustard seed. He confirms the effectiveness of that death with a resurrection that no one witnesses, and commences the New Covenant era by an unseen exalted Christ pouring forth His Spirit on a relative handful of people in a house, not a theater or marketplace. That is how God works! His primary glory is not found in beginnings, but in what follows them! That is why we are not to *“despise small things,”* or small beginnings (Zech 4:10). That is the way in which God starts, but that is not the way things will conclude. Therefore, beginnings are not the main thing.

“ 31 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

A mustard seed maintains its smallness **until** it is *“sown.”* At that point a process of growth is initiated. The Kingdom of God is like that – in fact, the process of growth that is found in nature is **intended** to show this aspect of Divine glory.

BUT WHEN IT IS SOWN. What God begins grows, advances, and comes to maturity. Once God sets His hand to do something, it is as good as done. Thus the Lord says, *“I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it”* (Isa 46:11). When God puts his hand on the earth to do a work, that work will grow! The day Noah was called, it was guaranteed that humanity would be preserved through a remnant. If Joseph is planted in Egypt, provisions will be realized in famine. If Moses is born, Israel’s deliverance is on the way. When the Spirit was poured forth on the day of Pentecost, a seed fell into the earth that would yield *“a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,”* who would eventually stand *“before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands”* (Rev 7:9).

It is no wonder that Paul wrote, *“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:6). He knew that once the seed of the kingdom is planted, it **will** grow. There is nothing that could, or can, stop the kingdom of God from eventually crushing all other kingdoms and filling the whole earth. Nothing or no one could stop the Messiah from being born, growing up in the midst of a wicked city, laying down His life, taking it up again, and reigning in heaven! Nothing can stop Him from coming again, gathering His people together, and giving them the kingdom of His Father. **Once the work got under way, its conclusion was guaranteed.** It is cast in stone, cannot be reversed, and will soon be heard throughout all domains, *“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever”* (Rev 11:15).

GREATER THAN ALL HERBS. As a mustard seed grows into a tree that is *“greater than all herbs,”* so the *“Kingdom of God”* will outstrip all other kingdoms. It will obtain more glory, be more dominating, and have no conclusion. When every other kingdom has fallen, and all foes have been publically subdued, it will remain in tact, with not so much as a single bruise upon it. Thus it is written, *“Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power”* (1 Cor 15:24).

A PLACE OF LODGING. Presently, the *“kingdom of God”* is a place of refuge and

safety. Upon being delivered from this world, it is where we are initially placed (Col 1:13). It is where the fruits of righteousness, peace, and joy are found (Rom 14:17). **We have been saved to participate in something that will have no end.** Every other form of power and influence is only incidental, and there is an appointed time when that will be very apparent.

SOME CONCLUSIONS. Jesus has affirmed the Kingdom of God may begin small, but it does not stay that way. It grows and advances until it faces no more competitors. That is its nature. Now, there are some implications here that ought to be noted. A person who professes to be of Christ, yet is not growing, is a living contradiction of this truth. Where there is no advancement in being conformed to the image of Christ, there is serious question about there being any living association with God at all.

A religious institution that has nothing more than a beginning is not connected with Jesus. That is not the way He works. It is not the manner of the Kingdom. Where there is no advancement from glory to glory, something has happened that took the individual out of the Kingdom process. Perhaps the Word was sown on a wayside heart, or a heart with surface interests that was really hard beneath that surface. Perhaps there were competing interests, like the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other things, that choked out the Word. But you may be sure of this, it did not grow.

Right here we see a slight distinction between the individual and the Kingdom itself. Nothing can stop the Kingdom from growing and coming to its intended end. It is different with the individual, Participation on the personal level depends wholly upon the grace of God being experienced through faith, while the Kingdom itself is the product of Divine will alone. The awareness of the latter is what fuels the faith of God's elect, assuring them that their labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). And why is it not in vain? It is because of the very nature of the Kingdom to advance to its intended glorious end.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 46

“ Mark 4:33 And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. 34 But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.”

(Mark 4:33-34; Matthew 13:34-35)

INTRODUCTION

There are two things that surface in the Gospels: **how** Jesus addressed the general public, and **how** He spoke with His disciples. Our Lord had one message – *“the word of the kingdom”* (Matt 5:13:19) – but it was presented in two different ways. The primary objective was for Jesus to do His Father’s will, finishing the work He was given to do. As He Himself said, *“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work”* (John 4:34). From another point of view, it was to call the sheep to Himself. As it is written, *“the sheep hear His voice: and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out”* (John 10:3). And again, *“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”* (John 10:16). Throughout the Gospels we read of these two activities – calling and separating the sheep, and instructing them concerning the will of His Father. He may go to a certain country, and call out one lone soul – like the Gadarene demoniac (Matt 8:28). He may stroll by a sea side, and call forth four disciples, summoning them to follow Him (Matt 4:18-22). There were times when a very few sheep were among a massive throng of people, and thus most of the group left Him (John 6:66). Fulfilling the word of Jeremiah, He would bring *“one from a city, and two from a family (clan)”* (Jer 3:14). There were other times when the teeming multitudes were not His focus. Instead, He opened up the truth to His disciples – the real *“sheep,”* who knew His voice, and refused to follow a stranger (John 10:4-5). In our text, we are told of these two activities – culling out the sheep, and instructing them in the ways of the Lord. This is a distinction that has been greatly blurred by the modern church, which is largely noted for neglecting those whom Jesus preferred. It is a most serious circumstance.

“ 4: 33 And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.”

MANY SUCH PARABLES. There is a precious perspective of Jesus’ ministry that is seen in these words. His subject was the Kingdom of God, and the vehicle through which it was communicated was the Word of God. He was not explaining matters pertaining to the government, and thus did not liken to Roman Empire to this or that. His theme was not the Jewish nation, and therefore He did not liken it to better known things. Nor, indeed, was His topic the family, moving Him to liken a household to certain familiar functions. His solitary focus was the Kingdom of God and things pertaining to it. Thus He would say, *“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto”* (Matt 14:24), or *“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto”* (Matt 18:23), or *“Then shall the kingdom of*

heaven be likened unto” (Matt 25:1), or “*The kingdom of heaven is like*” (Matt 13:31,33,44,45,47; 20:1; 22:2). He might say, “*Unto what is the kingdom of God like?*” (Lk 13:18), or “*Whereunto shall I like the kingdom of God?*” (Lk 13:20). The Gospels contain the record of Jesus speaking thirty-five parables. All of them had to do with Kingdom life, not earthly life.

It seems to me that our day is marked by the glaring absence of a proper message. Too much time is being spent trying to paint the picture of an ideal family, an ideal personal life or career, or even an ideal local congregation. But are these really suitable subjects for someone who comes in the name of the Lord? Should any person coming from God be noted only for being an expert in areas of life in this world? If it is conjectured that this is a good idea, where shall we go to confirm its validity? Can we turn to Jesus, the ultimate Spokesman for God (Heb 1:2). Is He noted for any dissertations on such themes? If we turn to the “*apostles’ doctrine,*” will we be able to find a precedent for such bodies of teaching? Did Jesus choose Apostles, making them experts in various aspects of life in this world? Has He ordained certain gifts that are noted for expertise in fields of domestic life?

The point is that the will of the Lord cannot be accomplished by those who do not have a grasp of the message, or “*word,*” of the Kingdom.

THE WORD CONTAINED IN PARABLES. Jesus spoke “*the word*” to the people, but in this case it was not contained in words of Scripture, but in parables. In order to do something like this, Jesus had to have a thorough grasp of God’s Word – of its purpose as well as its content. This expression – “*with many such parables He spake the word unto them*” – means that **He set the truth before them in such a way as to provoke inquiry** . He did not actually expound, or elaborate, upon the truth, but wrapped it in the swaddling clothes of likenesses, parables, and similitudes.

By presenting the truth in this way, the Lord awakened sensitive hearts to their need to know more, for a parable does not contain sufficient truth to save a person. It also served to convict men of their own ignorance, and of the requirement for a heavenly teacher. No one who heard a parable could say they were not exposed to the truth of God. However, such teaching was not designed to acquaint people more thoroughly with the truth, but to show them they needed to be more acquainted with it. If, for example, men on earth know that a mustard seed must grow significantly in order to serve any real purpose, they ought to conclude that much more must be known of God’s Word if it is to be of benefit to them. Thus, parables were nothing more than a veiled introduction to truth. However, the limited presentation was sufficient to awaken a genuine appetite for the truth it introduced.

AS THEY WERE ABLE TO HEAR IT. Notice, the ability here has to do with hearing, **not** understanding, and **not** doing. The Lord Jesus knew the measures of truth that were sufficient to lure the sheep away from the hireling. He knew what could persuade the sensitive soul that there was more to be known – yea, more that **had** to be known. He would not drive the sheep away, even though at the present, they may be mingled with the goats. He will speak plain enough so they can hear His voice and follow Him.

I understand the words “*as they were able to hear it*” to mean that Christ spoke to awaken the appetites of the people. When that was no longer being done, He would cease to speak to them. There was a reason for this. **The parables themselves were not the point, but the truth that was hidden within them.** Therefore, as long as they would listen, the door of inquiry remained open to them. When, however, their attention could no longer be placed upon Christ’s words, that door was shut, and there was no point to speaking any further. Jesus had perfect understanding of the circumstances for He “*needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man*”

(John 2:25).

“ **34a But without a parable spake He not unto them . . .**” One version reads, “*He did not say anything to them without using a parable .*” NIV Matthew also draws attention to this manner of Christ’s teaching (Matt 13:34).

THE BROADER PICTURE. For the most part, the multitudes were comprised of disinterested people. The Jewish people as a whole had drifted from God, and although there was a remnant among them, it was proportionately a small one. On one occasion Jesus spoke of His parabolic teaching within the context of this circumstance. “*Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing **see not** ; and hearing they **hear not** , neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall **not understand**; and seeing ye shall see, and shall **not perceive** : for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*” (Mat 13:13-15). **In this sense, their lack of response to His parables confirmed the hardness of their hearts.**

THE FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE. In Matthew’s account of this occasion, Jesus declared that speaking in parables fulfilled what the prophets had said of the Messiah. “*That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world*” (Matt 13:35). This is quotation from the Psalms: “*I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us*” (Psa 78:2-3). The point Asaph is making in this psalm is this: “I will not speak of trivial matters that are of no consequence. The song-writer went on to speak of the glories of the coming New Covenant, mentioning a “*generation to come,*” placing hope in God (vs 6-7). He went on to affirm the unbelieving generation of Israel, and how they had spurned Divine overtures, provoking the Lord to anger, and finally being expelled from the land (vs 10-64). However, in His mercy God chose Judah in general, and David in particular, through whom He would bring in the Messiah (vs 68-72). **Thus Asaph said he spoke of weighty matters – matters of eternal consequence.** Israel, however, was so obtuse because of their sin, that he could only lisp to them of these things, speaking in parables.

So it was with Jesus. He had weighty things to say – things that had to do with the eternal destiny of men. However, He was faced with a dull and hard-hearted people who, for the most part, had no real interest in what He was saying. Yet, for the sake of the sheep, He spoke in parables to them, likening eternal verities to the rudimentary things of this world. In so doing, He was calling the sheep from among the multitudes. There was a tone in His voice that the sheep would recognize, and they would come to Him for further exposure to the truth.

SEPARATION IS ESSENTIAL. We learn from this that separation from the multitudes is essential, if a person wants to be taught by Christ! Jesus will not open the great truths of God to those who have no heart for them. He will speak to such in parables. **He will show them enough truth to condemn them, but not enough to save them!** His words will draw out the corruption that is within them, rather than wooing them to Himself. Those who insist on walking with the multitudes do so at the expense of the truth, and consequently at the expense of their soul. This is precisely why Jesus said, “*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple*” (Luke 14:33). It is why the clarion call of the Lord is sounded out to the church itself, “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*” (2 Cor 6:17).

THE MEANS OF SEPARATION. Here we see a vivid portrayal of **the means** Jesus employs to gather His sheep to Himself. **It is the love of the truth** – even when it is veiled and needs to be expounded. The disciples heard Jesus’ parables and were intrigued by them, longing to have them expounded in their ears (Matt 13:36; Mk 4:10; 7:17; Luke 8:9). Having “*received the love of the truth,*” they were not content with a parable, because a parable does not illuminate the truth.

This circumstance sheds light on Paul’s statement concerning “*the love of the truth.*” When one comes in the power of Satan “*with all power and signs and lying wonders,*” there are those who swallow up what he says, “*because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*” (2 Thess 2:10). Thus the parables contained enough truth to stimulate this love of the truth, but not enough to satisfy it!

“**34b** “ . . . **and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.**” Other versions read, “*but He was explaining everything privately to His disciples,*” NASB and “*But when He was alone with His own disciples, He explained everything.*” NIV

Here is another glimpse of the nature of the Lord Jesus. He did **see** the multitudes (Matt 14:14; Mk 9:14). He did have **compassion** on the multitudes (Matt 9:36). He did **teach** the multitudes (Mk 2:13). However, this text informs us that He taught the multitude in parables, while **explaining** everything when He was **alone** with His disciples. Which discourse would you prefer to hear? Which type of teaching brought the real benefit to the people? Those who make much of Jesus being among the general populous omit telling us that they were not the ones to whom He “*expounded all things.*” Take, for example, what is commonly known as “*the sermon on the mount*” (Matt 5-7). That rather lengthy discourse was delivered to His disciples: “*And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him*” (Matt 5:1). His extensive teaching on humility, Himself being the Vine, and the coming of the Holy Spirit was delivered to the twelve (John 13-16).

Jesus told His disciples that they had been designated to know these things. “*Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God*” (Mark 4:11). This was according to the will of the Father, and Jesus thanked Him for it: “*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*” (Mat 11:25). Even among the disciples themselves there were some who especially wanted to know the meaning of Christ’s words. After Jesus had announced the coming destruction of the Temple, “*Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately , ‘Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?’*” (Mark 13:3-4). What is commonly known as the “*Olivet discourse*” concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the coming again of Jesus, and the end of the world, was delivered to four disciples! That was the manner of Jesus – to expound “*all things to His disciples .*”

And who is Jesus teaching today? To whom is He opening the things of God? Paul writes, “*But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him , as the truth is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:20-21). John writes, “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding , that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life*” (1 John 5:20). **It is still Christ’s manner to expound all things when He is with His disciples.**

When brethren gather together in the name of the Lord, Jesus said “*For where two or three are gathered together in Hy name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt 18:20). And what is He doing in their midst? The Scriptures depict Him as saying to the Father, “*I will declare Thy name*

unto my brethren” (Heb 2:12). Through the Spirit, He is doing from heaven what He did upon earth: **expounding all things to His disciples.**

This text assists us in understanding the purpose for the assembly of the saints. For some, it is a time to reach the multitudes. Therefore preaching and teaching is tailored for the unlearned and ignorant. But this is not at all proper. It contradicts the manner of Jesus and the purpose for the assembly. The assembly is, in fact, when we are **alone** with Jesus. It is not the time that we sit among the multitudes. It is the time when the Lord Jesus expounds all things to His people, opening the precious *“treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* to them (Col 2:3). The loss of this perspective has cost the church dearly. Because of the thrust of its leaders, we now have a professed church that is weak in understanding, and is therefore lacking in the *“full assurance of understanding”* (Col 2:2).

The impact of this upon every facet of religion is staggering to consider. If one can imagine Jesus never opening the truth to His disciples, and only speaking in parables to the multitudes, we will gain a faint picture of the state of the modern church.

Reading through the Gospels, you will note that *“the twelve”* were chosen *“that they should be **with Him**”* (Mk 3:14). They took this privilege seriously, and remained with Him when He went out and when He came in (Acts 1:21). They sought understanding from Him, and were not content to remain in the dark like the multitudes (Matt 24:3; Mk 13:4; Lk 8:9). When Jesus asked them if they would leave Him after He had delivered some of His most difficult sayings, Peter answered for them, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). May that spirit be found among us, from the youngest to the oldest. That is the kind of context in which many things will be revealed.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 47

“ Mark 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. 37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38 And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? 39 And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27; Lk 8:22-25)

INTRODUCTION

The earthly ministry of Jesus teaches us much about the various responses of men to His presence. As we will see in this text, the presence of Jesus does not mean everything is going to be ideal, or that there will be no situations that challenge the faith of those who are with Him. We also see in His ministry how He responds to the conditions and expressions of His disciples. He is gentle, but He is also firm. He will not gloss deficiencies, or pretend as though they did not exist. Those who are reluctant to come into the light where they are fully exposed will not enjoy being around the Lord Jesus. We are living in a time when the ministry of “light” is greatly subdued. When a person speaks of things as they really are before the Lord, a certain risk of rejection, and even opposition, is taken. This is not the popular way of doing things, and does not blend with contemporary notions of speaking for Christ Jesus. However, the record God has given us of His Son provides a detailed glimpse of the “*mind of Christ*,” as well as His ways and accomplishments. His responses to men are a sort of plumb line that exposes us to the Divine nature. They will assist us in assessing our own condition and progress in the faith. The text before us is a most excellent example of these things.

“ 4: 35 And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships.”

STARTING OUT IN THE EVENING. There is something worthy of note in this passage. Here we will confront an activity that appears to be non-religious – a trip in a boat after the completion of a focused work in the name of the Lord: the expounding of the word of the Lord (Mk 4:34). Yet, because Jesus was in the vessel, this became a spiritual matter. It was an occasion when faith or the lack of faith would be made known. It proved to be an occasion where the help of the Lord was

required. In this case, Jesus was in the vessel, just as surely as He dwells in our hearts by faith. Let it be clear, the presence of the Lord converts every circumstance into a spiritual one – one in which faith or belief is made known, confidence or fear, hope or hopelessness. The great weakness among professing Christians lies in their inability to perceive the association between Christ’s presence and where they are, as well as what they think, say, and do.

While other men were concluding the days activity – “*when the even was come*” – Jesus is preparing for the next day’s activity. He tells His disciples, “*Let us pass over to the other side*” – that is, the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This body of water was 13 miles long, and shaped like a pear with the widest breadth being 7 miles. The trip from Capernaum, in which vicinity Jesus had been ministering, was approximately 5-7 miles, and was probably negotiated by rowing, as at other times (Mk 6:48).

SENDING AWAY THE MULTITUDE. Having completed the work of teaching the multitudes, they were “*sent away.*” Only Mark refers to this event. Much teaching had taken place, both of the multitudes and of Christ’s disciples, to whom He “*expounded all things.*” Now, however, there comes the time of testing. Now we will see how much the multitudes want to be with Jesus. Also, we must see if the disciples have grasped what Jesus has taught them, and whether or not they can relate it to the hard experiences of life. There comes a time when those who hear Jesus must be put into the crucible of life, to see if they have taken hold of the word of the Lord, and are able to work with it.

THEY TOOK HIM AS HE WAS. Even though the day had been filled with activity, no time was taken to prepare for the trip, gather food and water, or refresh themselves. The disciples took Jesus “*just as He was,*” NASB weary from the day’s activities. Mark tells us He had been teaching all day from the ship (Mk 4:1). Of course, a weary Jesus is better than a strong and vigorous man! Mark says the disciples “*took*” Jesus. Matthew says Jesus entered the ship and the disciples “*followed Him*” (Matt 8:23). Luke says He “*went into a ship with His disciples*” (Lk 8:22). There is no contradiction in the texts. Mark emphasizes that the disciples had charge of the boat, preparing it for the trip, and managing the journey. The reference to Him entering the ship does not mean an initial entry into it, but going further into the ship itself, identified as “*the hinder part,*” or stern of the ship (v 38). For the disciples, there was no interruption of their fellowship with Jesus. He had used the boat for speaking to the multitudes on the shore, now he entered further into the ship as the disciples prepared to navigate to the other side of the sea.

OTHER LITTLE SHIPS. Again, Mark is the only writer who makes reference to these “*other little ships.*” Note, it is said that these “*little ships*” were “*with Him .*” That is, they had apparently moved in close to the ship from which Jesus was teaching, desiring to hear His words. Perhaps these were men who were fishing like Peter and Andrew when they were called (Mk 1:16), or mending their nets as James and John were doing when they were called (Mk 1:19). Maybe they were even carrying passengers to or from some other location. Whatever their activity, upon hearing the blessed Lord’s teaching, they had gathered themselves to Him, intent upon hearing His words.

I see in these “*little ships*” a host of people who forsook the normal flow of life to hear a Teacher to whom they were not ordinarily exposed. It is possible that they accompanied Jesus to the other side, as though chosen by God to witness the great miracle that would occur in the land of the Gadarenes. The wording of the text suggests this did, in fact, take place. “*And leaving the throng, they took Him with them, [just] as He was, in the boat [in which He was sitting]. And other boats were with Him.*” AMPLIFIED

The emphasis is placed upon the Lord Jesus, not the people who were with Him, or the crowds who gathered around Him. They were **with Him** – He was **not** with them! This is the

more precise perspective of any gathering in which Jesus is present. While it is true that there is a sense in which He is “*in the midst*” of those who gather in His name, those who are cognizant of that presence know Jesus is the primary attendee. All attention must be turned toward Him, to hear what He is sayings, and go where He is going.

“ 38 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38 And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?”

Is it possible that when we are with Jesus, or He is with us, we will experience no trouble, no hardship, no severe tests? There is a tendency in men to imagine this is true. But it is an utterly false view. When it is embraced, it brings with it great danger, weakness, and spiritual debility, for it leads men to conduct their lives incorrectly. When speaking of the glorified state, when we are at last liberated from everything caused by sin, we are told the redeemed “*Shall go no more out*” (Rev 3 12). It is written they “*shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heart*” (Rev 7:16). We are told “*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*” (Rev 21:4). Until that blessed time, “*the former things*” are actually “*present things.*” We should not imagine that they shall pass away before we are glorified, before the heavens and earth that now are pass away, and before we are “*ever with the Lord.*”

Not only is this true in the normal stance of life in this world, it is also true when Jesus is with us, and we are with Him. His presence in the vessels of our body does not mean everything will be always pleasant, and no severe and fearful threats will come. These are tests in which the level to which we have apprehended Christ’s word will be made known.

THERE AROSE A GREAT STORM. This was not an average storm, but a “*great storm.*” Matthew says it was “*a great tempest in the sea*” (Matt 8:24). Luke says, “*there came down a storm of wind on the lake*” (Lk 8:23). The word “*storm*” means a whirlwind, or squall, which is a sudden and violent wind. A “*whirlwind*” is a rotating windstorm that is violent and destructive. As used here, it was a sort of hurricane, and it appeared to focus on the very boat in which Jesus and His disciples were found. Keep in mind, there were with Jesus “*other little ships.*” The storm, though subject to Jesus, did not go around the ship in which He was found.

WAVES BEAT INTO THE SHIP. The surface of the water was in an upheaval, and the mighty waves were pummeling the vessel, “*breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.*” NASB Matthew says, “*the boat was covered with waves*” (Matt 8:24). Luke says, “*they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy*” (Lk 8:23). It was a dangerous situation, and the disciples were certainly anything but complacent. Trouble does have a way of making men more sober, and more diligent to do the things that can be done. Remember, all of this was happening with Jesus in the boat – present with His disciples.

ASLEEP IN THE HINDER PART. Here we will find that an inactive Christ is really of no comfort. Further, safety is not maintained by a passive Christ, who really is not involved in the affairs of life. There is no form of spiritual automation that guarantees safety while there is no lively sense of the personal involvement of Christ Jesus. During this particular storm, the Lord is “*in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.*” Matthew reminds us He was in the ship, “*but He was asleep*” (Matt 8:24). Luke says “*as they sailed He fell asleep*” (Lk 8:23). Thus, for all practical purposes, the disciples are left to navigate alone, and it appears that, for a while, they did precisely that. However, it soon became very apparent that their own labors were futile in this storm. Although seasoned veterans of the sea, this was a condition in which all of their expertise ran out, like water placed in a

broken cistern.

CAREST THOU NOT? The disciples awakened Jesus and asked, “*Master, carest Thou not that we perish?*” They seemed to sense that although He was asleep, He knew what was going on. Matthew says they awakened Him and said, “*Lord, save us: we perish.*” (Matt 8:25). Luke underscores their frantic cry, “*Master, master, we perish!*” (Lk 8:24). The ship was going under, and they knew it: “*we are perishing,*” NASB “*we are going to drown!*” NIV Notice **how** Matthew and Mark says they referred to Jesus: “*Master, master!*” Matthew says they cried “*Lord.*” Here, “*Master*” means “*Teacher,*” and is so translated in other versions. The point to see is that the disciples saw a connection between what Jesus taught, and the power that He had to work. His teaching differed vastly from that of the scribes and Pharisees, for it led people to the conclusion that He could **DO** what others could not do. **A person who knows what Jesus has said, yet does not come to the conclusion that He has all power to work in the behalf of the individual, has not heard the teaching with a spiritual and discerning ear.**

This text also confirms that if Jesus **cares** about us, He will do something about our situation. Therefore, the disciples interpreted that because He had not done something, He really did not care. They were wrong, and so are those who come to the same conclusion in their own troubles. This same call daily rises from those who are, at the very best, weak in the faith. They see their troubles, perceive Jesus is not apparently active, and thus conclude He does not care. We will now see how the Lord Jesus responds to such a conclusion.

“ 39 And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

HE SPEAKS TO THE WIND AND THE SEA. When He spoke among men, they observed “*His word was with power*” (Lk 4:32). Here is a classic example of that unfettered power. He rebukes the wind, and commands the sea to be still. Matthew says He “*rebuked the winds,*” as though several tempests had converged in that area (Matt 8:26). Luke says He “*rebuked the wind and the raging of the water*” (Lk 8:24). He “*rebuked*” the winds, because they had caused the tumult in the water. He simply quieted the waters by telling them to “*be still.*”

Behold the unshakable confidence of the Lord! He does not try to cause the winds to cease, and the waves to be still. He does not reason with them, or ask them why they have focused upon the vessel in which He was found. **His word was enough to alter the circumstance.** Jesus does not need to fight, engage in combat, and map out military strategies.

THE RESULT OF HIS WORD. The word of Jesus was instant in its effects: “*the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*” Luke says, “*and they ceased and there was a great calm*” (Lk 8:24). The waters did not return to their normal state, with gentle waves lapping on the sides of the boat. The calm was as unique as the storm. In the Divine economy, a “*great calm*” follows “*a great storm of wind.*” There is such a thing as extraordinary comfort, just as surely as there is unusual trouble. You see this lived out in Job who received “*twice*” as many possessions after he was tried than he had before the trial (Job 42:10).

When the saints of God experience trouble and deliverance, they should not expect things to return to “normal” after the trouble. They should rather anticipate that some progress will be made after their deliverance, so that a “*great calm*” is experienced within.

WHY ARE YOU SO FEARFUL? The resolution of the difficulty is not the end of the matter!

The **condition of the people** is more important than the hard circumstances in which they find themselves. Matthew says that Jesus said “*Why are ye so fearful,*” and **then** spoke to the winds and the sea. And how is a person to answer when the Lord asks, “*Why are you so afraid?*” NIV Can anyone really come up with an acceptable response to that query? It is as though Jesus asked them, “Why did you think you were going to drown? Why were you moved to think in such a manner when You knew I was here? You had been exposed to my power. Why could you not associate what you have seen Me to do for others with your own selves?”

WHY DO YOU HAVE NO FAITH? Matthew says Jesus said, “*O ye of little faith!*” (Matt 8:26). Mark reads, “*How is it that ye have no faith*” (Mk 4:40)? Luke reads, “*Where is your faith!*” (Lk 8:25). While men tend to gloss the circumstance, Jesus always declares the real situation! Men are fond of claiming they believe, while acting in contradiction of that claim. Jesus will not allow such empty profession! Wherever confidence is lacking, fear moves in to dominate. The most favorably way of viewing such a state is “*little faith.*” **It is good to consider that nothing good is said of “little faith.”** There are five references to this phenomenon. Jesus said those who worried about their worldly needs had “*little faith,*” thus living in contradiction of the revealed care of God Almighty (Matt 6:30; Lk 12:28). When Peter, after taking his eyes off of Jesus, began to sink in the stormy wave, Jesus “*stretched forth His hand, and caught him,*” saying, “*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*” (Matt 14 :31). *When Jesus told the disciples to beware “ of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees,”* they reasoned that it was because they had not brought any bread with them. Jesus responded by saying, “*O ye of little faith . . . Do ye not yet understand . . . How is it that ye do not understand?*” (Matt 16:8-11).

From the practical point of view, “*little faith*” is totally powerless. It could not cause those possessing it to quit worrying about their needs. It could not keep Peter on top of the water. It could not cause the disciples to take hold of, and understand, the words of Jesus. For that reason, Mark has Jesus saying the disciples had “ ***no faith.***” Luke represents the case as though they once had some faith, but in the time of stress, it took wings and flew away: “*Where is your faith.*” No person can afford to be content when they respond in fear and unbelief during hard trials!

THE DISCIPLES RESPONSE. The response of the disciples is most intriguing. They marveled at what Jesus could do, but did not seem to have any concern about their lack of faith. “*What manner of man is this?*” Luke adds, “*And they being afraid wondered*” (Lk 8:25). Jesus, however, had not asked them to rehearse what He did. He had inquired why they were fearful, and why they did not have faith. Yet, it is as though they did not even hear His words.

One of the marks of “*little faith*” or “*no faith*” is that it cannot distinguish the cause for fear and unbelief. It also moves them to “*marvel*” at what the Lord does rather than give insightful thanks. **It is of interest that following Christ’s exaltation, no believer is ever said to have “marveled” at the working of the Lord.** Such marveling is an indication of unbelief.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 48

“ Mark 5:1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.”

(Mark 5:1-5; Matthew 8:28; Lk 8:26-27,29)

INTRODUCTION

Some of Christ’s miracles were especially notable – the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the feeding of the five thousand, and walking on the water. It is not that any of these miracles required more power than others, for whether it is healing a man who was born blind (John 9:1-7), or feeding four thousand men beside women and children (Matt 15:38), both are impossible with men. In some of His miracles, however, Jesus appeared to have penetrated Satan’s kingdom more deeply, dealing with cases in which the devil had dominated for a long time, or was exercising unusual power. For example, Jesus healed one man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years (John 5:5). Another mature man was healed by Jesus who had been blind “*from birth*” (John 9:1). He healed a woman who had been bowed together for eighteen years (Lk 13:4), and another woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years (Matt 9:20). There were also three instances in which Jesus invaded the territory of the dead – a realm in which Satan had been given special power (Heb 2:14). The Lord raised three people from the dead: a young girl who had just died (Mk 5:42), a young man who was dead for only a day of two and was not yet buried (Mk 7:14-15), and Lazarus who had been dead for four days and was already buried (John 11:43-44). The incident now before us is in a category of miracles that especially penetrated the region of darkness. Here, Satanic dominance was most unusual, and it had existed for a long time. Yet, this was no challenge for our Lord. We also learn from this account that Satan’s forces are intelligent as well as powerful.

“ 5:1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.”

THEY CAME OVER. Matthew says, “*when HE was come to the other side.*” Mark and Luke says “*THEY same over*” (Mk 5:1), and “*THEY arrived*” (Lk 8:26). Matthew approaches the event with Christ’s work in mind – He was “*come over*” to do the works of His Father. Mark and Luke view the event from Christ’s overall purpose, to develop a nucleus of eye witnesses, who would later declare this event. Jesus referred to His disciples as “*witnesses*” (Lk 24:48; Acts 1:8). Peter affirmed that one of the qualification of an apostle was that he must have “*compained with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto*

that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22).

We have, then, several reasons for Christ’s wonderful works among the sons of men. First, He was doing the works God gave Him to do (John 5:36). Second, this was a means by which the Father “*approved*” of Him before men (Acts 2:22). Third, in these works He was making known His superiority over Satan (Lk 11:20-22). Fourth, He was introducing His ministry, which involved the recovery of humanity from Satan’s power (Lk 4:18). Fifth, He was preparing the Apostles for the work of spreading the Gospel (Heb 2:3). Sixth, He was showing He had power to forgive sins (Matt 9:6). Were Jesus to have failed in the instance before us, all of these causes would have fallen to the ground. The fact that He did not fail confirms that He is precisely who He said He was, and is to be trusted without reservation.

John tells us the reason for the record of these wonderful works. “*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (John 20:30-31). We must, then, see more in this event than a miracle. An association must be made in our minds of this work and Jesus being “*the Christ, the Son of God.*” We are not to assume we have fully grasped the significance of Christ Jesus.

With these things in mind, the storm through which the small group had just passed can be seen with fuller understanding. First, it was a test for the disciples, to discover to themselves the measure of their faith. Second, it prepared the disciples for a work of great magnitude that would take place before their eyes. Third, I do not doubt that Satan was also attempting to use that storm to rid the world of the Savior, and thwart the fulfillment of God’s promise, thereby imagining his own demise would be made less likely.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA. There are works that can only be done AFTER a sea – even a stormy sea – has been crossed. God can, as He did with Philip, transport His workers immediately to another place. After preaching to the eunuch, “*the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,*” and he “*was found at Azotus*” (Acts 8:40). On one occasion the prophet Ezekiel was lifted up by the Spirit and taken away to the exiles in Telabib (Ezek 2:14). Another time God “*put forth the form of a hand,*” taking Ezekiel “*by a lock*” of his hair, and brought him in visions to Jerusalem (Ezek 8:3). But all involvements in the work of the Lord are not instantaneous. Some involve traveling through a stormy sea, inconvenience, hardship, and even despairing of life (2 Cor 1:8).

Midway through the storm on Galilee, the novice might have imagined that going to the other side was a mistake. There is a view of “*open doors*” that sees ease and convenience as proof of Divine opportunity. While this may occur at times, it is not always the way God works with His children. There is such a thing as a “*great and effectual door*” that is attended by “*many adversaries*” (1 Cor 16:9). Those who walk with Jesus will find this to be true.

THE COUNTRY OF THE GADARENES. Matthew refers to the area as “*the country of the Gergesenes*” (Matt 8:28). Mark and Luke call it “*the country of the Gadarenes*” (Mk 5:1; Lk 8:26). In both cases, the area is associated with its inhabitants: “*Gergesenes*” (from the city of Gergasa), and “*Gadarenes*” (from the city of Gadara, capital of the region). These cities were close to each other, and were part of a cluster of ten cities referred to as “*Decapolis,*” where, following his healing, the Lord told the former demonic to testify (Mk 5:20). It was a region where Jesus Himself testified later (Mk 7:31). Some believe this refers to the ancient territory of the Gergashites, one of the seven nations Israel was to drive out of Canaan (Gen 15:17-21; Deut 7:1; Josh 3:10; 24:11).

The region to which they came was, from one viewpoint, near to one city, where the

tombs existed. The man Jesus will now confront was formerly “*from the city*” (Lk 8:27), which was probably the other city, both being part of the group of cities called “*Decapolis*.” (Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Dion, Pella, Gerasa, and Canatha). This is considered a region “*beyond Jordan*,” which was associated with “*the Gentiles*” (Matt 4:15,25). While there were no doubt Jews in this area, they do not appear to have been prominent.

“ 2 And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains. ”

HE WAS COME OUT OF THE SHIP. First, it is important to note that they arrived safely to the place to which Jesus had directed them (Mk 4:35). If ever men can accept the directives of Jesus as they truly are, they can be assured of their fulfillment. Some examples of such directives are, “*Let not your heart be troubled*” (John 14:1,27), “*Be thou faithful until death*” (Rev 2:10), and “*Be ye also ready*” (Matt 24:44).

When Jesus came out of the ship, He did so as the Master of the situation. Wherever Jesus was, He was in absolute control – the only exception being when He was given over into the hands of the powers of darkness for a brief moment, in order to His vicarious death (Lk 22:53). The presence of Jesus equates to the presence of the King, the Ruler, the Master, and He to whom everything is subject.

IMMEDIATELY, A MAN MET HIM. Matthew says that “*two men*” met Him (Matt 8:28). Mark and Luke emphasize the more prominent of the two, or the one more exceedingly fierce. Luke tells us the attention was on the man who was “*out of the city*” (Lk 8:27). Perhaps these men, and the one man in particular, rushed out to meet anyone who dared to come that way. This time, however, they would confront the King of glory.

WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT. Matthew says the men were “*possessed with demons*” (Matt 8:28). Luke says the particular man of reference “*had demons for a long time*” (Lk 8:27). Mark says he had “*an unclean spirit*,” i.e. an evil spirit that defiled, contaminated, and rendered unsuitable for any good.

In Zechariah, “*unclean spirits*” were associated with idolatry and false prophets (Zech 13:2). The Gospels contain seventeen references to this category of spirits (Matt 10:1; 12:43; Mk 1:23,26,27; 3:11,30; 5:2,8,13; 6:7; 7:25; Lk 4:36; 6:18; 8:29; 9:42; 11:24), Acts has two (Acts 5:16; 8:7), and Revelation has one (Rev 16:13). Parallel Gospel accounts refer to those “*unclean spirits*” as “*demons*” (Matt 10:1/Mk 3:15; Mk 3:11/Lk 4:11; Mk 7:25/Matt 15:22).

The term “*unclean spirit*” emphasizes **the effect** of the demon upon the person. Such demons brought on conditions that, according to the Law, rendered a person “*unclean*,” and unfit to dwell among men. **This** uncleanness was not of natural order, such as uncleanness caused by childbirth (Lev 12:2,5), touching something unclean (Lev 5:2), the issue of blood (Lev 15:19), etc. Jesus once confronted a young boy who had an “*unclean spirit*” that threw him in fire and water, and caused him to wallow on the ground and foam at the mouth (Mk 9:20-22; Lk 9:39). Another “*unclean spirit*” caused a man to go into convulsions (Mk 1:26).

These spirits overrode the human personality, so that conditions were caused, over which the afflicted person was powerless, whether a child, or in full adulthood. Jesus identified such spirits as “*wicked*,” and affirmed they were capable of bringing other spirits with them to inhabit some poor soul, who had experienced some reform, but had no genuine spiritual change (Matt 12:43-45). The man in this account also had multiple demons within.

In fact, we will find it was a staggering number of them. This indicates that evil tends to spread.

DWELLING AMONG TOMBS. Matthew says the men “*came out of the tombs,*” or out from among them (Matt 8:18). Luke says the man lived among the tombs – they were his home (Lk 8:27). The devil and his hosts have a particular penchant for death. Until Jesus died, he “*had the power of death.*” Death is something that the powers of darkness promote. Murder (taking the life of another), suicide (self murder), genocide (destroying a cultural group), massacres, etc. – they are all the work of Satan. Further, Satan promotes an unnatural attraction to death in such things as necrophilia, symbols of death, and places for the interment of dead bodies. There are even whole areas of society that are dominated by death and a penchant for it. Scriptures speak of areas that were “*the region and shadow of death*” (Matt 4:16), declaring that Jesus invaded them, shedding forth life-giving light and illumination.

It is no coincidence that this possessed man was found living along the tombs – the ultimate confirmation of uncleanness. It ought to be noted that we are living in a time when young people are being drawn toward death. They love to have and display its symbols, and use cosmetics that remind people more of the dead than of the living. All of these things are evidences of the prominence of demonic forces.

NO MAN COULD RESTRAIN HIM. The man had extraordinary strength, so that he could not be restrained, even with chains of iron. Luke says he was “*kept bound with chains and in fetters*” (shackles), and kept “*under guard*” NASB – inferred by the words “*kept bound*” (Lk 8:29). He had not, therefore, simply been abandoned. Some efforts were made to deal with him, but with absolutely no success. For centuries men have attempted to deal with the insane who are violent. This text is a commentary on their success.

“ 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.”

OFTEN BOUND. No doubt the most prominent experts in human behavior were employed by the region. After all, this man did not exactly attract visitors. Matthew says of his ferocity, “*so that no man might pass that way*” (Matt 8:28). Thus, we read that he “*had been often chained hand and foot,*” NIV but to no avail. The man simply “*tore apart*” the chains, and broke the shackles “*in pieces.*” NASB These attempts had been going on for a long time, and no one was able to come up with any solution. Not only were they impotent to cure the man, they were not even able to keep him restrained.

NO MAN COULD TAME. Other versions read, “*no was one strong enough to subdue him,*” NASB and “*no one was strong enough to control him.*” NLT Unclean spirits moved upon this man to the total consternation of the local citizenry. Luke says the evil spirit “*caught him,*” or “*seized him many times*” NASB (Lk 8:29a). Sometimes the demon would drive the poor man into “*the wilderness,*” or desolate places, (Lk 8:29b) – away from society and every valid expression of life. This apparently happened frequently, without any obvious pattern of frequency. No person was able to address the situation. It totally transcended any human wisdom or might – not only in the one who was possessed, but in all who had to deal with him.

There are certain things occurring in our society that are evidence of increased Satanic activity. We are seeing the eruption of uncontrolled violence, and the inability to deal with it.

There is also a certain attraction to death among the younger segment of society, and even a preference for foreboding black attire. There seems to be a culturing of wilderness-living: choosing to dwell in isolation, away from the normalities of life. These are all indications of the absence of moral and spiritual life, which is darkness – the only domain in which the devil and his hosts can work. This is a time for the church to be strong, alert, and prepared for every good work.

NIGHT AND DAY. There was a continual oppression of this man. “*Always, night and day,*” he was found “*in the mountains and in the tombs,*” shrieking out, and “*gashing himself with stones.*” NASB Luke tells us that this man did not abide “*in any house, but in the tombs*” (Lk 8:27). Even then, according to this text, the unclean spirit would take hold of the man and drive him into the mountains and remote regions, crying out like a wild and wounded animal, doing violence to himself, as well as any others within range.

NAKED. Luke informs us that the demons also influenced this man to go without clothes: “*and who had not put on any clothing for as long time.*” NASB Nakedness is the very first condition that caused man to be “*ashamed*” (Gen 2:25). It was also the very first condition men sought to correct (Gen 3:7). It has been true throughout history, that the more people were unaware of God, the more naked they have become. The display of naked flesh is particularly reprehensible to God. That is the reason the priests of old were commanded to wear breeches that covered their thighs (Ex 20:26; 28:42). One of the first curses following the flood was owing to a person beholding nakedness (Gen 9:22-25). The eighteenth and twentieth chapters of Leviticus contain thirty-two prohibitions against viewing nakedness outside of the covenant of marriage.

The “*unclean spirits*” within this man moved him to discard his clothing, so that he became accustomed to running about naked. The dreadful condition brought on by the sin of Adam and Eve was totally obscured to this man. He had no regard for either God or man.

SOME COMMENTS. Here is the case of a man who could not change his condition. He was powerless to stop the unclean spirits from driving him into the wilderness, or into mountainous regions, or darting in and out among the tombs. He had no power to stop his violent outbursts, or cutting himself with stones, or crying out like a wounded beast. Is there anyone thinks to promote the presence of free will within all men? What will they do with this man? Was his will free? Did he dwell among the tombs because he wanted to? Did he run into the mountains, the wilderness, and among the tombs because he chose to do so? Did he carve upon his body because he thought it best to do it? He was “*possessed*” by a host of evil spirits, who had absolutely no regard for his will, aptitude, or preferences. They had taken control of him.

In His teaching, Jesus indicates that certain human conditions are inviting to demons. There is not enough said to provide for the formation of a rigid doctrinal view. However, the Lord did tell us that “*unclean spirits*” are perceptive of lives that are lived in a sort of moral and spiritual vacuum. They are also capable of rallying other evil spirits, worse than themselves, to repossess people they either willingly left, or were cast out of (Matt 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26).

Suffice it to say, those who do not devote themselves wholly to the Lord are playing with fire. They are, in a very real way, making themselves available to the hosts of darkness. Perhaps some of us have even witnessed the overtaking of such foolish souls. Let none of us be among them!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 49

“Mark 5:6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not. 8 For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. 9 And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.”

(Mark 5:6-9; Matthew 8:29; Lk 8:28-30)

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Christ, as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, provides a glimpse of the wide range of human responses to the Son of God, as well as the reactions of Satan and demons. The type of human responses that are recorded are still representative of Adam's race. There are people who simply reject the Person and message of Christ, seeing no value in either. There are religious people like the Pharisees who have no heart for Christ, considering Him to be a threat to their cherished systems. There are Bible scholars who are confused and threatened by Him, like the scribes, and lawyers. There are political powers like Pilate and Herod who see Him as a threat to their political system. There are people like the multitudes He fed, who see Jesus as a sort of novelty, who breaks the monotony of life, but is really not essential to it. Others, like the blind, halt, and lame perceive Jesus as an answer to their problems, yet do not consistently follow Him. Still others, like His disciples, perceive Him as the Son of God, and pursue Him intently, willing to forfeit all competing influences for His fellowship. In this text, we will be exposed to the response of certain people to Christ's presence and work. We will also catch a glimpse of the response of the spiritual underworld to Him. We will find there is considerable understanding concerning the Person and mission of God's Son among these fallen spirits. They also fear Him and always obey Him.

“5:6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, 7a And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?”

HE SAW JESUS AFAR OFF. The waiting wild man was deranged, but had not lost all of his intelligence. He had times when he ran shrieking into the mountains or wilderness, but there were also times of lucidity. Here it records that the man saw Jesus, yet the demons spoke through him. There was a sort of oneness that had taken place between the demons and the man. They were, in a sense one, even though it was the demons who had the dominance. There is a sense in which the human spirit joins together with whatever spirit has the dominance over the individual, whether an evil spirit or the Holy Spirit. Man is not an independent being, or a totally free spirit.

HE RAN AND WORSHIPPED HIM. The man, dominated by demons, knew **whom** he saw. This gives us an idea of the high order of intelligence that exists in Satan's kingdom. It also confirms how obvious the Person of Christ really is. Mark says the man "*ran and worshipped*" Jesus. Luke says he "*cried out and fell down before Him,*" as though acknowledging the superiority of the Lord, even though robed in obscuring flesh (Lk 8:28).

There is an aspect of Christ's Person here that is most arresting. It is as though whoever recognizes Him is drawn to Him, being compelled to worship Him because of who He is. This is true of the hosts of heaven. When John saw heaven opened, and the Lamb of God taking the book of Divine purpose, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before him (Rev 5:6-8). The angels did the same (Rev 5:11-12). Then, in one grand panoramic view, John sees every living person acknowledging the Lamb. "*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever*" (Rev 5:13). **That is what happens when the Son of God is perceived!** It always happens, and never fails to happen.

Here the man, ruled by demons, runs to Jesus, falls down, and worships Him, acknowledging that He is, in fact, the Lord. Here the word "*worship*" means to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, adore." **STRONG'S** It is an outward action driven by an inward persuasion. It was a visible acknowledgment that Jesus was recognized as the Lord. The demons did not retreat from this recognition, but drove the man to run and fall down before Jesus – not in willing honor, but in dread and fear because their nature was contrary to that of the Lord Jesus, and they knew it.

Even the devil himself is not brash before Christ. See how docile the devil appears before the Son of God! This is Satan, who had run roughshod over humanity, enslaving the whole race, and deceiving every man. But how does he conduct himself before the Son of God? He can only hurl the feeble arrow of temptation at the humbled Word: "*If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread . . . If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He will give His angels charge concerning Thee . . . All the things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me*" (Matt 4:3-9).

WHAT HAVE I HAVE DO WITH THEE? Other versions read, "*What do you want with me?*" NIV "*What business do we have with each other?*" NAU "*Why are you bothering me?*" NLT and "*What is there in common between us?*" AMPLIFIED These demons knew that Jesus was not just passing through the area. They knew that when Jesus is present, it is always for a purpose. They also were keenly aware of the fact of their contrariety to Jesus. His presence was a threat to them. Jesus is always a terror to those whose nature differs from His own. Those who sense this always call out for mercy – even the demons.

There is apparently considerable communication among the fallen spirits. These demons, as well as others, had functioned with little restraint for as much as four thousand years. Yet, commensurate with the beginning of Christ's ministry, their diabolical world had been invaded and violently disrupted. These formerly dominating spirits were being forced to give up human hostages they had held for years – and there was not a one of the number that had offered the slightest bit of resistance.

JESUS, THOU SON OF THE MOST HIGH. Now, Jesus comes into the territory of the demons of Gadara, and they are concerned about it. They know precisely who He is – "*Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God!*" It is a shame that men have haggled about Christ's Sonship, when

the world of demons know full well about that matter. Matthew reads, “*Jesus, Thou Son of God*” (Matt 8:29). For demons, this confession means doom. **For men who confess it, it means salvation :** “*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*” (1 John 4:15). These demons know that Jesus’ presence brings no good to them! For them, it was a “*fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb 10:31).

“ 7b . . . I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not. 8 For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.”

How do demons speak to the Lord Jesus – even when He is robed in concealing flesh? Do they hurl aspersions at Him, like men who rejected Him? – “*He hath a devil and is mad . . . He is beside Himself . . . Crucify Him . . . This man is not of God . . . Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews*” (John 10:20; Mk 3:21; 15:12; John 9:16; 19:2). No such challenges will come from these demons!

I ADJURE THEE BY GOD. Other versions read, “*I implore you by God,*” NKJV “*Swear to God,*” NIV “*I will that Thou swear to me by God,*” GENEVA “*In God’s name,*” NJB and “*I solemnly implore you by God.*” AMPLIFIED In English, the word “*adjure*” means “to urge or advise urgently.” In Greek it means “to take an oath.” THAYER Here, the demons ask Jesus to take an oath by God – to make a favorable commitment to them before God, and by His power.

First, we see that these demons know full well that God is “*above all and through all*” (Eph 4:6). They also know that nothing can contravene what Jesus determines. They know that it is true of Jesus, just as surely as it is true of God Himself, “*I work, and who will reverse it*” NKJV (Isa 43:13). Again, it is true of Jesus, just as it is of the Father, “*For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*” (Isa 14:27). We know this is the case, because “*the Man Christ Jesus*” is “*the Lord of hosts.*” Those hosts – all of the holy angels – are called “*His (Jesus’) angels*” (Matt 13:41). These demons, plead with Jesus to make a commitment before God – a commitment that will hold true, and which it would be impossible to reverse or nullify.

TORMENT ME NOT. Matthew reads, “*are thou come to torment us before the time?*” (Matt 8:29). Luke reads, “*I beseech thee, torment me not!*” (Lk 8:28). There are several things that can be seen here. First, these demons know their condition is irreversible – that cannot be changed, and they cannot be blessed or experience mercy from God. They have been consigned to “*chains of darkness,*” and are “*reserved unto judgment*” (2 Pet 2:4) – and they know it. They are “*reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*” (Jude 1:6) – and they know it. For them “*the time*” (Matt 8:29) is the dreadful day of judgment, when they will be cast into “*the lake of fire,*” or “*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt 25:41).

Second, the knowledge of their future has made them no better. They fear, yet still wreak havoc upon the earth. They treat their victims no better – whether in the presence of Christ (Mk 9:20, or apart from it).

Third, they associated Jesus with judgment. They appeared to have no sense of any delay in judgment when the Son of God came into their territory. They concluded this was the end for them, and they would enter into eternal torment. Therefore they pled with the Lord to make a vow before God not to torment them “*before the time.*”

APPLICATION. There is a sense in which sinners reason after this manner when they become aware of the Lord Jesus. Their plea is more in keeping with Christ’s purpose among

men. That is why they call, “*Have mercy on me*” (Lk 18:39), “*Save me*” (Matt 14:30), and “*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*” (Acts 9:6).

A person who is not reconciled to God is stricken with fear when becoming aware of the Person of Christ. Upon perceiving Christ’s Person, Peter once said, “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*” (Lk 5:8). **No person whose sins remain unforgiven is comfortable in the perceived presence of the Lord.** Even though Jesus is Savior, there is a vast gulf between Himself and sinners. Only the dispensing of mercy will enable the sinner to survive, and the sinner knows it all too well. **When the professing church tailors its services for the comfort of the sinner, it has, by that very action, required that Jesus leave the house!** It is the perception of Jesus as “*The Christ, the Son of the Living God,*” that provokes the sinner to flee “*for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us*” (Heb 6:18).

HE HAD SAID. Prior to the dialog we are now considering, Jesus had said, “*Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit!*” Luke reads, “*For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man*” (Lk 8:29). These demons, therefore, had concluded that when they left the man, they would be going directly to their appointed destination. Here is an example of a point made in James’ salient remark about demons: “*Even the demons believe; and tremble!*” (James 2:19). They knew the word that Jesus spoke could not be resisted! They knew they had to do what He said, and thus sought for some temporary consideration. For “*a long time*” they had possessed this poor man (Lk 8:27). Now, however, at the word of the Master, that possession was brought to a grinding halt. Jesus did not wrestle the man down to the ground, but only said a word. He did not shout out a secret formula, but merely effectively commanded the “*unclean spirit*” to “*come out*” of the man he had long inhabited and dominated.

“ 9 And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.”

Here is a most intriguing occasion – Jesus Christ having a conversation with demons! Of course, He also held some abbreviated dialog with the devil himself (Matt 4:3-10). Keep in mind, according to appearance, Jesus is speaking with a man. Actually, however, He was addressing the unclean spirit within him – an apparent representative of a host of demons. The words that came from the man’s mouth were not his own, but the words of a demon.

HE ASKED HIM, WHAT IS THY NAME? The purpose of this question was not for Jesus to gain knowledge not known to Him. Jesus knew “*what was in man*” (John 2:25), including any demons that had taken possession of a person. If Jesus knows “*the Father,*” who is the ultimate Person (Matt 11:27), can there be any other person or realm He does not know? If He has knowledge of the realm of “*thoughts*” (Matt 12:25), can the notions of demons be withheld from Him? If He can perceive the “*wickedness*” of men (Matt 22:18), can it be that the wickedness of demons is hidden from Him? Jesus does not ask so that **He** will know.

Jesus is not alone with this possessed man. There were other people there with Him. Christ was there with His disciples (Lk 8:26), for “*they came over*” to this place (Mk 5:1). It is for their sakes that Jesus asked this question. **By looking at the man, the watchers would have no idea of the greatness of his dilemma.** The magnitude of the work Jesus was going to do would not have been fully appreciated. Therefore Jesus discovers to the people the case before Him.

What kind of question will Jesus ask? Once, when speaking with a father about his afflicted son, Jesus asked, “*How long has this been happening to him?*” NASB (Mk 9:21). Here, however, He does not ask about how long this possessed man had been in this condition. He rather

asks, “*What is thy name?*” This is equivalent to asking, “*What is your nature?*” or, “*What is your character?*” The more a person knows of the condition from which they have been delivered, the greater will be their love and thankfulness. Thus Jesus said of a sinful woman whom He had forgiven, “*Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little*” (Luke 7:47). I do not doubt that eventually the man himself gained some knowledge of his condition that was formerly unknown to him.

MY NAME IS LEGION. It is interesting that the demon does not give a name that identified what was being done, but rather of the quantity of demons that were working together within this man. The word “*legion*” did not have a static meaning. In the time of Romulus, a Roman legion consisted of 3,000 footmen and 300 horsemen. When Rome was increased in size, a “*legion*” was 6,000 footmen and 200 horsemen. Sometimes it was 6,200 footmen and 300 horsemen, or 5,000 footmen and 300 horsemen. Some have identified a “*legion*” as 6,666, and others as high as 12,500. JOHN GILL The point is that there was a great host of demons in this man – like a vast army of demons, or unclean spirits.

Luke adds this remark concerning the term “*Legion,*” “*because many devils were entered into him*” (Lk 8:30). What a dreadful plight for such a horde to be permitted to enter a single person, and control him for a long period of time. We do not know the reason for this condition, but it ought to stir us to give heed to the admonition, “*Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?*” (1 Cor 10:22). At the very least, this confirms the extent to which men can fall, and the degree to which they can be dominated by the powers of darkness.

Matthew tells us that people were brought to Jesus, including “*those which were possessed with devils*” (Matt 4:24). Matthew also records, “*they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils : and he cast out the spirits with His word*” (Mat 8:16). Jesus cast “*seven devils*” out of Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9; Lk 8:2). **The point is that there are increasing levels of corruption.** There were people who were said to be possessed by a single demon – a “*young daughter with an unclean spirit*” (Mk 1:23). Multiple demons inhabited a man in a synagogue. When confronting Jesus the man cried out, “*Let US alone*” (Mk 1:23). Mary Magdalene was controlled by seven devils, and the man in our text with a legion, or very large number, of devils. Jesus spoke of a demon who garnered seven other demons worse than himself, and returned to inhabit some poor “*man*” (Matt 12:45).

When people willingly expose themselves to the domain of darkness, whether in immorality, drugs, the occult, or visual and audible representations of wickedness, they have entered an arena of unimaginable danger – a realm with which the human intellect cannot contend. Natural abilities wither in the world over which Satan presides, under the influence of “*the rulers of the darkness of this world*” (Eph 6:12). Today, using all manner of audio and video media, the devil is promoting an environment in which he can work more freely. It is not possible to adequately describe the condition of a person who has been exposed to the truth of Christ, yet chooses to walk in such realms. This man, whose record we are now reviewing, will no doubt rise up in the day of judgment to condemn those who chose to live in Gadara, when they had opportunity to live in Jerusalem.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 50

“ Mark 5:10 *And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. 11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12 And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.*”

(Mark 5:10-13; Matthew 8:30-32; Lk 8:31-33)

INTRODUCTION

We are being exposed to a rather lengthy account of the work of the Lord. It centers in a single person – not a city, and not a country. In it we have Jesus confronting an army of demons – somewhere in the thousands. He absolutely controls them with His Word. No other engagement is necessary. The power of these demons is seen in their manipulation of the man they possessed. They apparently took him captive at their will – whenever they wanted to do so. Satan is also represented as doing this with certain who are dominated by him (2 Tim 2:26). However, these powerful forces of darkness cannot operate freely in the presence of Jesus. His very presence is disruptive to the powers of darkness – like an invasion of their territory. That is why Satan cannot have His way in the individual in whom the Lord Jesus resides. As it is written, *“that wicked one toucheth him not”* (1 John 5:18). When the devil has the dominance over an individual, pulling him here and there in unholy involvements, it is because Jesus does not dwell in the person. Sin cannot erupt where Jesus is dwelling within the heart by faith (Eph 3:17). His influence must be rejected for sin to be expressed.

If this is not true, what possible advantage can there be to Jesus indwelling a person? **“ 10 *And he besought Him much that he would not send them away out of the country.*”**

HE BESOUGHT HIM. According to outward appearance, it is the man himself who is speaking to Jesus. However, in actuality, it is a demon – a sort of spokesman for a horde of unclean spirits that is dwelling in and possessing the man. This is not the spirit of the man himself speaking, for if that was the case, when the dismissed, the man would have been left dead – a body without a spirit. Among other things, this shows the extent to which the hosts of darkness can possess a person. They can capture and dominate their thoughts and their speech, as well as their deeds. If we do not *“resist the devil,”* as we are enjoined to do (1 Pet 5:8-9; James 4:7), there is no guarantee that he will not enter into us and dominate us, just as he did Judas (John 13:27). However men may choose to speculate about this subject, our only protection from the devil, practically speaking, is to remain *“steadfast in the faith”* (1 Pet 5:9) – to persist in being strong in the faith.

Now, the inferiority of these demons to Jesus is confirmed in this request. The

representing demon “*besought*” Jesus. That is, he “*begged*,” NKJV entreating Him “*earnestly*.” NASB One version reads, “*he begged Jesus again and again*.” NIV That is the meaning of the word used here: speaking with persistence, earnestly asking for, imploring, and begging. ROBERTSON Such speaking can only come from a personality who is totally subordinate to Jesus and **knows** that is the case. Wicked men did not speak to Jesus in this way. The scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees and lawyers, Pilate and Herod – they made no earnest petition to Jesus. And why not? **Only because they did not know who He was.** For them, his flesh was an obscuring veil over His Deity. The demons, however, **knew** who He was!

We may adduce from this that all who fail to yield to Jesus, choosing to walk in their own ways, do so because of their blindness. They simply do not know who He is, even though they may be imagined to be theological experts. In fact, for a professing believer to engage in the expression of sin, he must **forget** who Jesus is, which is the result of **refusing** to think upon Him, remember Him, or listen to Him.

NOT SEND HIM AWAY OUT OF THE COUNTRY. The petition of the demons is most intriguing. They “*besought Him MUCH that He would not send them away out of the country*.” Other versions read, “*not to send them out of the area*,” NIV “*away from that territory*,” NAU “*out of the district*,” NJB “*out of the region*,” YLT **Here was a geographic area these demons preferred, and they did not want to leave it.** They could apparently work more freely in this region of the Gadarenes. The surroundings were more conducive to wicked freedom. These demons could congregate better in this region, taking hold of individuals, and using them to cause fear, confusion, and disruption.

There are spirits referred to as “*the rulers of the darkness of this world*” (Eph 6:12). It is apparent that there are sections of the world in which they can more easily work. In this case, the land of the Gadarenes was preferred by them over Galilee, where Jesus did most of His mighty works (Matt 11:20). It should not surprise us that there are countries, regions, cities, churches, and even individuals, in which Satan can more easily work. There are environments that are more dark than others – “*regions*” of darkness (Matt 4:16). Jesus can invade these territories, to be sure – but **only** He can do so. Should someone in whom Jesus is **not** dwelling attempt to penetrate such areas, they will themselves be overcome by the darkness. Discipline, scholarship, and fleshly power have no impact for righteousness in such regions. If “*the power of the Lord*” is not present (Lk 5:17), wicked powers cannot be unseated.

Luke provides some further information about the request of these demons. “*And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep*” (Luke 8:31). Mark says one demon made the request, Luke says they all did. The meaning is that the one demon spoke for them all. None of this horde of evil spirits wanted to be expelled from that area. Yet, something more is seen. They begged Jesus not to “*command them to go out into the deep*,” or “*the abyss*.” NKJV Here we catch a glimpse of God’s mercy toward humanity. Both Peter and Jude inform us of a vast world of fallen spirits that have been delivered “*into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*” (2 Pet 2:4). Jude refers to “*everlasting chains UNDER darkness unto the judgment of the great day*” (Jude 1:6).

Although there is a certain vagueness in these texts, it appears as though there are some fallen spirits who are allowed to range at large, such as those in our text. It seems to me that if all of these spirits were permitted such liberty, the world would fully gravitate to the state of Noah’s world – and maybe even worse. It is a mercy that we contend with only a segment of Satan’s hosts, with the greater part being chained in “*the deep*.” These demons knew of

the place of confinement and did not want to go there. They have great fear concerning their ultimate destiny, and do not want to go there “*before the time.*”

“ 11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.”

A GREAT HERD OF SWINE. Here is mention of a condition that, under any other circumstances, would only be incidental – “*a great herd of swine feeding.*” The word “*swine*” refers to young pigs. These were being fed, perhaps being fattened for butchering. Mark speaks of their location in reference to the possessed man, saying they were close to “*the mountains*” in which the man Jesus is confronting is said to have been often found: “*in the mountains*” (Mk 5:5). Matthew refers to the swine in reference to Jesus and His disciples: “*a good way off from them*” (Matt 8:31). Luke says the swine were “*feeding on the mountain*” (Lk 8:32) – apparently the very mountain near which Jesus was standing, probably on the other side of it. Keep in mind, the demoniac had rushed out to meet Jesus as soon as He stepped out of the boat, so this conversation is probably taking place on the seashore.

This circumstance confirms the area was occupied more by Gentiles than by Jews, even though it was a part of the promised land. The swine was an “*unclean*” animal according to the Law, because it did not chew the cud AND have a cloven hoof. In this case, the swine did have a cloven hoof, but did not chew the cud. Therefore it was “*unclean*” to the Jews. They were forbidden to eat its flesh or touch its carcase (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8).

The swine is repeatedly used as a picture of defilement and unacceptability. Solomon likened a beautiful woman without discretion to a “*jewel in a swine’s snout*” (Prov 11:22). Jesus admonished His disciples not to cast their pearls “*before swine*” (Matt 7:6). The fall of the prodigal son is depicted as being sent into a field “*to feed swine*” (Lk 15:15). Peter likened those who fall away to “*the sow that was washed*” returning “*to her wallowing in the mire*” (2 Pet 2:22). It is not coincidence that “*swine*” are involved in this occasion. This man was possessed by an “*unclean spirit*” (Mk 5:2). It is appropriate, therefore, that the animals in that area were identified as ones that were also “*unclean.*”

SEND US INTO THE SWINE. Mark says that “*all the devils besought him.*” **There was perfect accord among them, for their natures were the same.** Matthew says of their petition, “*If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine*” (Matt 8:31). Even though these were unclean animals, the demons could not enter into them without permission. How much less can they enter into the sheep of Christ’s pasture (Psa 100:3).

Notice that the demons made no request to enter into another man or group of men – even though there were wicked men in that area who would later ask Jesus to leave “*their coasts*” (Mk 5:17). It is a mercy that Jesus did not dismiss these oppressive demons from that poor man to enter into the unworthy people of that area. It was certainly not because they were any better than this possessed man. Jesus could very well have spoken to them as He did to others who had known of a tower that fell upon eighteen men, killing them all. “*Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:4-5).

The swine made no request to enter into any clean animals (Deut 14:6) that may have been in the area, such as cattle. These demons appeared to have known what options were open to them. They made no request to enter any other man, nor did they ask to inhabit animals that could have been used for sacrifice to the Living God.

There is an indication here that the demons prefer to be in a body – a house within which they can work. There are two different views that can be taken of this matter. First, that the demons simply desire to be in some kind of body. I do not doubt that this is true, yet feel it is deeper than that. The demons, like the one who leads them, are bent on doing evil. They cannot stand the thought of not being able to carry out their wicked desires, hurting, causing disruption, and doing all manner of mischief. Wherever they are found, they are at work. If it is not catching the man before Jesus, and driving him like a wild man into the mountains and wilderness, it is causing a woman to be bowed in two, or a child to jump into fire and water, or some other form of moral and physical confusion. They can even inhabit the things men possess – like a herd of swine.

The point is that they did not want their activity among men suppressed. They are not content to work among the world of spirits. They have joined their leader's wicked work to "*make war*" against the sons of God (Rev 11:7; 12:17). If he cannot gain access to them, he will disrupt the environment around them, seeking to wash them away with a flood that impacts on others as well (Rev 12:15-16). **It is not possible to overstate the diabolical nature of these fallen spirits.** If men had no other knowledge than this, they would flee with great haste to Jesus "*for refuge.*" To be ignorant of these spirits puts men at an unspeakable disadvantage.

“ 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.”

JESUS GAVE THEM LEAVE. Matthew reads, "*And He said unto them, Go (“Begone!” NASB)*" (Matt 8:32). Luke reads, "*And He suffered them (“He gave them permission” NASB)*" (Lk 8:32). The involvement of the Lord with His creation, both personal and impersonal, is very detailed. In this case, wicked spirits from the spiritual underworld could not enter into a herd of swine without Christ's "*permission.*" Jesus taught that two insignificant sparrows could not be sold for a "*farthing,*" nor could a single one of them "*fall to the ground,*" independently of God's will (Matt 10:29). The Psalmist affirmed that wild animals had offspring according to "*the voice of the Lord.*" Lightning flashes forth at His word, and even the bark is stripped off of trees at His command (Psa 29:7-9). It certainly should not surprise us that evil spirits are held in check by the word of the Lord, and even a hair cannot grow or fall from our head without Him (Luke 12:7).

Why did Jesus not consign these wicked spirits to "*the abyss*" which they so dreaded? Was it that He had mercy upon them? Indeed not! It was not yet time for them to be consigned to their final place. Indeed, the saints would have a part in judging them, and therefore they must wait until the day appointed to enter their final abode – "*everlasting fire*" (1 Cor 6:3; Matt 25:41).

We ought to learn from this occasion not to judge our circumstances quickly, or assume that things are hopeless when not a ray of expectation can be perceived in the course of nature or among the sons of men. The account of the Gadarene demoniac confirms that once the Son of God enters into the situation, there is no such thing as "*hopeless.*" His presence dispels hopelessness, and renders the powers of darkness impotent. The very spirits that dominated this poor man, driving him into the mountains and the wilderness, became nothing more than pleading spirits in the presence of the Lord of glory. Hope rises with the Sun of righteousness.

THEY ENTERED INTO THE SWINE. Mark says "*the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine.*" Matthew says "*when they were come out, they went into the swine*" (Matt 8:32). Luke says, "*Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine*" (Lk 8:32). Whatever the animal rights advocates may say, it is better for demons to be in the beasts of

the field than in those who are made in the image of God! If this were not the case, Jesus would never have given these demons “*permission*” to enter the swine. I do not know if this is the only time such permission was granted. However, I am suspicious that, according to the request of the demons, and the readiness of Jesus to give them permission, this is not an isolated incident. Be sure of this: much more is going on in this world than is seen with the eye.

THE REACTION OF THE HERD. Immediately, the swine rushed like a wild stampede down the mountain into the lake, and were drowned. NIV Matthew says “*the whole herd*” ran down “*a steep place*” into the sea and “*perished in the waters*” (Matt 8:32). Luke says they were “*choked*” in the sea (Lk 8:33). Impetuously the whole herd bolted, and in a sudden stampede lurched forward toward the sea to their own death.

Notice that this herd of swine did not endeavor to attack Jesus. They did not seek to run over His disciples, or lash out against their keepers. They did not rush into the city to wreak havoc among the sons of men. **What is more, they could not do to the man they were forced to leave what they did to the swine into which they entered!** Jesus was in control of this whole event, even before He landed on the Gadarene shore!

Even the brute beasts cannot conduct themselves in a normal manner when inhabited by evil spirits! Is it any wonder that those who bare the rational image of God can become deranged and unstable under the influence of the devil and his host?

MAN AND SPIRITS. Mark provides a general count of the number of swine that perished: “*about two thousand.*” All of those demons had formerly dwelt in a single man, moving him to do things that no man in his right mind would do. First, we note that there is some form of compatibility between humanity and spirits. As Job well said, “*There is a spirit in man*” (Job 32:8). That unseen part can be joined to an evil spirit (or multiple spirits), and be constrained to act in total contradiction of God. However, it is also possible for that unseen part to be “*joined to the Lord,*” becoming “*one spirit*” with Him (1 Cor 6:17).

We have in this text a picture of the extremities of man’s capacity. On the one hand we have one man inhabited by enough demons to fill and move 2,000 swine. On the other, we have the Son of God, to whom God “*gave not the Spirit by measure*” (John 3:34). What person of sound mind is capable of conceiving how much of the Holy Spirit can dwell in a person? What is the extent of the expression, “*that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God*” (Eph 3:19). It ought to be obvious that none among us has exhausted the possibilities found in Jesus. The contemplation of what we can be in Jesus is worthy of much consideration.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 51

“ Mark 5:14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17 And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. ” (Mark 5:14-17; Matthew 8:33-34; Lk 8:34-37)

INTRODUCTION

The account of this miracle is filled with all manner of instruction. It teaches us that Jesus goes out of His way to bless. It confirms that the devil can so dominate the human personality that only Jesus can deliver the individual. It contrasts the blessing of Jesus with the defilement and desecration wrought by Satan. In this miracle we see the devil's propensity to death, causing a poor soul to dwell among the tombs. We see those in the grip of Satan are driven by him, and caused to experience personal harm in some form. There is also confirmation that the hosts of darkness are intelligent, can reason, and have a great fear of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also becomes clear that the worst of Satan's hosts do not resist Jesus, argue with Him, or engage in an initiative against Him. There is also the preference of Satan and his host for certain regions. As well, there is the matter of their desire to work havoc and harm among the sons of men. There is even the thought that the creation, wholly subject to the Lord Jesus, refuses to obey the devil, or engage in his warfare against humanity. We know from the book of Job that natural forces can only be employed by Satan when he is given permission by the Lord. Now, we will behold the reaction of men to the works of God. What will those who hear of this event ask Jesus to do? Will the people of Gadara bring their sick to Him like those in Galilee (Matt 4:24)? Will they run after Jesus like those Jews who saw Jesus leaving their area (Mk 6:33)? How do men react to the works of the Lord of glory?

“ 14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.”

There is a very wonderful thing to be seen in this text. **When the Lord works, there will always be witnesses who report it.** God does not do His work in a corner, nor does He permit it to go unreported. That is why Paul said to Festus, *“this thing was **not** done in a corner”* (Acts 26:26). It is why the Psalmist wrote, *“The Lord gave the word: **great** was the company of those that published it ”* (Psa 68:11).

When Israel came out of Egypt, it was at the midnight hour, yet their deliverance was so orchestrated that reports of it were heard throughout the entire region – even though the only people who saw them walk through the Red Sea were killed by that same body of water (Ex 14:17,23,25,28; 18:8). Over forty years later, the citizens of Jericho confessed they had heard of it and had been trembling (Josh 2:10). The Gibeonites had also heard the report (Josh 9:9). Balak, king of the Moabites also heard of their deliverance (Num 22:5).

When Jesus was born, there was a Divinely orchestrated report of the event, by both the enemies and people of God (Matt 2:3; Lk 2:18,20). When the infant Jesus was dedicated by Simeon, a report was spread among those who were looking for redemption (Lk 2:38). When Jesus “*shed forth*” the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, a report was spread concerning what was taking place (Acts 2:11).

This is the Divine manner! If ever God actually works, the matter will not be hidden! It is written, “*He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered*” (Psa 111:4), and that requires that they be reported. The fact that a significant proportion of humanity has not heard the Gospel confirms the rarity of a genuine Divine work. Wherever God is, or has, worked, some word of it will get out. However, should the church ever lapse into a state of spiritual dulness, choosing to walk at a distance from God, reports of the Lord’s working will wane, and finally dissipate within the sphere of their influence.

A society can become so spiritually obtuse that it can be said of it, “*The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart : and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come*” (Isa 57:1). That describes a body of people among whom God is neither walking nor working in goodness and truth. It is a most dreadful consideration. God said Israel would be reduced to such a deplorable state that they would confess, “*God is not among us*” (Deut 31:17).

But when the Lord is present in a place, and chooses to bare His holy arm (Isa 52:10), the matter will be made known. The problem with a silent church is not that they do not speak, but that they cannot see! They do not see what God has done through Jesus Christ, and consequently nothing of any eternal consequence is being done among them. Hence, there is little said about them. But it is not so in our text.

THEY THAT FED THE SWINE. Matthew says, “*they that kept them*” (the swine) – Matt 8:33. When Jesus was born, shepherds who kept “*watch over their flock by night*” (Lk 2:8) were made privy to the event by holy angels. Now, when Jesus performs a great work, those who kept swine **by day** witnessed what was done. Matthew says of them, “*they fled,*” or “*ran away*” NASB (Matt 8:33). Luke says when they “*saw what was done, they fled,*” or “*ran off*” NIV (Lk 8:34).

They did not run to Jesus, like the demons drove the possessed man to do when they recognized the Son of God (Mk 5:7). Instead, they ran away in fear, because they did not see Jesus as He really was. When Jesus is seen as He really is, the one who sees Him comes before Him and worships, just as that legion of demons who had terrorized the area through the man they possessed. This is what will happen when Jesus appears in all of His glory. Every personality, both the wicked and the righteous, will bow the knee to Him, and confess that He is Lord (Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10). To the extent that men see Him in His people, they will do the same. Thus it is written, “*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and . . . all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth*” (1 Cor 14:23-25). That test is certainly

worthy of extended consideration.

THEY TOLD IT IN THE CITY AND IN THE COUNTRY. Matthew says they “*went their ways into the city, and told everything*” (Matt 8:33). These were witnesses, but not holy ones. They did not have a proper perspective on what they had witnessed, but they knew enough for their report to elicit the curiosity of the people “*in the city and in the country.*” The works that Jesus does are so unique, and are of such magnitude, as to provoke inquiry among even the ungodly. This circumstance removes all pretentious excuses for not pursuing the Lord with vigor and consistency. The Lord’s Person and work have a drawing power in them.

“ 15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind . . . ”

THEY COME TO JESUS. Matthew says, “*the whole city came out to meet Jesus and . . . saw Him*” (Matt 8:34). Luke says, “*they went to out see what was done, and came to Jesus*” (Lk 8:35). Jesus remained with the man out of whom He had expelled a legion of demons. He did not forsake His own. Also, when the people heard of such a great work, they were compelled to see the One who did it – even more than the one upon whom the work was done. **It is still true that the heavenly Worker is greater than the work He does.** It is not His work that makes Him great, but His Person that makes the work great. Those who speak more about **what** Jesus does than of **who** He is are not wise. His works are designed to confirm who He is. Thus Jesus said, “*the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me*” (John 5:36). And again, “*Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake*” (John 14:11). Now we will see whether or not the people of Gadara were able to associate the works of Christ the One who sent Him.

THEY SAW THE MAN WHO HAD THE LEGION. They saw “*him that was possessed with the devil (demon) .*” Notice that Mark refers to a single demon rather than a host of them. It appears that he was the leading demon who may have gathered the others to cohabit the former wild man. Jesus spoke of one spirit gathering together other spirits to take over a man (Matt 12:45). If people were more aware of the magnitude of the forces that are aligned against them, they would more quickly run to Jesus for refuge. It is said of those who have come to Jesus that they have “*fled to Him for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before*” them (Heb 6:18). They fled **from** Satan and his hosts. They **fled to** the One through whom genuine hope is realized. Luke says they “*found the man, out of whom the devils were departed*” (Lk 8:35), confirming the demons immediate obedience to their Lord.

SITTING. “*They found the man . . . sitting.*” Luke says he was “*sitting at the feet of Jesus*” (Lk 8:35b). Prior to being made free, this man was not found “*sitting.*” It is said of his former life: he was “*exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass that way*” (Matt 8:28); “*night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones*” (Mk 5:4-5); the unclean spirit “*often caught him,*” and he was “*driven of the devil into the wilderness*” (Lk 8:29). Now, a genuine change has taken place in the man: he is “*sitting*” rather than being driven into the wilderness, running like a wild man in the mountains and amidst the tombs. Further, the man is not merely sitting among the tombs, or in the mountains, or in the wilderness where he once ran shrieking out to the consternation of all who may have heard him. He is sitting at the feet of his Deliverer!

CLOTHED. Formerly it was said of this man that he “*ware no clothes*” (Lk 8:27). He further appeared oblivious to his condition, and of the repulsiveness of nakedness. At that time, clothing was the last thing on his tormented mind, even though it was the very first thing on Adam and Eve’s mind after they had sinned. Nakedness was also the first human flaw that God corrected, making coats of

skin to cover them, because their skimpy fig leaves were not sufficient. But now, this man is different. He covered the nakedness he once flaunted fearlessly before men. He refuses to stand or sit naked before the Son of Man, who Himself was noted, in part, for His clothing, for which men gambled at His death (John 19:23).

IN HIS RIGHT MIND. Once he was demented, being “*exceeding fierce*,” so that he required taming – which no man could do. He did not think properly, even being driven to cut himself with stones, and do violence to his own person. He was a living contradiction of the norm: “*for no man ever yet hated his own flesh*” (Eph 5:29). But now his mind has been changed, and he is sitting at the feet of Jesus. Any other posture would have been insane. This is the only acceptable way for a delivered person to conduct himself.

Spiritually speaking a “*right mind*” is a “*sound mind*” – a mind that is not contaminated with imaginations and false notions. A person with a “*sound mind*” thinks properly, and thus is able to perceive things correctly. This is the kind of mind that is obtained in Christ Jesus who gives us the “*spirit of a . . . sound mind*” (2 Tim 1:7). A “*sound mind*” is also described as “*the law of my mind*” (Rom 7:23), “*the mind of Christ*” (1 Cor 2:16), and the mind “*which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Phil 2:5). Just as surely as this man had a “*right mind*” following his deliverance, so those who are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, obtain a “*sound mind*.” Just as a continued distorted mind would have negated any claim to this man being delivered, so a “*carnal mind*” negates any profession of identity with Christ Jesus.

It ought to be noted that a genuine encounter with Jesus always works a very real change. I have no confidence at all in a religion that leaves people fundamentally unchanged.

“ 15b . . . and they were afraid. 16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17 And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.”

AND THEY WERE AFRAID. Upon witnessing the man sitting, clothed, and in his right mind, the people “*were afraid*.” Luke says they were “*taken with great fear*” (Lk 8:37). This was not the fear they formerly had when confronting this untamable man. Then, they were fearful of being harmed – but that is not the kind of fear they have now. This fear was induced by an obvious power they had never before seen. It was brought on by an unparalleled change for which they could not logically account. Well did the Psalmist say, “*They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs*” NKJV (Psa 65:8). The people sensed they were in the presence of a power they did not understand, and thus could by no means control. The very power that brings hope to the godly causes fear in the ungodly.

THE ONES WHO SAW, TOLD THEM. Those who had seen what happened to the former demoniac, and what happened to the swine, “*described to them how it had happened*.” NASB I wonder how accurately they related the events. Luke says, “*They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed*” (Lk 8:36). Perhaps they heard the conversation between Jesus and the demon, and therefore knew why the swine had stampeded into the sea. Mark reveals the accent of the keepers’ report: “*and also concerning the swine*.” We know this is the case because they did not rejoice at the liberation of the man, but apparently lamented the loss of the swine. The response of those to whom they gave their report confirms that this was, in fact, the case. This report did not provoke the citizens to go back to their cities and bring out the sick, as they did at the setting of the sun in Capernaum (Lk 4:40). We do not find a group of men bringing an afflicted friend to Jesus, as the four men did in a certain house where Jesus was teaching (Mk 2:1-5).

It ought to be noted that those who speak in the behalf of the Lord Jesus are to give a proper report. They must have some understanding of the situation, or else their words will only prove to be stumbling blocks. Paul spoke of certain who desired to be teachers, describing them as “*understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*” (1 Tim 1:7) – or, “*they do not know what they are talking about.*” NIV You have no doubt heard such men. It is not possible for them to bring about proper responses, for God does not work through lies and misrepresentations of Himself.

THEY ASKED JESUS TO LEAVE. The people began “*to pray (plead NKJV) Him to depart out of their coasts.*” The demons had asked Jesus not to expel them from the very same territory, so that we see these people were controlled by Satan as well, even though they were not wild people cutting themselves with stones. Luke says “*the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them*” (Lk 8:37).

They saw no advantage whatsoever to the presence of Jesus. They only associated Him with disadvantage. It is not strange that the demons themselves were known to have said virtually the same thing to Jesus: “*Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee?*” (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34). This is what wayward Israel said about God to Moses: “*Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die*” (Deut 5:25). Flesh senses its own demise in the presence of the Lord. It had rather be totally without the Lord than to have Him occupy any region in which it finds itself.

We must be able to associate this event with things that are occurring in our time. People who have no heart for Jesus have not changed. They still want Him to leave their coasts. They are still afraid of His presence and influence, seeing it as bringing them great disadvantage. This kind of rejection is seen in the demand of people that there be less of the Word of God, shorter and more simple messages, and less exposure to the deep things of the Spirit of God. Such demands are nothing more than a request for Jesus to depart from the area! Some of our brethren have heard requests to cease speaking about sin, or the coming of the Lord, or the Holy Spirit, or the grace of God. Those petitions are nothing more than asking Jesus to leave the place. Those who seek for entertainment and earthy forms of communication are actually asking Jesus to leave, for He will have nothing to do with such nonsense.

However, as we will see, those who have genuinely received grace from Christ, and know it, will not ask Him to leave. Those who “*have tasted that the Lord is gracious*” (1 Pet 2:3), will not ask Him to leave! When people have basked in the blazing light of the Son of God, and have experienced Him expounding the Scriptures to their hearts, they will react like Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus: “*Abide with us!*” (Lk 24:29). For “*the elect,*” the very notion of Jesus leaving is dreadful. The ultimate apprehension is to be found where Jesus is **not** . As we peruse the human race, everyone who has been exposed to Jesus falls into one of two classes: those who want Him to **stay** , and those who want Him to **leave** . Which one are you?

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 52

“ Mark 5:18 And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.” (Mark 5:18-20; Lk 8:38-39)

INTRODUCTION

Those who live in a place and time where the words and works of Christ are despised have a remarkable presence. They confirm that the work of the Lord is genuine, even enduring the test of an adverse environment, and of time as well. We live in a time when the effectiveness of Christ within the lives of men is little known. This is what has given rise to all manner of religious professionals who deal with human frailties in the energy of the flesh. Here is a man who was completely restored without the intervention of anything traced back to Adam, or from the earth. There is no way to account for his renewed condition apart from Christ. His was not a physical or mental condition that gradually grew better – as a leper whose skin gradually returned to a normal state (Lev 13:16-17). That was a confirmation that there are difficulties of life that are only intended to be temporary. This was not an infirmity that he was enabled to bear, with no apparent outward change – as Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7-10). That was a confirmation of the sufficiency of God’s grace. It was not an oppressive infirmity for which repeated prayers were made until the Lord had mercy – like the illness of Epaphroditus (Phil 2:27). That was the Lord bearing long with the petitioners. But in this man we have an instant and thorough change – a marvelous picture of regeneration. It impacts upon the inward and outward nature of men – *“clothed and in his right mind.”* Such a thorough change is rapidly becoming unknown in our country, but it is the only kind of change that is wrought in the new birth – human skepticism notwithstanding.

“ 18 And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him.”

HE WAS COME INTO THE SHIP. The people of Gadara had asked Jesus to leave their coasts (Mk 5:17). In so doing, they had revealed they thought just as the demons who said to Jesus *“Let us alone”* (Mk 1:24), and *“What have I to do with Thee”* (Mk 5:7). **It is always a serious thing when it becomes apparent that the Divine nature stands in sharp contrast to that of demons and unregenerate men.** If, when this is recognized, there is not a plea for mercy, or a reaching out for Christ to change the situation, the adversarial state becomes more solidified. This is precisely why Jesus did as the people requested, and entered the ship, ready to depart from their coasts. He was in sharp variance with them.

A word ought to be said about the seriousness of attempting to obscure the glaring contrast between the Divine nature and fallen human nature. This has become quite common our day with the introduction of “seeker-friendly” methodologies within the church. The whole notion is totally wrong, and has resulted from spiritual blindness. It is actually the contrast of the Divine with the human that induces men to seek the Lord, abandoning their former manners and pursuits. By blurring the line of demarcation between the Holy and the unholy, men become blind to the gravity of their condition, and pass that blindness to others.

HE THAT HAD BEEN POSSESSED. The man’s former condition is now referred to in the past tense. He is no longer “*possessed*” by an unclean spirit. He is no longer under the control of the powers of darkness. Something has taken place that has removed him from the category in which he was once confined. Jesus did not, then, administer some form of temporary improvement. It was a thorough deliverance or rescue.

This prefigured the nature of the “*great salvation*” that He would accomplish among the sons of men. Just as this man is described as “*he that had been possessed,*” so “*the elect*” are described in terms of what they were: “*And such WERE some of you*” (1 Cor 6:11), “*ye WERE the servants of sin*” (Rom 6:17), “*ye WERE without Christ*” (Eph 2:12), “*ye WERE sometimes darkness*” (Eph 5:8), and “*ye WERE as sheep going astray*” (1 Pet 2:25). The “*redeemed of the Lord*” (Psa 107:2) are not merely a people who have changed their habits, just as the man of our text was not a man who only changed his habits. Our nature is changed in Christ, so that we can no longer be identified as we were prior to being washed, sanctified, and justified.

THAT HE MIGHT BE WITH HIM. The delivered man pursued Jesus to the ship, and “*begged to go with Him.*” NIV Luke says that he “*besought Him that he might be with Him*” (Lk 8:38). He wanted to leave the territory in which he had been hopelessly driven by the dark forces of the devil. Notice, when dominated by a legion of demons, these words came forth out of his mouth: “*What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not*” (Luke 8:28). But now he does not associate Jesus with torment or any form of repression or painful restraint. Now he wants to be **with** Jesus – no matter where the Lord goes. That is what a change of nature does – it alters the desires of a person.

FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE. When a person professes to have come to the Lord, received Him, or been “*saved,*” and yet has a fundamental propensity to his former manner of life, a most serious condition exists. When the people who had called for the crucifixion of Jesus were “*pricked in their hearts,*” they adjusted the course of their lives. They “*gladly received the Word,*” were “*baptized,*” and “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers*” (Acts 2:37-42). When Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the early church, confronted the living Christ, he asked what the Lord wanted him to do, fasted and prayed, was baptized, and “*straightway . . . preached Christ in the synagogues*” (Acts 9:5-20). When the people in Ephesus heard the Gospel, they “*believed,*” “*confessed,*” and even brought their occultist books “*together and burned them before all men*” (Acts 19:18-19).

It is not possible for a person to be “*born again*” (1 Pet 1:23) and not be fundamentally changed. One cannot receive a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*” (Ezek 36:26), and still maintain old preferences. It is not possible to be “*washed,*” and yet remain defiled (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:22), or to be “*reconciled*” (Rom 5:10), and yet remain at enmity! How is it possible for a person to be “*delivered from this present evil world*” and yet remain a willing and integral part of it (Gal 1:4)? If such things are, indeed, possible, then what good word will men have for this former demoniac? Will they tell him that once he is a demoniac he is always one, and must now live in the persuasion that he is forever vulnerable to demons? Will they suggest that he might

remain among the tombs, and occasionally run shrieking into the mountains and wilderness, with occasional outbreaks of violence to himself? Such a Gospel would certainly bring no comfort to the delivered man from Gadara, and neither does it bring any comfort from those opportunistic peddlers of psychological babble in our time. This man's house was not only swept and garnished, it was filled with new desires and ambitions!

“ 48 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

JESUS SUFFERED HIM NOT. Other versions read, “*Jesus did not permit him,*” NJKV “*He did not let him,*” NASB and “*But Jesus refused to permit him.*” AMPLIFIED Luke reads, “*but Jesus sent him away*” (Lk 8:38). This is one of the very rare instances in which a person wanted to follow Jesus, yet was not allowed to do so. You may remember that two young men once said they would follow Jesus, yet one wanted to return home to bury his father, and the other to bid farewell to those in his house. Jesus allowed neither man to follow Him (Lk 9:59-62). Now, here is a man what wants to follow Jesus, and makes no request for some additional time to set things straight at home. He will come immediately after Jesus, yet the Lord does not allow him to do so.

It may appear on the surface that this would be devastating to the one making the request, and that he would go away with great sorrow in his heart. However, we know from what follows that this was not what happened. This did not constitute a rejection by Christ. It rather confirms that Jesus was employing him in specific work – just as when He sent out the twelve (Matt 10:5), and the seventy as well (Luke 10:1). Both groups had to leave the immediate presence of Jesus to fulfill their commission. Yet, they did not leave His influence or His power.

There are other possible reasons for Christ not permitting this renewed man to travel with Him. You may remember that it is written of the evil spirit that formerly governed this man: “*For oftentimes it had caught him . . . and was driven of the devil into the wilderness*” (Luke 8:29). Would this “*unclean spirit*” catch the man again, overpowering him and compelling him to be more like a beast than a man? How would the man know this could not happen again – or that Prophet from Galilee would have power on the other side of Galilee as well as on this side? He would learn it by experience in the land of Gadara!

GO HOME TO THY FRIENDS. Other versions read, “*Go home to your people,*” NASB and “*Go home to your family*” NIV Luke reads, “*Return to thine own house*” (Lk 8:39). Here, the reference is to his former abode as compared to the ship Jesus was then occupying. It was said of this man, prior to being possessed by a legion of demons, he was a man “*out of the city*” (Lk 8:27). We do not know precisely how long it had been since he had been seen in that city, or by his friends and relatives. We do know that, according to Luke, it had been a “*long time*” (Lk 8:27). Now, Jesus sends him back to the people who knew how he was before he was possessed, and how he had become after he was possessed.

The testimony of the man would lose all of its force if it was not heard by those who knew what he used to be. The extent of the miracle, and its permanency could be witnessed first-hand by those who knew him best. We know from the account, that the man no doubt had moments of lucidity, even when he was possessed, for the demon would catch him, we are told – indicating that he was in some state of normalcy. Now, when he returned to his home, that demon would catch him **no more**, driving him into the mountains and wilderness,

and compelling him to make his abode among the tombs. The man and those to whom he witnessed, would see the permanency of Christ's work – that the demons obeyed Jesus even when the Lord did not remain in the territory from which they themselves did not want to be expelled.

TELL THEM. Mark says “*tell them,*” and Luke says “*show*” them (Lk 8:39). That is, the appearance of the delivered man would match his testimony. Jesus spelled out what he was to report: “*tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*” Luke reads, “*show how great things God hath done unto thee*” (Luke 8:39).

The only reason for declaring what he was before was in order that men might compare it with what he was now. That is the only reason for announcing deliverance from a sinful life or a period of dominance by the devil. If a person is not obviously under the dominion of the Lord, what good is it to say he was formerly under the dominance of the devil? If a person is not apparently righteous, of what value is it to say that he was formerly unrighteous? When it is said that the Lord has “*done*” something for a person, it is to be understood that something of note has taken place. This particular man was no longer naked, no longer running about in a maddened state, and was no longer demented. He was to tell the people **how** this change had taken place, and why he was now clothed, in his right mind, and compelled to take into his heart and mind what was said by the Lord Jesus.

All of this reveals the remarkable extent of the man's recovery. **His latter state was as extraordinary among normal men as his former state was among depraved men, and it was because the Lord had compassion upon Him.** That is the kind of thing compassion does. It not only relieves, it also confers. It not only removes, it also brings.

Later, when Jesus came into the Decapolis, a ten-city complex, the citizenry brought a deaf man to Jesus for healing (Mk 7:35-36). Upon seeing the working of the Lord those people said, “*He hath done all things well*” (Mk 7:37). The testimony of the former demoniac was effective!

“ 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”

HE DEPARTED. Luke says, “*he went his way*” (Lk 8:39). From one point of view, I can only imagine how difficult it was for this renewed man to leave Jesus. I can tell you that he never would have left if Jesus had not told him to do so. He had to leave like the Ethiopian eunuch had to leave Philip (Acts 8:39). There came a time when Jesus had to leave this man like Paul had to leave the elders at Ephesus, when he “*kneeled down, and prayed with them all,*” knowing they would “*see his face no more*” (Acts 20:36-37). See, the work of the Lord does not center around the people who are blessed, but around the One who blesses them! Jesus was preparing himself to take away the sins of the world. Those who had been chosen to stay with Him through everything leading up to that event remained with Him “*to the end*” (John 13:1). This man did not fall into that number. Notwithstanding, he was given a work to do that would yield good fruit. Being “*made willing in the day of His power,*” (Psa 110:3), the man did not hesitate to obey the Lord. He immediately did what he was told.

HE BEGAN TO PUBLISH. Sometimes Jesus told the people He healed NOT to tell anyone what was done (Matt 8:4; Mk 7:36; Lk 5:14; 8:56; 9:21). Those words were generally spoken in the area where Jesus did most of His miracles. But this was a different area, dominated by the Gentiles. They needed to know more of the Lord Jesus, for He would not spend much time among those people. Now he sends forth an ambassador to testify to what Jesus of Nazareth could and did do. Mark says

the man proclaimed it “*in Decapolis*,” a ten-city complex. Luke focuses on the area where the man had apparently lived before, and to which he returned: “*And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city*” (Luke 8:39).

GREAT THINGS. Mark accents the fact that Jesus did something that could not otherwise be done: “*how great things Jesus had done FOR him*” (Mk 5:20). Luke places the stress on what the man actually experienced: “*how great things Jesus had done UNTO him*” (Lk 5:39). Just what are “*great things*?” Other versions read, “*all*,” NKJV and “*how much*.” NIV

The expression “*great things*” can mean “*how many things*,” emphasizing the extent of the work. In this case, it included deliverance from being captivated by an evil spirit, driven into the mountains, driven into the wilderness, running about naked, cutting himself with stones, and living among the tombs. An extensive deliverance, indeed! It can also mean “*how extraordinary were the things*,” emphasizing how there was no comparison of the Lord’s work with any other accomplishments. The deliverance of this man was, indeed, extraordinary, uncommon, and unusual! In it Jesus spoke to and dominated a legion of wicked spirits. A herd of swine was lost in the deep when the demons entered them. In a moment of time the man was made every whit whole, in both mind and body. He was lucid and held an intelligent conversation with the Lord of glory, whereas his mouth was before used by demons.

I think that one of the telling signs of our times is the lack of the extraordinary. When the average churchman is asked to give an account of the working of the Lord, if there is not total silence, there is often the recounting of something that is altogether too ordinary. I question that God receives the kind of praise that is characterized by the mere reports of beautiful natural scenes, the supply of the necessities of life, and a state of good health. It is not that such thanksgivings are not comely, for they are good and to be rendered to the Lord. However, the “*great salvation*” that has been wrought out by the Lord Jesus extends far beyond such benefits, and is worthy of an infinitely greater degree of praise and honor.

When, on the day of Pentecost, people of God were “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” and began to speak forth “*the wonderful works of God*” (Acts 2:4,11), does anyone imagine they were delivering weather reports, political updates, and reports from the local hospital? Indeed, what had taken place in the spiritual realm was as unique as the healing of the man in the dark region of Gadara! If it is true that God has “*made His wonderful works to be remembered*” (Psa 111:4), then it is also true that they are to be reported, or proclaimed. In the case of the former demoniac, a single man went through a ten-city region declaring the greatness of the work he had experienced. Concerning the greater work of Jesus, it is written, “*The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it*” (Psa 68:11). Our day demands that greater things be reported by the church than is common.

ALL MEN DID MARVEL. The testimony of the man, coupled with his very visible and attesting appearance, caused all men to “*marvel*,” or be “*amazed*.” NIV It is as though their speech dried up, and there was nothing left to do but be astounded that such things had taken place in their region. When men are caused to “*marvel*,” they are confessing that something has taken place, or has been said, that is transcendent to nature – something that cannot be accounted for in the seen realm (Matt 8:27; 9:8,33; 21:20; Mk 12:17). The Gospel contains such a report. Wherever it is taken seriously, it is seen as absolutely unique, and will cause men to marvel.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 53

“ Mark 5:21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was nigh unto the sea. 22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, 23 And besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. 24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.”

(Mark 5:21-24; Matt 9:18-19; Luke 8:40-42)

INTRODUCTION

Mark headed this book, *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”* (Mark 1:1). As we proceed through his book, it becomes glaringly apparent that the Gospel of Jesus Christ deals with who He is and what He does. At no point does Mark shift his writing to focus on another subject or another person. He never veers into a literary bypath, commenting on the environ of the country of Galilee, the city Jerusalem, or the Temple. He is not found providing us with a lengthy description of the landscape, the Temple service, or the various feasts that were being observed. The focus is always placed on Jesus, and the events that are mentioned relate to Him, what He did and what He said. If a demoniac, a Feast, or a crowd of 5,000 men is mentioned, it is always in association with the Lord Jesus. If the scribes and Pharisees are considered, it is from Jesus’ viewpoint. If there is a record of the detailed teaching of a person, it is always Jesus’ teaching. We read about **His** perspective, **His** teaching, and **His** works. That is the grand theme of the Gospel. Luke said his Gospel was a *“treatise,”* or account, *“of all that **Jesus** began both to do and to teach”* (Acts 1:1). When, therefore, we are considering these things, we are considering the Gospel of Christ – the beginning of it: what He *“**began** to do and teach,”* *“the **beginning** of the Gospel.”* All of this sheds light on the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

“ Mk 5:21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was nigh unto the sea.”

PASSED OVER AGAIN. Jesus has just healed the Gadarene demoniac, and, at the request of the citizens of that region, has left the area and returned to region of Galilee. When he left Galilee, he had just finished teaching the people by the seaside, telling the parable of the sower, and expounding it to His disciples. This was done on the sea shore: *“And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land”* (Mark 4:1). Now He returns to resume His ministry in that area.

Jesus conducted His entire ministry in this way, moving here and there, leaving and

returning, always on the move. One time He said, *“I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent”* (Luke 4:43). What does all of this mean? Simply this, that Jesus always did the works He saw His Father doing. He said the works He did were *“the works of My Father”* (John 10:37). Also, His ministry did not center in a particular individual, city, or region. No one owned Him but God the Father.

MUCH PEOPLE GATHERED UNTO HIM. When He left, a lot of people had been gathered to Him, and when He returned the same condition resumed. Prior to leaving it is said of the people, *“And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore”* (Matt 13:2). Matthew also speaks of the great following Jesus had in the region of Galilee. *“And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan”* (Matt 4:25). It would prove to be a temporary revival, but Jesus honored it while it was present. In a way, this depicted the kind of response that would be found in the world to His great redemption. Later Jesus would affirm, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me”* (John 12:32).

True revivals, regardless of their duration, always center in the person of the Lord Jesus. You will note that when Jesus sent out the disciples (both the twelve and the seventy), they went to the people (Matt 10:5; Lk 10:1). The people, however, never gathered to them as they did to Jesus, even though they worked many wonders among the people. When God draws people, it is to His Son. Thus Jesus said, *“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him”* (John 6:44). When, therefore, men or an institution formed by men, upstage Jesus, the Father is not in the matter.

Mark says that when Jesus returned *“much people gathered unto Him.”* Luke says, *“And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people **gladly received Him** : for they were all **waiting for Him** ”* (Luke 8:40). How different was His reception in Galilee than it was in Gadara. The people across the sea had asked Him to *“depart out of their coasts”* (Mk 8:34). On this side of the sea the people *“gladly received Him.”* Other versions say the crowd *“welcomed Him,”* NKJV *“were glad to see Him,”* BBE and *“received and welcomed Him gladly.”* AMPLIFIED How this must have refreshed the heart of the Savior – particularly in the wake of the chilly reception He had received among the Gadarenes. Here were people who saw advantages to Jesus being among them. In Gadara His presence was only associated with disadvantages.

Luke explains why the people were so glad to see Jesus again. They *“were all waiting for Him,”* or *“expecting Him,”* NIV or *“waiting and looking for Him.”* AMPLIFIED Perhaps they had seen the vessel approaching their shore from the land of Gadara. We are not told how long they had been waiting for the Lord, for that was not the point. The point is that when He returned, the people were ready and waiting for Him.

Herein is a vivid picture of the posture of those who see in Jesus the Answer to all of their need. The Lord has left the region of the world in order to minister in the heavenly realms. But He will return again, and blessed are those who are waiting for Him, and will gladly receive Him. We are told that the grace of God teaches us to look for *“that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”* As we wait on the shore of time, we do so denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, living *“soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”* (Tit 2:11-13). Like those in Galilee, the returning King will be gladly received by them, for they will be waiting for Him. I have no doubt that Jesus saw these future realities in the people who welcomed Him back to their region.

HE WAS NIGH UNTO THE SEA. One version reads, “*He stayed by the seashore*” NASB This is a sort of depiction of the posture Jesus assumes when teaching the people. He remains close to the place of disembarkment, leaving the people with a sense of the temporary nature of external benefits. This was also a situation where the people had to come to Him – and they did, because they were waiting and longing for Him. True religion can only exist where there is an unquenchable appetite for Jesus, an eager looking for Him, and a gathering unto Him.

“ 22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, 23 And besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”

Suddenly one surfaces from the crowd. He is not content to remain among the faceless masses, or receive a general benefit from the Lord. This man has a need that only Jesus can meet, and he boldly separates himself from the crowd and speaks personally to Jesus.

ONE OF THE RULERS OF THE SYNAGOGUE. Matthew refers to “*a certain ruler*” (Matt 9:18). Like Mark, Luke also identified him as “*a ruler of the synagogue*” (Lk 8:41). He differed from another “*ruler of the synagogue*” who was indignant when Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath day (Lk 13:14). John mentions that a great number “*among the chief rulers*” of the synagogue believed on Jesus (John 12:42). When Paul and Silas were attending a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, the “*rulers of the synagogue*” asked them if they had “*any word of exhortation*” (Acts 13:15). We read in Acts of a man named Crispus, who was a “*the chief ruler of the synagogue,*” who “*believed on the Lord with all of his house*” (Acts 18:8). Another man named Sosthenes is also identified as “*the chief ruler of the synagogue*” (Acts 18:17).

It is generally understood that these were the “*elders*” to whom the care of the synagogue was committed (Matt 15:2; 16:21; 21:23; 26:3). They apparently presided over the gatherings, as suggested in Luke 13:14 and Acts 13:15.

Israel also had certain that held key positions among the people (Ex 18:12; 19:7; 24:1; Lev 4:15). These also exist in the body of Christ (Acts 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim 5:17; James 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1). They are also associated with “*rule*” (1 Tim 5:17), something that is specifically associated with laboring in the Word and the doctrine (1 Tim 5:17), and speaking the Word of God (Heb 13:7).

JAIRUS BY NAME. The name Jairus means, “whom, God enlightens” – certainly an appropriate name for this ruler of the synagogue. Notice, he was not there as a ruler, but was among the crowd as one who stood in need of Jesus. This is also how the Lord Jesus saw him – a particular individual to whom mercy could be shown.

HE SAW AND FELL. Although there was a crowd there, Jairus “*saw*” Jesus and made his way to Him, falling at His feet. Matthew says he “*worshipped Him*” (Matt 9:18). The crowd did not stop him from coming to the very feet of Jesus, and prostrating Himself before the Master. This kind of eagerness, determination, and humility has been largely lost in the American church. It is because the breed of Christianity that is being embraced does not promote this kind of response. The more institutionalism prevails, the less people extend themselves to come to and worship Jesus, and to humble themselves before Him.

HE BESOUGHT HIM GREATLY. Other versions read, “*made strong prayers,*” BBE “*implored Him earnestly,*” ESV “*pleaded earnestly,*” NAB and “*begged Him earnestly.*” NKJV

One version of Luke says he “*began to entreat Him*” NASB (Lk 8:40), indicating the supplication was in detail, extended, and even repeated. This is a level of prayer in which more of the person is found. James refers to it as “*the effectual fervent pray of a righteous man*” (James 5:16). It is said of our blessed Lord that He “*offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears*” (Heb 5:7). Paul wrote of widows who continued “*in supplications and prayers night and day*” (1 Tim 5:5). This is a petition that presses the matter, and in which the individual does not “*faint*” – for men are always to pray, and “*not to faint*” (Luke 18:1). It is the type of prayer in which it will do us well to become more expert – prayers with more faith and fervency.

MY LITTLE DAUGHTER. Mark says “*little daughter*” – “*little*” in age. Luke tells us it was Jairus’ “*only daughter, about twelve years of age*” (Lk 8:42). Matthew says that she was already dead – “*my daughter is even now dead*” (Matt 9:18). By this, we understand he meant that his daughter was as good as dead, being in the last stage of life. Mark says she “*lieth at the point of death*” (Mk 5:23). Luke says, “*she lay a dying*” (Lk 8:42).

LAY THY HANDS ON HER. How fervently Jairus pleads, “*I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.*” Matthew represents Jairus as saying the same words (Matt 9:18). Luke says Jairus “*besought Him that He would come into his house*” (Lk 8:40). Jairus was seeking the **immediate** presence and involvement of Jesus.

Here is an expression of the persuasion of faith. There was no question about the power of the Lord. It only remained for Him to confront the situation, and it would be resolved. A touch from Jesus, and all would be well. Precious is the soul who is persuaded of the truth of this, as Jairus was. Over the years I have found that institutionalized religion tends to remove this persuasion from the heart. Dead religion actually leads an individual to cease thinking of Jesus as a Worker, viewing Him only in a theoretical or speculative sense. You may rest assured that such a posture will not move the Lord to work in our behalf.

“ 24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him, and thronged Him.”

JESUS WENT WITH HIM. Matthew writes, “*And Jesus arose, and followed him*” (Mat 9:19), for Jesus was seated, and teaching the people concerning not putting new wine into old bottles (Matt 9:15-17). Thus, upon His return from Gadara, and confronting the people who were waiting for Him, Jesus was in the process of teaching the people.

We learn from this that Jesus’ works did not conflict with His teaching. Technically speaking, Jairus’ did not interrupt the Lord. He rather made a request that was in perfect accord with what Jesus was teaching – else Jesus would not have gone with him. Once Jesus rejected an appeal that He go to a certain house and speak to one of its members about a more equitable distribution of the family inheritance (Lk 12:13). That particular request was at a variance with His mission, and therefore He did not honor it.

It is important that we consider the requests we make of the Lord. Are they in keeping with His revealed purpose? Do they ask Him to act in strict accord with His nature? Where such comparisons are not made, it is quite possible that we will “*ask amiss,*” with our own objectives in mind rather than the Lord’s (James 4:3).

There is only one other time that Jesus is said to have gone with someone. It was when the elders of the Jews spoke to Him in behalf of a centurion whose servant was “*sick, and ready to die.*” It is written that “*Jesus went with them*” (Lk 7:6). Jesus does not always work according to a known outward pattern. The faith of Jairus seemed to sense this. Do you sense it also?

MUCH PEOPLE FOLLOWED HIM. Other versions read, “*a great multitude was following Him,*” NASB “*a large crowd followed Him,*” NIV and “*a great crowd kept following Him.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew focuses on the disciples of Jesus saying that Jesus followed Jairus, “*and so did His disciples*” (Matt 9:19).

Notice that Christ’s disciples and the multitudes did not assume that Jesus moving away from them meant that they had to be separated from Him. They followed Him where He was going, even though He was following Jairus’ to where **he** was going. Jairus did not ask them to come, but they came anyway, and Jesus did not ask them to leave.

Here we see a certain manner of the Kingdom. Spiritual life does not consist so much of the Lord joining you in what you are doing, as you joining Him in what He is doing. This manner was depicted in the movement of Israel through the wilderness. They did not chart their own course, asking the Lord to accompany them. Rather, the Lord directed them with a cloud. It is written, “*And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up*” (Ex 40:36-37). This is how the Lord directs His people – not by pointing and saying “Go!” but by leading them.

Thus we read of the leading of the Spirit (Rom 8:14), Jesus leading the sheep (John 10:3), and the goodness of God leading us (Rom 2:4). All of this postulates the attentiveness of the people – having their affection set on things above (Col 3:1-2), looking unto Jesus (Heb 12:2), and looking for His return (Tit 2:13). Where this attentiveness is not found, it is not possible to be led by the Lord, or to accompany Him wherever He goes.

I am persuaded that Jesus has moved Himself so as to lead certain people into a deeper fellowship with Himself, where more can be seen and known of Him. Perhaps He has removed Himself in order to work in a different manner, and to enable His disciples to work with Him. He may have led them into a fuller and deeper life, or to more lofty heights in their understanding. But, unlike the throng on the sea shore, they were not able to follow Him because they were not alert, and were unaware that He had moved.

MUCH PEOPLE THROGGED HIM. Luke says “*as He went the people thronged Him*” (Lk 8:42). These people did more than follow Jesus at a distance – “*afar off*” – as Peter once did (Matt 26:58). They “*thronged Him,*” “*pressing in on Him.*” NASB “*bumping up against Him,*” BBE “*jostling Him,*” ISV and pressing Him “*from all sides [so as to almost suffocate Him].*” AMPLIFIED

Only a large crowd can “*throng,*” crowding around an object or person – in this case, the Lord Jesus. Two or three people cannot “*throng.*” In our text, there were no “back-seaters” present. Everyone was seeking to get as close to Jesus as they could – like a great circle of people that became tighter and smaller as they eagerly moved as close as they could to the Lord.

This again is a vivid picture of what happens when people recognize the Lord. They always try to get closer to Him. If they hear someone speaking His Gospel, they make every effort to get closer. Kingdom life is aptly described as drawing near. Thus we are admonished, “*Let us draw near*” (Heb 10:22), and “*draw nigh unto God*” (James 4:8), “*come boldly*” (Heb 4:16) and “*come unto Me*” (Matt 11:28). There is no God, Christ, or Spirit in a religion of distance – one that allows a person to remain aloof and detached from the Savior. I must confess that I

long to see Jesus thronged with seeking multitudes. But even if that does not occur, I myself will press in.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 54

THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD, #1

“Mark 5:25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. 28 For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole. 29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.”
(Mk 5:25-29; Matt 9:20-21; Lk 8:43)

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Jesus on earth was an introduction to “*the kingdom of God*” – its reality, power, and objectives. In Jesus, God was preparing men to be transformed, obtaining the nature God, and entering into His work. Jesus did not come to make men better at what they do, but to involve them in what He is doing. Just as Jesus enabled men and women to recover from the debilitating effects of sickness and disease, so He enables them to recover from sin and transgression, cleansing them of contamination, and strengthening them within. While this transformation had been prophesied in part, all that it entailed had not yet been perceived. Moses spoke of God circumcising the hearts of the people (Deut 30:6). Ezekiel spoke of men receiving a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26). David, because of his spiritual sensitivity, saw the need for newness. Therefore he prayed, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*” (Psa 51:10). Yet, very, very little was understood of a thorough change of this sort. In fact, there are precious few people in our time who perceive this, even though we are living in the time when it is being fully implemented. Instead of men taking advantage of “*the day of salvation,*” they often theorize about human conduct, offering explanations for moral deficiencies, and mapping out some temporary remedy for the various inadequacies of “*the flesh.*” Such miserable teachers and leaders are like the physicians of our text, that take from the people, but make them no better. You will not find such inadequacies in the ministry of Jesus. When He made people whole, they were “*whole,*” with no evidence of the infirmity from which they were healed. In doing this, our Lord was introducing His “*great salvation.*”

“ Mk 5:25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse”

Here is one of the very few instances when the attention of Jesus appeared to be drawn away from the one He was committed to help. Jairus had informed Jesus of the deteriorating condition of his “*little daughter,*” who was at the point of death. Without saying a word, Jesus arose and went with him. Now, on the way, a seeming delay will occur while Jesus deals with another person. In this incident we will be taught about being patient, not making haste, continuing to have faith, and not viewing our own condition as being of primary importance. In our spiritual lives, these

lessons are of great significance. Life must not be approached as though we were the main people, or our circumstances and desires are the principal ones.

PROTRACTED INFIRMITY. Mark and Luke say the woman “*had an issue of blood twelve years*” (Mk 5:25; Lk 8:43). Matthew says, “*she was **diseased** with an issue of blood twelve years*” (Matt 9:20). We would call “*an issue of blood*” a “*hemorrhage.*” NASB Other versions refer to this as a “*flow of blood,*” NKJV “*a flux of blood,*” DARBY “*a discharge of blood,*” ESV “*subject to bleeding,*” NIB and “*chronic bleeding.*” ISV

This was a diseased condition – a sort of quirk of nature. It was not the result of an injury, but of the introduction of some defiling condition that caused the body to react abnormally – an ordinary condition that became extraordinary.

This type of infirmity was mentioned in the ceremonial law, and certain guidelines were to attend its presence (Lev 15:25-31). This flow of blood was associated with the woman’s menstrual cycle, when that flow of blood continued “*beyond the time*” normally experienced (Lev 15:25a). During the entire time, the woman was ceremonially “*unclean,*” any bed or chair she occupied were unclean, and whoever touched any of those things became unclean, (Lev 15:25b-27). After the flow stopped, she was unclean for seven additional days (Lev 15:28). On the eighth day following the cessation of the flow, she was to bring two turtle doves or young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the door of the tabernacle (Lev 15:29). The priest was then to offer one bird for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, “*to make an atonement for her before the Lord for the issue of her uncleanness*” (Lev 15:30).

At the time of our text, therefore, this woman was technically “*unclean*” – it was the time of her “*separation,*” when she was not allowed among the rest of the people (Lev 15:25-26). According to the Law, she should not have ventured out among the people. However, this is an occasion that is governed by grace, not by law. It teaches us that grace triumphs over circumstance, and is superior to the Law WITHOUT any Divine qualities being compromised.

MISERABLE PHYSICIANS. This poor woman had “*suffered many things of **many physicians** and had spent all that she had.*” Luke informs us she “*had spent all her living upon physicians*” (Lk 8:43). Her failure to improve was not owing to any lack of effort. She did not remain the same because she failed to look for help. She had sought for help from sundry specialists in the varied diseases of humanity.

We are not to interpret this as a condemnation of all physicians. Jesus Himself said, the sick had “*need of a physician*” (Matt 9:12). He would not have said this if the occupation of a physician was unlawful. The sick, for example, never have need of a “*sorcerer,*” like Simon, who gave the impression “*that himself was some great one*” (Acts 8:9). Additionally, one of the chief men used by God was a physician – “*Luke, the beloved physician*” (Col 4:14). Rather than abandoning his physician-skills, the language suggests that he may have helped Paul with them. The point of this text is that there are circumstances that extend beyond the ability and knowledge of a physician. There are no such circumstances with Jesus.

NOTHING BETTERED. In spite of the variety of physicians, and the resources spent on them, there was no improvement in the condition of the woman. Her flow of blood continued without interruption for twelve years.

GROWING WORSE. The condition of this woman was not a static one, remaining the same. Rather, her condition “*grew worse.*” Her status continued to dissipate and deteriorate, being in a constant state of decline.

THE PARALLEL. There is a remarkably precise parallel between this woman's condition and that of humanity. There is a moral and spiritual condition that is growing worse within men. A number of "physicians" have sought to correct the disorder. The psychiatrists have tried, as well as the sociologists, governments, legislators, educators, and others. The false church has entered the arena also, marketing its wares, professing to have the answer to the human dilemma. But none of them have been able to resolve the condition. For those outside of Christ, things are growing worse. They will continue to do so until people make an association of the Lord Jesus Christ with the resolution of human deficiency.

" 27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. 28 For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole."

SHE HEARD OF JESUS. Giving the most thorough record of this account, Mark tells us the woman "had heard of Jesus." Other versions read she "heard about Jesus," NKJV "heard the reports about Jesus," RSV and "heard all about the wonderful miracles Jesus did." LIVING The things concerning Jesus that are known by us were not known at that time. How much He "loved the world" was not fully known. His origin and mission had not been clarified as they have been since He has been exalted. It was not a finely tuned theology that was being reported, although that would surely be formed, especially through Paul. What she heard was what Jesus was doing then – perhaps some of the gracious words that He was saying. They probably were more in the nature of testimonials from those who had witnessed the working of the Lord, or perhaps a personal word from someone upon whom Jesus had mercy.

There probably were other kinds of views of Jesus that were being carried from place to place. Some had said of Him, "He has a demon and is insane" NASB (John 10:20). Others said, "We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is" (John 9:29). Certain scribes said of Jesus, "This man blasphemeth" (Matt 9:3). However, these are not the reports that this woman chose to believe. She listened to, and embraced, the true reports. As a result, she received faith, for "faith cometh by hearing" Rom 10:17).

OBSERVATION. As the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), it is the church's responsibility to deliver an accurate report of the Lord Jesus Christ – one that is free from the taint of flesh and the contaminant of worldly wisdom. Men cannot "obtain like precious faith" by believing a lie, distortion, or misrepresentation of the Savior.

CAME IN THE PRESS BEHIND. She came "behind Him in the crowd," NKJV coming "up behind Him in the throng." AMPLIFIED Although she was "unclean," she made her way to Jesus, doing so in the least obvious way. Also, her condition gave her no advantage in coming to Jesus. She could not come running to Jesus, like the multitude that met Him when He was coming down from the mount of transfiguration (Mk 9:15), or the rich young ruler who ran to Jesus to inquire concerning the obtaining of eternal life (Mk 10:17).

From one point of view, she was shrinking back in humility, coming "behind" Jesus. From yet another point of view, she was boldly coming – drawing near to find mercy, and grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16). There are precious few souls who have had to work their way through a crowd to reach Jesus – but that is precisely what this woman had to do. She had to work her way past curiosity seekers, the casually interested, and those who were merely going along with the crowd.

Make no mistake about this, heaven was working in this circumstance! God was drawing the woman to Jesus, giving her just enough strength to make it a step at a time. She was being strengthened within and without to push through a mass of people to get the

blessing.

TOUCHED HIS GARMENT. *“She touched His garment.”* Matthew says she *“touched the hem of His garment”* (Matt 9:20). Luke says she touched *“the border of His garment”* (Lk 8:44). This was the lower part of Jesus’ clothing – near His feet, where the woman saw that she must be. How long it took this suffering woman to get to Jesus, we do not know. However, it is apparent that she is among those who *“fainted not”* in her quest for the blessing of the Lord (Lk 18:1). She was among those noble souls of whom it was prophesied, they *“shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint”* (Isa 40:31)

THE REASONING OF FAITH. Those who approach to Jesus are invariably thinking people. Raw emotion cannot draw you to Christ! This woman reasoned, *“If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.”* NKJV Matthew says, *“touch His garment”* (Matt 9:21). What is the source of such a thought? No known prophet had declared such a thing. John the Baptist did not present Jesus in such a manner. There are some who would chide anyone for thinking such a things, saying there was no precedent for imagining that touching Christ’s clothes would yield such a singular benefit. Some have suggested the woman thought there were some healing properties in the Lord’s clothing. I rather think this view demeans the faith of the woman. The results of her action, as well as Jesus’ specific words to her, confirm that it was faith in Him, not in His clothes, that was her focus.

This woman associated the Person of Christ with what was around Him, and not vice versa. She reasoned from the unseen to the seen – which is the peculiar property of faith. She was persuaded that His Person was superior, and that it influenced everything about Him, even what He wore. In her heart, she also saw Jesus as being superior to the Law, which would not allow her to take this approach. You can count on true faith to constrain thinking in the proper manner – that is, within the framework of the facts of the matter.

“ 29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.”

STRAIGHTWAY. *“Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up.”* NKJV A condition that had prevailed over this woman for twelve years was instantly corrected. A leper was *“immediately”* cleansed (Matt 8:3). Two blind men *“immediately”* received their sight (Matt 20:24). The oppressive fever of Peter’s mother-in-law left her *“immediately”* (Mk 1:31). A palsied man confined to his pallet, *“immediately”* got up, picked up his bed, and walked (Mk 2:12). It is said of a deaf and dumb man, *“And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain”* (Mark 7:35). Conditions, however adversarial and powerful they may appear, instantly yield to the Lord of glory.

We must never deprive people of the hope that if they, in faith, can touch the Lord, there is no such thing as a situation that will not be resolved. If *“virtue”* ever leaves the Savior and goes to a person, there is no form of bondage or oppression that can dominate us.

FOUNTAIN OF HER BLOOD. The abnormal flow of blood was cut off at its source: *“the fountain of her blood.”* The root of the problem was removed. Ordinarily, men deal only with surface issues, for that is all they can see: the symptoms. They have all manner of supposed remedies that can, at the very best, reduce the symptoms, and make for a little comfort – even though the fundamental problem remains. However, this is not the manner in which the Lord Jesus works.

The effects described under the Law, which made what the woman touched *“unclean”* (Lev 15:25), were here reversed. Instead of defiling what she touched, what she touched – the hem

of Jesus' garment – cleansed her. Even so, the very condition that moved the Law to condemn us – *“the soul that sinneth, it shall die”* (Ezek 18:4) – when brought to Jesus in faith, is answered with justification and cleanness of heart.

In matters pertaining to the soul, men must seek remedies that go deep – to the source of the problem. It is not enough to treat symptoms by counseling, discussions, experiments, and the likes. All problems, whether external or internal, have a root, or source. If men do not deal with that root, there can be no permanent resolution to the problem.

We ought to note that this is precisely what the Lord addresses in His *“great salvation.”* He deals with the root of the matter. By nature, the heart of man is *“deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”* (Jer 17:9). Therefore, salvation provides a *“new heart”* – removing the *“stony heart”* and giving a *“heart of flesh.”* From another point of view, the heart has been covered over a hard shell, and thus the spirit of fallen man is *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Eph 2:1). Therefore, the Lord circumcises the heart (Col 2:11), quickening men, raising them from the dead, and giving them a *“new spirit”* (Ezek 36:26). Adam, because of sin, has been written off. Therefore, in Christ we are made *“a new creature,” “created in Christ Jesus”* (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). No religion, regardless of its impressiveness, is valid that does not change the person, dealing with the *“fountain”* of all sin and uncleanness.

SHE FELT IN HER BODY. A real work from God brings evidences with it. Here was a woman who had an infirmity in her body. When that infirmity was removed, she *“felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.”* NKJV The infirmity was unique, and the effects of it were keenly felt. Therefore, the cure and the effects of it were also felt. This was a *“feeling”* of confidence that stemmed from a consciousness of what had really taken place in her. It ought to be noted that confidence is also the result of the Lord's working in us. That is why such things as *“assurance,” “confidence,”* and the *“rejoicing of the hope”* are found within those who have truly *“tasted of the Lord that He is gracious”* (Heb 3:14; 6:11; 10:22; 1 Pet 2:3).

This woman did not have someone shouting in her ear, telling her what had happened. Through the very moment that the fountain of her blood dried up, there had not been a single word passed between her and the Savior. No request had been made by her, like that of Jairus. She had not been called like blind Bartimaeus prior to his healing. She had not been brought in by some friends like the palsied man who was let down through the roof (Mk 2:4). There were only four things that preceded this wondrous miracle, but there were sufficient to move heaven. 1 She heard of Jesus. 2 She worked her way through the press to touch him. 3 She reasoned in herself that if she could touch His clothes, she would be healed. 4 She touched the hem of His garment.

No person of sound mind would attempt to combine those things into a procedure, and teach men this was the way to be healed of an *“issue of blood.”* The manner in which she approached the Lord was not the secret, but her faith in Jesus Himself. Under the Law, it was the way in which you went about things that made them acceptable. This was so because *“the law is not of faith”* (Gal 3:12).

There are still people who imagine that Divine acceptance is strictly based upon HOW you do what He commanded you to do. Such an approach would have been of no value to this woman, and neither is it of any value to anyone else.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 55

THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD, #2

“Mark 5:30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? 31 And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? 32 And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. 34 And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” (Mark 5:30-34; Matt 9:22; Luke 8:45-48)

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of an account of Jesus doing His Father’s works, going about doing good. On a single occasion, two great works will be done – twin demonstrations of Divine power. Both take place on people with a twelve-year history. A young girl will be raised who was twelve years old and died. A mature woman will be healed that had an issue of blood for twelve years. Both cases were hopeless from a human point of view. We can see these miracles as Jesus showing compassion. We can also see them as occasions for God to receive glory. They can also be seen as an index to the Divine nature. They also are sterling examples of the kind of works God plans, determines, and lays out before hand – for that is the kind of works Jesus did (John 10:37; 14:12). We will also see the intensely personal nature of Jesus’ works. His virtue is able to focus on a single individual, even though He may be surrounded by many people. As great as He is, He will hold a conversation with the lowly, conferring peace upon them, and sending them away with joy and confidence. He will not allow a believer to get lost in the crowd, even though men are prone to do so. Oh, how very much is to be learned as we peruse the Gospel accounts. They are like interpreters of the Savior, and commentaries on the great salvation wrought out for and in us.

“ Mk 5:30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? 31 And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?”

Surrounded by a throng, Jesus is on his way to the house of Jairus, where a crisis has arisen. His daughter is dying. A diseased woman has made her way through the press and touched the hem of His garment, reasoning in herself that the touch will make her whole – and, indeed, that is precisely what happened. Now we will see the reaction of Jesus.

KNOWING IN HIMSELF. Jesus is acutely aware of His own Person. He knows what is hurled at Him by the devil, and He knows when virtue goes out of Him to bless another. As

soon as this woman touched Jesus, He knew what had happened. He lived on a spiritual level where what was within did not escape His attention because of what was without. David knew when his soul was “*cast down*” (Psa 42:5, 11; 43:5). Jesus knew when His soul was “*sorrowful*” (Matt 26:28), and when it was “*troubled*” (John 12:27). He was, so to speak, in tune with His inward man. He immediately knows “*in Himself*” what has occurred. He was **not** like Samson, who did **not** know the Lord had departed from him (Judges 16:20). Nor, indeed, was he like king Saul from whom the “*Spirit of the Lord departed,*” and he was not aware of it (1 Sam 6:14).

This is one of the dangers of being spiritually asleep. In such a condition one does not know when the Spirit is striving, the devil is tempting, or strength is leaving. A desensitized soul is tottering on the brink of eternal ruin, and does not even know it. When this sensitivity is lost, the individual has exchanged his soul for some of the world’s baubles (Matt 16:26).

VIRTUE HAD GONE OUT OF HIM. Earlier it is said of Jesus, “*And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all*” (Luke 6:19). Other versions read, “*power had gone out of Him.*” NKJV And, indeed, the word translated “*virtue*” is the word ordinarily translated “*power*” (dunamis). There is, as I see it, a reason why the word is translated “*virtue*” here. This word accents the fact that Christ’s power was inherent – it was an essential part of Him. The disciples healed diseases by delegated power – but “*virtue*” did not go out of their own persons. The word “*virtue*” personalizes Divine power, accenting that it is a Divine quality devoted to “*doing good.*” Now Jesus perceived that some of this gracious and personal power has gone out from Him. Rest assured that this did not diminish that Divine supply.

WHO TOUCHED MY CLOTHES? Luke says Jesus said, “*Who touched Me?*” In Mark’s account, the disciples also say Jesus had asked “*Who touched Me?*” This accents that virtue went out of Jesus Himself, not His clothes. His Person sanctified what He wore. The heart of the Savior is sensitive to any person who approaches Him in faith, desiring to be blessed by Him. The touch of faith is always discerned by the Lord. Jesus reacted to faith just as His Father, who once said to Israel, “*I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain*” (Isa 45:19). Luke tells us that when Jesus asked who touched His clothes, the people “*all denied*” (Lk 8:45). No doubt many had touched his clothes, yet none of them was willing to own up to it. They must have interpreted His inquiry as a threat, suggesting He did not want the people to get so close to Him. That is the way natural men reason.

DO YOU SEE THE MULTITUDE? The disciples saw that it was not possible that only one person in this pressing multitude of people could have touched Jesus. But Jesus was not speaking of a mere physical touch. Luke says that “*Peter and they that were with Him*” said, “*Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?*” (Lk 8:45). So far as they were concerned, Jesus was heading for Jairus’ house. They were blissfully unaware of any other quest for Jesus among the people. How crude they were in those early days, before Jesus ascended on high that He might “*fill all things,*” including them (Eph 4:10). Even though it is not justified, some of God’s people are still making foolish observations.

I PERCEIVE. In stark contradiction of the words of Peter and those with him, Jesus replied, “*SOMEBODY HATH TOUCHED ME, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me*” (Lk 8:46). One version reads, “*Somebody DID touch Me!*” NASB Someone got closer! Someone was more intent on obtaining a blessing! Someone reached higher, went further, and believed more! Someone felt a greater need for the Lord’s blessing, and was more convinced of His power than most of the others.

Such faith is always recognized by Jesus. This text confirms what the discerning already know – namely that Jesus does not see everyone the same. The people who affirm that He loves everyone the same cannot account for this marvelous distinction. “*Somebody hath touched ME!*” Here was a single person who received more than the others, and was therefore recognized above all of the others. We can make it our aim to be such people.

“ 31 And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 32 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.”

HE LOOKED. Jesus must have known who the person was who touched Him. After all, He knew the thoughts of people (Lk 6:8). Later He knew the chief priests had delivered Him up because of “*envy*” (Mk 15:10). It is stated that “*He knew all men*” (John 2:24), and “*knew what was in man*” (John 2:25). Before Judas ever betrayed Him, Jesus “*knew who would betray Him*” (John 13:11). However, the heart of Jesus was stirred by this woman, and He looked about to see her, that He might bring a morsel of comfort to her. From the standpoint of human achievement, she had not done anything worthy of reporting. Yet, Jesus looked for the person “*that had done this thing!*” Her’s was a distinguishing work, and Jesus would not let it pass by without public recognition. Besides this, He was no doubt doing this for Jairius’ sake also, who in just a few moments will hear the words, “*Thy daughter is dead*” (Mk 5:35).

SHE SAW SHE COULD NOT BE HID. Luke says the woman “*saw that she could not be hid*” (Lk 8:47). The searching eye of Jesus will find her, for “*His eyes*” are “*over the righteous,*” and He will not pass them by (1 Pet 3:12). One version reads she saw “*she had not escaped His notice.*” NASB He who came to “*seek and to save the lost*” will surely find her (Lk 19:10). She sensed the truth of this and did not seek to hide from Him. She did not run like Adam and Eve, but let herself be discovered. That is the unwavering trait of the elect. They want to be seen by Jesus. They want to be known by Him. They want to be in His presence.

FEARING AND TREMBLING. Although she sensed the Lord’s power, perhaps she was not yet introduced to His gracious disposition. According to the Law she had been “*unclean*” when she touched the hem of His garment. Now, she would receive the confirmation that He was “*full of grace and truth*” as well. These days we do not hear much about “*fearing and trembling.*” However, these qualities are frequently found among those who confront the Lord, and often those who are sent forth by Him. The Corinthians received Titus with “*fear and trembling*” (2 Cor 7:15). Servants are to be obedient to their masters “*with fear and trembling,*” in “*singleness of heart, as unto Christ*” (Eph 6:5). We are all to work out our “*own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil 2:12). Once David confessed, “*My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee*” (Psa 119:120). The Lord went so far as to identify the kind of person that will gain His gracious attention: “*him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word*” (Isa 66:2). When Saul of Tarsus faced the glorified Christ, He trembled (Acts 9:6). When the Philippian jailor faced Paul and Silas, he trembled (Acts 16:29). When Paul spoke as Christ’s ambassador, he did so “*in much trembling*” (1 Cor 2:3). Speaking through the Spirit, David admonished the people to “*rejoice with trembling*” (Psa 2:11). When an angel appeared to Daniel, announcing that he was “*a man greatly beloved,*” Daniel said, “*I stood trembling*” (Dan 10:11). The dreadful absence of this kind of spirit betrays people are at a distance from the Lord. Luke says this woman “*came trembling*” (Lk 8:47).

The “*trembling*” factor is owing to our flesh – our mortal frame. No person can knowingly stand in the presence of Christ or of God without the human nature being disturbed. The part of us that is from Adam still recoils at the presence of the Lord. Yet, as seen in this anonymous woman,

faith can overcome the trembling of the flesh.

KNOWING WHAT WAS DONE IN HER. There was no further evidence of the woman's infirmity, and therefore she "*knew what was done in her.*" This did not make her shout for joy, but caused her to fear and tremble in the presence of "*the Lord of all.*" There is something sobering about the awareness of the work of the Lord within.

FELL DOWN BEFORE HIM. She assumed a humble posture before commencing her confession and giving her account. She knew she was in the presence of one greater than herself, and thus she would speak within the framework of that perception.

TOLD HIM ALL THE TRUTH. Luke says she "*declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately*" (Luke 8:47). She thus told Him of her ailment, how she had reasoned about it, what she had done, and how she had experienced "*immediate*" healing – "*all the truth.*" A heartless person might conjecture that all of this was not necessary. After all, the Lord knew all of these things already. However, the Lord also takes delight in His people, the confession of their faith, and the obedience of their faith. The candidness of the woman no doubt brought great delight to the Lord, confirmed the faith of Jairus, delivered a rebuke to the disciples for their hasty words to Jesus, and inspired the multitude that was following Jesus. There is something about the testimony of the "*great things*" God has done for a person that is compelling (Mk 5:19). Notice how shameless people become when they know what the Lord has done in them. Such knowledge strengthens the will, loosens the tongue, and drives out timidity. It is good for us also to tell the Lord all the truth concerning what He has done in us.

" 34 And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

There is a crowd around Jesus, and He is going to another man's house. Yet, He pauses to speak to this dear, yet unknown, woman. It is His manner to speak to those who are often spurned by others – like the woman at the well (John 4:9-26), the palsied man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:6), Bartimaeus (Mk 10:51), and others.

DAUGHTER. This woman was a Jew – a descendant of Abraham. Jesus referred to one other woman as "*daughter*" – the woman who had been bowed together for eighteen years with a "*spirit of infirmity*" (Lk 13:16). All three gospels that record this incident mention Jesus calling this woman "*Daughter*" ((Matt 9:22; Mk 5:34; Lk 8:48). What a tender and endearing term it is! It speaks of acceptance, recognition, and being precious in the sight of the Lord.

Both Matthew and Luke add that Jesus said, "*be of good comfort*" (Matt 9:22; Lk 8:48). These words were intended to calm her spirit, for she was in a state of "*fear and trembling.*" You may be assured that this word from Jesus, as all of His other words, "*was with power*" (Lk 4:32). There is a transcendent "*comfort*" that exceeds the consolation of knowing you have been healed. It is the "*comfort*" that comes from knowing what has been done by Jesus is good and righteous, and will stand in the court of heaven as being proper. In this world, "*stolen waters are sweet*" (Prov 9:17), but it is not so in God's kingdom. What this woman received was pure water, and thus she could be comforted that the Master had graciously and righteously blessed her. This is, of course, a vivid picture of our salvation, in which God is both "*just and the Justifier of him that believeth*" (Rom 3:26).

THY FAITH HATH MADE THEE WHOLE. The manner in which the Lord speaks to this woman suggests she may not have realized the significance of her own faith – or the pivotal position

faith occupies in the Divine scheme of things. Prior to Christ, there had not been much said about “faith.” In fact, the word is only mentioned two times from Genesis to Malachi (Deut 32:20; Hab 2:4). The word “believe,” in all of its varied forms (believe, believed, believing, believeth, believers, and believest) is only mentioned forty three times in Genesis through Malachi – and twenty four of them refer to **not** believing. Several times believing is referred to as an objective – something in the future (ten times). It is no wonder that Jesus drew attention to this woman’s faith. She needed to know she was not healed because she followed the correct procedure – like the ceremony associated with the cessation of a flow of blood (Lev 15:25-33). It was not because she touched His garment, or made any physical contact with Him. It was her faith that opened the “wells of salvation” so she could be refreshed from them.

GO IN PEACE. Both Mark and Luke record this expression: “Go in peace.” That is, go on your way with a settled spirit, entertaining no doubts, and fully confident that all is well.” It is as though Jesus said, “You have done the right thing, and no one will be able to charge you with wrong doing.” With this word, the peace itself must have come to the woman. He did for her what He did for His disciples later: “Peace **I leave with you** , my peace **I give unto you** : not as the world giveth, **give I unto you.** Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Your tenure in this world should confirm the rarity of such a peace. We are often surrounded by troubled and fearful hearts – perhaps even possessed of such ourselves. However, the Lord can “speak peace unto His people” (Psa 85:8), sending them on their way in a state of spiritual calmness and serenity. The value of such a blessing cannot be overstated. It is not enough to receive a great and even miraculous benefit from the Lord. Such times are generally followed by great joy and exhilaration, like Israel on the banks of the Red Sea. But differing sets of circumstances will pursue us following those great deliverances, and they will not always be pleasant. There will be times when there will be no water or bread in the wilderness, and people will be tempted to murmur, easily forgetting the deliverances they experienced. However, the peace of God “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). Going “in peace” is a vital part of spiritual life, and is to be treasured.

BE WHOLE. Matthew adds, “And the woman was made whole from that hour” (Matt 9:22). When she touched the border of Christ’s clothes, “her flow of blood stopped” NKJV (Lk 8:44). This word – “Be whole!” – confirmed it would never return. Any other infirmity she may have had was also resolved that hour. She would require no further appointments with the physicians where she had expended all of her living.

“Be whole of thy plague!” Other versions read “be healed of your affliction,” NKJV “be freed from your suffering,” NIV “be well of thy scourge,” DARBY and “be continually healed and freed from your [distressing bodily] disease.” AMPLIFIED If we were addressing the matter of salvation, this would be equivalent to saying, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom 6:12). It is another way of saying “keep the faith” that made you whole in the first place, or “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). The same faith that brought the blessing will keep the blessing. The same faith that obtained freedom will maintain freedom. It is ever “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 56

JAIRUS IS TESTED, SOME DISCIPLES PRIVILEGED

“ Mark 5:35 While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. 37 And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.” (Mark 5:35-37; Luke 8:49-51)

INTRODUCTION

Men often philosophize about what Jesus would do under this or that circumstance. In recent years it became fashionable for some to wear a bracelet with the initials “WWJD” – what would Jesus do? It was designed to encourage men to reexamine their conduct in the light of Jesus Christ. While there may be some measured value to such an approach to life, the Gospel record declares what Jesus actually did do. When that record is believed (John 20:31; 1 John 5:10), a certain impression is made by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, soul, and mind, so that the individual begins to think and act differently. John referred to this as having “*life through His name.*” This circumstance accomplishes what no slogan, philosophy, or discipline can do. When the truth of this registers upon the conscience, it transforms the way in which we view the accounts of Christ’s working among men, as He “*went about doing good, and healing all that were possessed of the devil*” (Acts 10:38). That is how we want to approach texts like the one we are presently considering. There are nourishing spiritual nougats here that will accomplish two things. First, they will acquaint us with **how** the Lord thinks, speaks, and acts. We will also become familiar with the way He works, how He approaches our difficulties, and how He brings His people into involvement with Himself.

“ Mk 5:35 While He yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?”

WHILE HE YET SPAKE. On the way to Jairus’ house, a woman with a twelve-year issue of blood had made her way through the crowd and touched the hem of Jesus’ garment. Jesus sensed someone had touched Him, and that virtue had gone out from Him. Calling out, “*Who touched Me,*” Jesus has drawn the woman out of the crowd, and she has told Him all the truth concerning her approach to Him and her healing. The Lord is in the process of speaking to her, informing her that he faith has made her whole, and that she can go in peace. Now, while He is speaking to the woman, there is another seeming interruption. First, the cause of Jairus’ was interrupted, and now the dialog with the healed woman is also interrupted. It should be apparent that no single person ever becomes the solitary object of Divine attention. There is a heavenly agenda that is being served, and it is larger than any one of us. Thus Jesus taught us to pray, “*THY will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matt 6:10).

It is good for each of us to learn to yield to the Lord's priorities, even if it seems as though His attention is being drawn away from us. Jairus had to yield to the woman with the issue of blood, and now she must yield to the case of Jairus. No one can keep the Master to himself, or constrain Him to conduct the affairs of the Kingdom with him alone in mind.

THERE CAME ONE. The messenger has come from Jairus' house, a first-hand witness. Mark says "*certain*" came from Jairus' house. Luke says "*there cometh one*" from his house (Lk 8:49). The fact that this person came while Jesus was speaking to the woman is not a coincidence. This messenger did not arrive until a work of mercy had been done in the presence of Jairus, the testimony of the one on whom it was worked has been given, and Jesus has accounted for the work, sending the woman away in peace and with the assurance that all will be well from that time forward.

THY DAUGHTER IS DEAD. What shattering news this was – at least from the human point of view: "*Thy daughter is dead!*" From an earthly perspective, the news was not good news at all. In fact, if it was delivered in the presence of anyone but Jesus, it would only have been tragic. Further, this news comes after what appeared to be a delay – something like Jesus tarrying for "*two days*" when He heard of the sickness of Lazarus (John 11:6).

Circumstances tend to blind us. By nature, the mind of man does not process tragedy well. This is one of the liabilities of living at a distance from the Lord, not drawing nigh to Him. Those choosing to live in aloofness from the Lord will generally arrive at the wrong conclusion when they hear distressing news. Judging according to appearance never leads to a right assessment, and thus can never produce a proper conclusion. That is why Jesus said, "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*" (John 7:24).

I do not know how much time was involved in the incident of the woman with the issue of blood. However, I do not doubt that it was long enough to cause "*the flesh*" to wonder why it had taken place at all. In this case, however, we will find the triumph of mercy, for the flesh never does assert itself in Jairus. By the grace of God, Jairus was willingly with Jesus when he got the news, and thus he will ultimately be able to react to it in a proper manner.

It ought to be said that this is another benefit of walking "*in the light as He is in the light.*" (1 John 1:7), there is also the presence of peace, stability, readiness to believe, and an assurance that nothing is "*too hard from the Lord*" (Gen 18:14). I am persuaded that much, if not all, wayward thinking and erratic behavior is the direct result of ignoring the fellowship of Jesus, and choosing to walk in the darkness. If, on the other hand, we zealously seek to "*win Christ,*" and be "*found in Him*" (Phil 3:8-9), troubling news and distressing circumstances will not derail us, even though they are by no means pleasant.

WHY TROUBLEST THOU THE MASTER? Luke has them saying, "*Trouble not the Master.*" It is as though they said, "The situation now reaches beyond the ability of the Master, so there is no further need to involve Him." This is how flesh reasons, even though the person may not actually say these words. Perhaps a person has been taught that Jesus simply does not do things like this any longer. It is even possible that the individual has never consciously thought of Christ as resolving the impossible.

Up to this point, Jesus had only raised the dead son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7:12-15). Following that event, the news of it spread throughout "*all Judea, and throughout all the region round about*" (Lk 7:17). Perhaps the news had not yet reached Jairus' house, which was in Galilee. Palestine was divided into three divisions: Galilee, Judea, and Samaria. Perhaps the news had not yet reached Galilee. Hope cannot thrive without a word concerning Jesus!

Note, they referred to Jesus as “*Master*,” or teacher. They apparently did not associate Him with the miraculous, or with great power, else they would have called Him “*Lord*.”

“ 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.”

AS SOON AS JESUS HEARD THE WORD. Luke records, “*But when Jesus heard it*” (Lk 8:50). The word was not delivered to Jesus, but to Jairus; yet Jesus heard it. Even when He walked among men in the flesh, Jesus was always aware of what was around Him, including what men had to say. Therefore, being with Him brought Divine remedies and assurances closer to those who walked in company with Him.

If there is distressing news that is coming to you, it is best to hear it while you are with Jesus. As simplistic as that may seem, multitudes never think in such a manner. They live as though it was impossible to ever receive any bad news, and thus they are always startled out of their whits when it comes, resorting to murmuring and complaining as soon as they hear morose tidings.

HE SAYS TO THE RULER. Jesus preempts any response by Jairus, at once responding to Jairus himself. The Lord does not respond to the messenger, but to Jairus, the one who had first informed him of the need. Neither, does He wait to see how Jairus will respond, as He did when He looked about for the woman who had just touched Him (Mk 5:32). Instead, He takes control of the situation, injecting Himself into it, even though the messenger appears to have not given a thought to the One who was with Jairus, whom he had referred to as “*the Master*.” That courier could not apparently associate Jesus with raising the dead, even though he seemed able to relate Him to healing the sick. It ought to be noted that we must wholeheartedly endeavor to think of Jesus as having “*all power*” (Matt 28:18), and being “*over all*” (Rom 9:5).

It is quite true that God expects appropriate responses from His people. When He speaks, He expects them to hear (Heb 12:25). When He commands, He expects them to obey (Acts 5:32; Heb 5:9). When He calls, He expects them to answer (2 Thess 2:14). However, it is quite possible for someone else to bring evil tidings to you, and Jesus answer, precluding any response from you. Here is a case in point, so that we need not doubt this to be the case.

BE NOT AFRAID. Mark reads, “*Be not afraid*.” Luke reads, “*Fear not*” (Lk 8:50). The phrase “*Be not afraid*” means to not be frightened away, put to flight, or forced to flee out of a sense of overwhelming alarm. The idea is that Jairus was not to allow fear to cause him to react foolishly, giving up hope, leaving Jesus, speaking rashly, or some other expression of unbelief.

After Jesus walked among men, “*be not afraid*” or “*fear not*,” was often addressed to those who were confronting the Lord Himself (Matt 14:27; 17:7; 28:10; Mk 6:50; Lk 5:10; John 6:20). Here, however, it is the circumstance itself that is not to be feared. Prior to Jesus, not fearing was almost always associated with adverse or overwhelming circumstances (Ex 20:10; Deut 1:21; 20:1,3; Josh 1:9; Judges 6:10; 2 Kgs 1:15; 2 Chron 20:15).

Here, the Lord admonishes Jairus not to fear because of the news that he had heard. What is there about such circumstances that can cause fear to rise up within us? It is that there are things we confront that exceed our aptitude, and flesh trembles when that happens. When men are faced with things that transcend their own ability, and they know it, they are not challenged to resist, but moved to “*fear*.” Now Jesus challenges Jairus by telling him to respond to this news in a way that contradicts and neutralizes fear. You may rest assured that this word is accompanied with Divine power, so that it becomes doable.

ONLY BELIEVE. “*Only believe!*” Luke reads, “*believe only*” (Lk 8:50). There are people who cannot say these words: “*only believe.*” They insist on saying “*believe and*” in every instance, as though believing must always be coupled with something else. However, God can introduce us to circumstances where believing is all that we can do. This is such an instance.

The word “*only*” means “alone (without a companion),” THAYER and “without accompaniment,” FRIBERG Other versions read, “*only have faith,*” BBE “*just have faith,*” NAB “*just trust Me,*” NLT and “*only keep on believing.*” AMPLIFIED This is the only text in all of Scripture where these precise words are found – and they came from the mouth of Jesus Himself. However, when you consider the announcement Jesus has just made to the healed woman – “*thy faith hath made thee whole*” – this word is seen with refreshing fulness and clarity. In this case, believing is really all that is necessary, or even possible.

A parallel word was spoken by Jesus to the man with a possessed son: “*If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*” (Mk 9:23). Another example of the absolute uniqueness of believing is found in our father Abraham. “*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*” (Rom 4:3; Gen 15:6). At the time God delivered the promise of multitudinous offspring to Abraham, believing is **all** that he could do. All other responses were rendered impotent by the greatness of the promise. When James said Abraham was “*justified by works,*” he referred to an incident that took place more than thirty years **after** the occasion when Abraham “*believed God*” and it was counted to him for righteousness (James 2:21). That event **confirmed** Abraham’s faith.

“*Only believe*” means precisely that! Concentrate on believing! Throw yourself into it! There are truly occasions when that is really all that you can do – yea, must do!

“ 37 And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.”

Before mentioning the separation of Peter, James, and John, Luke tells us that Jesus “*came into the house*” (Lk 8:51). Matthew also makes a note of this (Matt 9:23). Mark informs us that the separation of Peter, James, and John, took place **before** Jesus actually arrived at the house of Jairus (verses 37-38). I gather that this indicates when they arrived at the general area, or grounds, of Jairus’ house, this separation took place, so that when Jesus actually entered into the house, only these three disciples were being allowed to follow Him.

HE SUFFERED NO MAN TO FOLLOW HIM. Here is a characteristic of Jesus that is scarcely known in our time. There has been such a barrage of corrupt teaching spewed upon the people of God that it is imagined that all have a sort of equality before the Lord. However, this has never been the case with Deity. There are places where some of God’s own people are not allowed to come. “*Moses alone*” was allowed to come near to the Lord, while Aaron, his sons, and the elders of Israel had to remain at a distance (Ex 24:1-2). Moses and Joshua were able to present themselves in the tabernacle, while others were not (Ex 24:2).

There are Divine workings some are not allowed to see. We are not made privy to the reason for this, only to its reality. Such circumstances are undergirded by Divine purpose, to be sure. It may be that the Lord will even make people aware of **why** they are not able to see this or that – as He did with the prophets who foretold Christ’s sufferings the glory that should follow (1 Pet 1:11-12). It may require some humility to accept this circumstance, but we do well to consent to it without any fleshly remonstrance. There are some things that it is not necessary for us to know. There are also things that it is untimely to know. Additionally, there

are things that it is simply not in order for us to know. We do well to acclimate to those situations.

SAVE PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN. This is the first of three occasions when these three disciples were granted privileges withheld from the others. The other two instances are the occasion of our Lord's transfiguration (Matt 17:1-2), and His agonizing prayer in Gethsemane (Mk 14:33). See, this too is a Divine manner. Some are permitted to come further, or see more, or become more involved, than others. Abraham was favored above the other sons of Terah (Gen 11:26; 12:1). Joseph was given privileges that his brothers did not have (Gen 47:12; Psa 105:17). Moses and Aaron were granted unique favor (1 Sam 12:6). The Levites were given special allowances (Num 3:12,45; 8:14). The prophets are another example of some Israelites being granted special distinctions (Jer 1:5). Things were revealed directly to Paul that were made known or only given to others secondarily (Eph 3:3-7). John was granted a unique revelation of God's working in the earth (Rev 1:1).

Take this very circumstance as a most notable example of Divine favor. Andrew, Peter, James, and John were all chosen about the same time (Matt 4:18-21). All four of them – and only those four – were the recipients of Jesus' Olivet discourse concerning the end times (Mk 13:3). Here, however, Andrew is excluded, as well as on the mount of transfiguration, and on the eve of Jesus betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. During the eve of His betrayal, all twelve met with Jesus for the Passover (Lk 22:14-15). During the meal Judas was dismissed, leaving eleven who were favored (John 13:27-30). After they left the room for Gethsemane, the remaining eleven all entered Gethsemane (Matt 26:30). There, eight were left behind, and only three were allowed to go further (Mk 14:32). Later, at the foot of the cross, of the three, only John was given a personal word from Jesus (John 19:26-27).

This Divine manner was also declared through the Psalmist. There are sensitive souls who will receive more from the Lord than others – people who are willing to pay the price for being more close to the Lord. Therefore it is written, "*The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant*" (Psa 25:14). Again it is written, "*Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully*" (Psa 24:3-4). And again it is written, "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God*" (Psa 50:23).

Those who choose to leave all to follow Jesus – and that is a requirement for anyone who desires to be a disciple (Lk 14:33) – will be richly compensated for such a sacrifice. There are "*greater riches*" that are to be obtained (Heb 11:26), but they can only be realized when men forsake the earthly "*treasures*" that compete with them (Heb 11:26).

There is also one more modifying factor. The position into which God has placed us in the Kingdom (1 Cor 12:28) will play a key role in the determination of the measure of riches we receive from the Lord. This accounts for the remarkable abundance given to Paul (2 Cor 12:1-7). This is one of the reasons for the privileges vouchsafed to Peter, James, and John. Also, when we are permitted to go further with the Lord, let us be alert as to what is taking place.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 57

JESUS FACES THE UNBELIEVING CROWD

“ Mark 5:38 And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39 And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. 40 And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.” (Mark 5:38-40; Matthew 9:23-24; Luke 8:52-53)

INTRODUCTION

How does unbelief effect the Lord Jesus? And, how does unbelief respond to the statements of the Lord of glory? This occasion will provide some insight into these matters. Although it is often denied by some who wear the name of Jesus, the responses of men, whether that of belief or unbelief, **do** have an effect upon Christ. The fact that the Lord knows all, does not mean He is indifferent to human expressions. It is said of the Savior – particularly regarding His revelation as a Man – *“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows”* (Heb 1:9). As is evident, this is the only appropriate response to righteousness and evil, and precisely reflects the posture of heaven. There is no way that Jesus can respond lovingly to iniquity, or heartlessly to righteousness. For Him to react in such a manner would contradict His nature, and He *“cannot deny Himself.”* He is not only faithful to His word, but to His nature as well (2 Tim 2:13). By perpetrating erroneous views of the Lord Jesus, Satan has enabled men to remain comfortable in their sin. However, those who have consciously confronted the Lord Himself know very well that no person can remain comfortable in their sin before Him, or discouraged from pursuing His mercy. Of course, where there is no awareness of Christ, men can only speculate about such things.

“ Mk 5:38 And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. (Mark 5:38).

HE COMETH INTO THE HOUSE. A lot had happened since Jairus had first spoken to Jesus. He had earnestly entreated the Lord (v 23). Jesus had accompanied him in a return to his house, with a throng coming along with them (v 24). A woman with an issue of blood had made her way through the throng to touch the hem of Christ’s garment, and was healed (vs 25-29). Jesus, sensing that virtue had gone out of Him, inquired who had touched Him, looking about to see the woman who did this (vs 30-32). The woman came to Him, telling him all the truth: why she touched Him and what happened when she did (v 33; Lk 8:47). Jesus told the woman her faith had made her whole, to go in peace, and be whole from the plague that had been upon her (v 34). That is a lot to happen during what men would call “an emergency.”

It is the business of faith to keep trusting, persevering, and clinging to hope, even though there may seem to be delays along the way. While there is certainly a sense in which the Lord deeply cares for His own, none of us should approach Him as though we were the only ones standing in need of Him. That is one reason why Jesus taught us to pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread,*” “*forgive us our debts,*” “*lead us not into temptation,*” and “*deliver us from evil.*” Faith can survive what appears to be delays!

HE SEES THE TUMULT. As soon as Jesus comes to the house, He sees “*the tumult.*” He has just come from an environment of faith, as seen in Jairus’ request, and the healing of the woman with an issue of blood. The word “*seeth*” is not a casual one. It means “to view attentively, take a view of, and survey.” STRONG’S That is, Jesus took particular note of the activities going on at Jairus’ home. This, of course, would not be possible if, as some allege, Jesus viewed everyone alike, or was able to easily endure all of the expressions of men. And what does Jesus see? It is “*the tumult.*” Other versions read, “*commotion,*” NASB “*people running this way and that,*” BBE “*great confusion,*” LIVING and “*a scene of uproar.*” WEYMOUTH Capturing the full sense of the text, another version reads, “*He looked [carefully and with understanding] at [the] tumult.*”
AMPLIFIED

We have every reason to believe Jesus still beholds the reactions of men – particularly during what is termed a “crisis.” It is at such a time that belief or unbelief tend to rise to the surface. Some people are able to associate crises with the Living God. All, it seems to me, will be **tempted not** to do so. However, faith consistently and always overcomes the world. As it is written, “*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (1 John 5:4). **For every person, there comes a time when profession is tested by circumstance.**

Matthew says Jesus beheld “*the minstrels and the people making a noise*” (Matt 9:23), or “*flute-players, and the crowd in noisy disorder.*” NASB These conditions testified to at least two things. First, Jairus’ daughter had, in fact, died. Second, the people made no association of Jesus with the raising of the dead. A short time earlier, in Judah, Jesus had raised the departed son of a widow from Nain (Lk 17:12-15). Jesus, however had not become well known for His ability to raise the dead. In fact, Jairus had made no request for Jesus to raise his daughter. There are still people who perceive Jesus as being wholly adequate for some matters, but deficient for others – as when both Mary and Martha both said, “*Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*” (John 11:21,32). It seems to me that the professed church still comes short in the matter of comprehending that Jesus, “*is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Tim 6:15). That is something that only faith can grasp.

AND THEM THAT WEPT AND WAILED. Jesus beheld more than the general conditions. He also took special note of those who were weeping and wailing “*greatly,*” or loudly. NKJV It was a scene of the hopelessness that is produced by unbelief. These were people who were sorrowing as those who “*have no hope*” (1 Thess 4:13).

Wailing is a cry that is audible, more akin to a shout. Our culture does not ordinarily have this practice, which remains common throughout the middle East. During the various upheavals that are presently taking place in that part of the world, scenes of “*wailing*” are often brought to us. It is a depiction of those who are overcome by sorrow, and loudly articulate their sorrow. There is also the sound of hopelessness and despair in wailing.

There are matters in life over which men have no power. There are actually more of these than we are capable of imagining. However, death is one that stands out – a common

experience, yet one to which men cannot grow accustomed. In the ministry of Jesus, many things were confirmed to the hearts of men. One of them was this: “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” (Psa 46:1). And again, “*The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth*” (Psa 145:18). This is a reality that faith can see and grasp. When it does, it neutralizes all circumstances, so that they can no longer cast us into the pit of despair. This is another aspect of overcoming the world.

“ 39 And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.”

WHEN HE WAS COME IN. Only Jesus can enter into the domain of unbelief with great poise, taking charge of the situation. He does not enter, however, to make Himself available to everyone, but to those who have been given to Him by the Father (John 6:39; 17:9,11,24). **Jesus saw what was going on, but He did not enter the house as a spectator. Sometimes I sense that much of the activity of the modern church does not reach beyond Jesus seeing and knowing what they are doing.** There does not seem to be a sense of Him being “*A Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man*” (Heb 8:2). Jesus said of the Father and Himself, “*My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working*” NIV (John 5:17). It only remains for our faith to take hold of that circumstance and live in the power of it.

WHY MAKE YE THIS ADO. Other versions read, “*Why make this commotion?*” NKJV “*Why all this commotion and wailing?*” NIV “*Why do you make a tumult?*” DARBY “*Why are you making such a noise?*” BBE “*Why make ye this trouble?*” GENEVA “*Why do you continue all this confusion?*” WILLIAMS and “*Why do you make an uproar and weep?*” AMPLIFIED

As you can see, when truth is apprehended, it makes one intolerant of expressions of unbelief. The person who sees the case as it really is finds the expressions of unbelief chaffing against his spirit. He knows there is no good reason for them, and he can not abide them. Here, it is as though Jesus said, “*Why have I entered into an environment such as this? How do you account for your conduct, now that the King of glory is here?*” How does one answer such an inquiry?

Jesus’ is frequently said to have asked such questions: “**Why?**” “*Why take ye thought for raiment?*” (Matt 6:28). “*Why are ye fearful?*” (Matt 8:26). “*Why reason ye among yourselves?*” (Matt 16:8). “*Why tempt ye Me?*” (Matt 22:18). “*How is it that ye have no faith?*” (Mk 4:40). “*Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?*” (Lk 12:57). “*Why sleep ye?*” (Lk 22:46). “*Why are ye troubled?*” (Lk 24:38). “*Why do ye not understand My speech?*” (John 8:43). “*Why do ye not believe Me?*” (John 8:46).

When men allow expressions of unbelief to be uttered, they are accountable to Jesus for why they have done so. If your heart is tender and sensitive, you will hear Him. When this occurs, it is good to acknowledge our failings, and not attempt to explain them.

“GIVE PLACE.” Matthew records Jesus saying, “*Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth*” (Matt 9:24). “*Give place*” means, “*Depart,*” NASB “*Go away,*” NIV “*Withdraw,*” DARBY “*Leave,*” NAU and “*Get out of here.*” NJB

Matthew adds, “*And when the people were put forth,*” or “*put outside*” NIV (Matt 9:25). Later Mark will say that Jesus Himself “*put them all out*” (Mk 5:40). Luke says the same thing (Lk 8:54).

There are some people who are not permitted to see the more profound works of God.

Others, like Peter, James, and John, are allowed to go further, and see more. This is one of the great deficiencies of living at a distance from the Lord, becoming absorbed into the “*fashion of this world*” (1 Cor 7:31). Some people, like the sellers and merchants in the Temple, are driven out. During that most memorable event, it is said of Jesus, “*And [He] would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple*” (Mark 11:15-16). **He would not allow anyone in the Temple who was not there on Temple business!**

I have often pondered if this does not explain the lifelessness and superficiality that exists in many of the churches of our land. Could it be that such people have actually been thrust out of the working area, and are not allowed to see the working of the Lord?

NOT DEAD, BUT ASLEEP. All three writers report these words of Jesus: “*The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth*” (Matt 9:24; Mk 5:39; Lk 8:52). This is the same thing He said about Lazarus after he had died: “*Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep*” (John 11:11). By these words Jesus does not mean that the young girl had not actually died, her soul departing from her body as Rachel’s did from hers (Gen 35:18), or the son of the widow of Zarephath, whose soul came into his body when he was raised by Elijah (1 Kgs 17:21-22). **Jairus’ daughter had really died, but she would not remain in the grip of death.** Jesus would call her back from the region of the dead, from which no person can return under their own power.

This was a miniature representation of the resurrection of the dead, when “*they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake*” (Dan 12:2), when “*all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth*” (John 5:28-29). It ought to be noted that the part of man that “*sleeps*” is the body, not the soul. That is also the part of Jairus’ daughter that was “*asleep*” (1 Cor 15:6,51; 1 Thess 4:14; 5:10; 2 Pet 3:4).

Also, Jesus is here calling “*those things that are not as though they were*” (Rom 4:17) – something that **none but Jesus can do!**

“ 40 And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.”

THEY LAUGHED HIM TO SCORN. All of the Gospels use this phrase, “*they laughed Him to scorn.*” Other versions read, “*they ridiculed Him,*” NKJV “*they began laughing at Him,*” NASB “*they derided Him,*” DARBY “*laughed at Him in bitter derision,*” LIVING “*began to laugh in His face,*” WILLIAMS and “*laughed and jeered at Him.*” AMPLIFIED

How quickly the flesh can swing from one carnal mood to another – from weeping greatly to laughing and jeering. In this case, the latter response is the most serious one. Their laughing was more real than their weeping. Their weeping and wailing was superficial, but their tawdry laughter was really from their hearts!

Luke adds that they laughed Jesus to scorn, “*knowing that she was dead*” (Lk 8:53). They obviously reasoned that death was the boundary beyond which no work could be done. Perhaps they had all been waiting for the return of Jairus with the Master, persuaded that something could be done for his “*little daughter*” when she was sick. But, alas, now the very thought of her recovering was nothing more than an imagination at which they will jeer. For them, what was seen outweighed the words of Jesus of Nazareth.

The spirit of Jairus’ daughter lived on, and was neither dead nor asleep. Jesus once made a point of this, saying of God Himself, “*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac,*

and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt 22:32). We are told that He said this in view of the resurrection, when even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would enter their resurrection bodies. Until then, however, they were very much alive.

This teaches us to view the circumstances of life, that have been caused by sin, as a **temporary** condition. Death is not the final word, for it will itself be *“swallowed up of life”* (1 Cor 15:54). These people, however, knew nothing of these verities, and so they laughed in the face of He who would conquer death, once and for all concluding its reign.

I have long marveled at the insolence of the flesh. It is brash, unafraid to scoff, and to parade its folly. Who has not confronted the brashness of the flesh in scoffing at things pertaining to the power and effectiveness of Jesus? Those who give themselves to ministering to the saints will soon find some scoffer who will deride the proclaimer for suggesting God is over all, of that He chooses, or that He has power over all flesh. They will promote their carnal notions, and then laugh at the believer who sees through them and rejects them. How many times I have seen this happen. I have heard the derisive laughter of those who could not accept the fact that God gives understanding, or that the Jews will yet be delivered, or that spiritual Babylon is destined to fall. Such benighted souls will be fully exposed at the coming of the Lord.

THOSE PRIVILEGED TO WITNESS THE WORK. Again, we will see that all people are not given the same privileges. This is particularly true of those who show unbelief in their responses and manners. Mark says that after Jesus had put all of the people out of the room, He *“took the father and mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him.”* Luke reads, *“He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden”* (Luke 8:51). Mark reminds us that the separation of Peter, James, and John from the others, took place right after Jairus got the words that his daughter had died (Mk 5:37).

God has said there are special people to whom He will show His salvation (Psa 50:23). There are also those to whom it is said, *“He will show them His covenant”* (Psa 25:14). There are those to whom it is given to *“know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt 13:11). When it comes to knowing the will of the Lord, there are a select people to whom this privilege is given. *“If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority”* NKJV (John 7:17). Let the fool say that God views everyone the same. After they have belched out their foolishness, Jesus will put them out of the room of impossibilities, and take in those who have found favor in His sight!

WHERE THE DAMSEL WAS LYING. Who but Jesus can remove all of the scoffers, and lead the penitent and tender of heart into the room of impossibilities? He will have them look at the case, beholding that there is nothing here that men can do. Alone with Jesus in the room, there will be no uncertainty about the helplessness of all flesh! The situation they are confronting is very real, and the answer to it lies outside the domain of nature. The girl’s body is lifeless and cold. There is no question about her state!

It is Jesus’ manner to bring His people to confront reality, and their need of Him. Like Paul, any one of us can be brought to a point where we despair *“even of life”* – when we are *“pressed out of measure, above strength”* (2 Cor 1:8). We may be treading water in the murky deep (2 Cor 11:25), or confined in some dark prison house of oppression (Acts 16:24). But, Jesus can bring you into that very room, and show you it is the place of possibility, not impossibility!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 58

JESUS RAISES JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

“ Mark 5:41 And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. 42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43 And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.” (Mk 5:41-43; Matt 9:25-26; Luke 8:54-56)

INTRODUCTION

The authority and power of Jesus extends into the region of the dead. No person could “*save sinners*” who did not have such authority. Men did not need a new set of rules, or a mere philosophy of life. The human condition is one in which death dominates, and until that circumstance is effectively addressed, there can be no resolution to the human dilemma. When Jesus raised the dead, as seen in this second miracle of raising the dead, He was revealing His power over this dreaded enemy. This power would be revealed in its fulness when Jesus took back His own life from the dead, and would be revealed to its full extent at the resurrection of the dead. Because, prior of Jesus, so very little was known of the resurrection of the dead, men had to become acquainted with the reality of individuals being called back from the region of the dead. Before Jesus, two men were translated into heaven without having to pass through the experience of death: Enoch, from before the administration of the Law (Gen 5:22-24; Heb 11:5-6), and Elijah, from during the time of the Law (2 Kings 2:9-12). There were also three instances of the dead being raised. **(1)** The son of the widow of Zarephath by Elijah – 1 Kgs 17:17-23). **(2)** The son of the Shunammite by Elisha – 2 Kgs 4:32-37). **(3)** The dead man who was cast into the open grave of Elisha – 2 Kgs 13:21. Only the Gospel would fully bring “*life and immortality to light.*” The ministry of Jesus was a telling introduction to that illumination. **Death** was not a hopeless state!

“ Mk 5:41 And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.”

HE TOOK HER BY THE HAND. All three gospels recording this event make a note of this: He “*took her by the hand*” (Matt 9:25; Mk 5:41; Lk 8:54). This act no doubt ministered to Jairus, for he had originally besought Jesus saying, “*My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy hand upon her , and she shall live*” (Matt 9:18).

According to the Law. Which was “*until John*” (Lk 16:16), touching a dead body, or a bone, or a grave, caused uncleanness : “*He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days*” (Num 19:11). A person, under such a circumstance, was “*defiled by the dead*” (Num 5:2; 9:6,10). Yet Jesus was, in every way, “*undefiled*” (Heb 7:26) – even though He was in an “*evil world,*” among sinners, and in contact with certain defiling influences according to the

Law. He thus confirmed that His ministry was of a higher order than that of mere law. Following His ascension, He became the High Priest – but not according to the Law (Heb 7:14).

Only the “*Lord of all*” could come into the room of the dead and take hold of the hand of the deceased without any defilement passing to Him. He is Lord over every circumstance in which He is found – and over those in which He is **not** found as well. That can often be a most difficult lesson to learn, but time spent seeking to take hold of it is time well spent.

TALITHA CUMI. Mark says Jesus “*said unto her, Talitha cumi.*” Luke says, He “*called, saying, Maid arise.*” The secret was not in the words that were said, but in the voice that spoke them. This was nothing less than “*the voice of the Lord*” that is in every way omnipotent. The 29th Psalm is an ode to “*the voice of the Lord.*” It declares that this voice “*is powerful,*” “*full of majesty,*” “*breaketh the cedars,*” “*divideth the flames of fire,*” “*shaketh the wilderness,*” and “*makes the hinds to calve*” (Psa 29:4-9). **Men are to expect that when they listen to what the Lord says, His words will exert power upon them, just as surely as they will do in the room where Jairus’ deceased daughter lay reposed.** We must seek a full deliverance from the dreadful notion that the human intellect alone is able to take hold of the words of the Lord and act upon them. If those words had no power of themselves, all human effort to profit from them would be futile in the extreme.

“*Talitha cumi*” is a Syriac expression— apparently a language in which Jesus frequently spoke. Another example of Jesus using this language is found in Mark 7:34, where He healed a deaf man who had an impediment of speech, saying “*Ephphatha,*” meaning “*Be opened.*” A third use found of this language is found in Mark’s account of Christ’s cry from the cross at the ninth hour: “*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Mark 15:34). Matthew has a slightly different expression (“*Eli, Eli*”), which is closer to the Hebrew. It is generally understood that Syriac was the language in which Jesus commonly spoke. Yet, the **record** of His words was generally expressed in the Greek language. **However, here it seems that the Spirit wants to accentuate the power of Christ’s personal word** – a word that is employed in all spiritual resurrections (John 5:25), and in the final resurrection as well (John 5:28-29).

I SAY UNTO THEE, ARISE! Luke reads, “*Maid, arise.*” This was a command that reached into the regions of the dead, from which Jesus Himself would return following spending three days and night there. This word is uttered before five attentive witnesses: Peter, James, John, Jairus, and his wife. Jesus did not lift the child up, but told her to “*arise,*” – to get up, confirming that her spirit had returned into her body. If the word of Christ is nothing more than an academic witness, like that of the scribes and Pharisees, nothing will happen. However, if He is the Lord from heaven, and has been given to have “*life in Himself*” (John 5:26), His word will be “*with power*” (Lk 4:32).

On one occasion, God likened Israel to an unwanted child that had been thrown into the open field, and was utterly helpless. He depicted Himself as coming by them, and quickening them by His word. “*And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live*” (Ezek 16:5-6). Thus the Lord is seen as causing life with a Word – or negating the power of death with a word!

Not only was this an introduction to the resurrection of the dead in the last day, it also acquainted men with what had really occurred when sin entered into the world. Men were thrust into a state of spiritual death – one in which they were separated from the Living God, being “*dead in trespasses and sins.*” Men could not be “*taught*” out of this state by someone

external to themselves. They could not “*work*” themselves back into a state of life toward God. Whatever may be said of the human will, natural aptitude, and the wisdom of men, they are all impotent in the areas of both bodily and spiritual death. Only Jesus is free to work in these environs.

“ 42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.”

STRAIGHTWAY THE DAMSEL AROSE. When Jesus gave the command to “*arise*,” the young girl immediately responded, getting up from the bed on which she had confined. One version reads, “*she stood up*,” NIV meaning that she got up from her bed and stood unassisted on her feet. The word “*damsel*” means an immature, or half-grown girl, or little girl. Mark uses this word three times in the text: “*He took the damsel by the hand*,” “*Damsel, I unto thee, arise*,” and “*the damsel arose*.” Here is a young girl struck down by death, which is no respecter of persons. Yet, life is restored by the Prince of life, who is also no respecter of persons.

Luke provides a few more details on the matter. “*And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway*.” Technically speaking, it was the girl’s “*spirit*” that Jesus addressed, and her “*spirit*” that obeyed, entering again into her vacated body. That means, of course, that her “*spirit*” was not reposing in sleep with her body, but was able to move about while her body could not. This same kind of language is used in the account of Elijah raising the son of the widow of Zarephath from the dead. Elijah had prayed insightfully: “*O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again*” (1 Kgs 17:21). It is written that “*the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived*” (1 Kgs 17:22). It is clear, therefore, and had been for at least 900 years, that the soul and the body are not permanently joined together. In death they are separated. They do not remain united in sleep. There is not a syllable of Scripture that suggests that the body is not alive when it remains united with the soul. As soon as the two are brought together, the body is again said to be alive.

AND WALKED. Only Mark makes a point of this: “*the damsel arose, and walked* .” It would have been marvelous enough for someone to be raised from the dead, get out of bed, and stand steadily on their feet next to the bed. That would have been as impossible as one standing up and said to have “*walked around*.” NIV This did not make the miracle any greater, for it was already in the category of the impossible. Rather, this confirmed the girl had, in fact, been raised from the dead, and was in possession of all her faculties and appetites.

THE AGE OF TWELVE YEARS. This is a time when life in all of its potential is beginning to be made known. It is a time when significant things can be expected to begin to surface in the youth. Manasseh was “*twelve years old when he began to reign*” (2 Kgs 21:1). Jesus was “*twelve years old*” when He was found in the Temple, “*sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hear them, and asking them questions*.” It is written that, at that age, “*all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers*” (Lk 2:42-43). It is supposed that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were about this age when they were taken captive to Babylon (Dan 1:3-7). Miriam might have been about this age when she watched her baby brother Moses, and orchestrated the bringing of Moses’ mother to nurture him in Egypt (Ex 2:4-7).

It is tragic beyond comprehension when any age treats its young with such disdain as to offer them nothing more than entertainment, foolish fads, dumbed-down literature, and meaningless music. Such a generation is squandering its youth!

ASTONISHMENT. Those witnessing the miracle were “*astonished with a great astonishment*,” or “*completely astounded*.” NASB Luke reads, “*And her parents were astonished*,” or “*amazed*” NASB (Lk 8:56). That is, there was no possible way to account for this event

apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. It was beyond the border of all human ability. It extended beyond the boundary of scientific expertise, and the limited circumference of worldly wisdom. There was only one explanation for what happened. *“This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes”* (Psa 118:23).

A TYPE OF SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION. This event introduces us to the nature of salvation, which is nothing less than a spiritual resurrection. Therefore, it is said of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, *“And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins . . . Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 2:1,5,6). There is no other valid salvation! Where people have not been raised up from death in sin, insensitivity to God, and separation from His Person and power, there has been no salvation! Those who bear the attributes of spiritual death – being the vassals of Satan, having corrupt desires, and being at enmity with God – are, in fact *“dead,”* just as surely as Jairus' daughter. When they are raised, they also will get up and stand, and be ready to eat.

This also introduces us to the fact that a spiritual resurrection is also attended with a walk, which commences when one is *“raised with Christ”* – walking *“in newness of life”* (Rom 6:4). The raised individual begins to move about in *“the heavenly places,”* obtaining Divine benefits, seeking the things above, and living unto the One who died for them. Who does not know that it is a reproach to Christ for people to supposedly have been raised from death in trespasses and sins, yet who do not walk about in their new spiritual environs.

“ 43 And He charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.”

HE CHARGED THEM STRAITLY. To be *“charged straitly”* is to be *“commanded strictly,”* NKJV be given *“strict orders,”* NASB and be *“charged much.”* DARBY There is the idea of repetition in these words, indicating that Jesus was making a very special point, particularly to the young girl's parents. Some people do not believe Jesus can speak in such a manner – making special demands of people, when they should speak and when they should not. However, Jesus is well within His rights to tell us what should be told and what should not be told.

One of the sure indications of spiritual growth is when a person begins to take the words of the Lord Jesus seriously. If He says *“forsake all”* (Lk 14:33), *“fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt 10:28), or *“Take heed what ye hear”* (Mk 4:24), we do well to let His sayings *“sink down into our ears”* (Lk 9:44). In my judgment, the contemporary church is extremely deficient and dull in this area.

NO MAN SHOULD KNOW IT. This is not the first time Jesus has demanded such a response (Mk 1:43-44; 7:36; Matt 9:30; 12:15-16; 17:9). At least three things can be seen here.

The Immediate Circumstance. First, this was not intended to be a permanent condition, but was no doubt spoken with the immediate surroundings in mind. When Jesus had arrived, He had not only faced a *“tumult,”* but was *“laughed to scorn”* when He said the young girl was not dead, but was only asleep. Such a miserable audience would not be given the good news of what took place in the room from which they had been put out. Bearing witness of the works of the Lord to such a people would be akin to casting *“your pearls before swine”* (Matt 7:6). Those who disdain the word of the Lord lose the right to hear of His wonderful works.

Jesus Did Not Seek Honor Among men. Jesus once said, *“I receive not honor from men”*

(John 5:41). That is, this was not His ambition, nor did He engage in a quest for such a thing. It was the honor of the Father that Jesus sought, for it was His will that He was commissioned to fulfill. Therefore He said, “*it is my Father that honoreth Me*” (John 8:54).

His Hour Had Not Yet Come. Jesus knew that when His hour was come, He would be “*delivered up*” because of the “*envy*” of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 27:18). Christ’s popularity among the people was disdainful to their religious leaders. This is why, during the initial phases of Christ’s ministry, when He knew the “*Pharisees had heard*” that He was making and baptizing “*more disciples than John,*” He “*left Judea,*” going through Galilee by way of Samaria (John 4:1-4). The time for Him to be offered up “*had not yet come*” (John 2:4; 7:6,30; 8:20). Therefore, He would not provoke His enemies to act prematurely to the appointed time.

GIVE HER SOMETHING TO EAT. Mark is the only writer who records this gracious act of the Lord: “*and commanded that something should be given her to eat.*” This would confirm even further that she had been restored to a state of perfect health, for eating is a normal lot in life. **She was raised supernaturally, but she will be sustained by the means of ordinary Divine provision.**

There is a wonderful lesson to be seen here. In the kingdom of God, men are sustained “*by every word of God*” (Lk 4:4) – that is truly “*the children’s bread.*” However, before one can feed on this bread, they must be raised from death in trespasses and sins. Once raised, however, that “*newness of life*” is to be sustained by the appointed means. It will be necessary to live by faith, walk in the Spirit, and set one’s affection on things above (Heb 10:38; Gal 5:16; Col 3:1-2). **A person who fails to do this cannot expect to continue living to God, anymore than Jairus’ daughter could continue to live without being given something to eat.**

It appears that this circumstance is not generally acknowledged. The scarcity of spiritual food that is extant in the professed church is rather astounding. Even if one imagines that the conversions that are reported are genuine, how can the newness of life be maintained when those who have been raised from death in sin are not being given something to eat?

HIS FAME WAS SPREAD ABROAD. Matthew says of this event, “*And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land*” (Matt 9:26). Other versions read, “*the report of this,*” NKJV “*this news,*” NASB and “*news of this.*” NIV The reputation of Jesus is always preceded by a report of what He has done, or will do. Even the revelation of the Christ by John the Baptist was preceded by the announcement that He was “*the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Intrinsic to this understanding is the fact that what Jesus **does** cannot be hidden, anymore than a city that is set on a hill can be hidden (Matt 5:14). **When there is a prevailing ignorance of Christ, it is an acknowledgment that His works are not present.**

Adorning the doctrine. One of the reasons for the legitimate and truthful promotion of the real Jesus is the lives of those who fellowship with Him. Their lives are said to “*adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*” (Tit 2:10), confirming that He has, in fact, been at work within them.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 59

“ Mark 6:1 And He went out from thence, and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him. 2 And when the sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.”

(Mark 6:1-3; Matthew 13:54-57; Luke 4:16-22; John 6:42)

INTRODUCTION

Thusfar in the Gospel of Mark, following His baptism and return from forty days of temptation, He has been several places. He “*came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God*” (1:14). He “*walked by the Sea of Galilee,*” calling Peter, Andrew, James, and John (1:16-20). He ministered in Capernaum (1:21), desert places (1:45), by the seaside (2:13), in a mountain (3:13), and the country of the Gadarenes (5:1). Luke also records that He went into the city of Nain (Lk 7:11). He has astounded the multitudes with His doctrine (1:22), by raising the dead (5:42), the casting out of demons (1:27), and miracles of healing (2:12). People observed the superiority of His teaching over that of the scribes, for He spoke as one having authority (1:22). He even confirmed that He had power on earth to forgive sins (2:10). He had ordained twelve men and given them power “*to heal sickness, and to cast out demons*” (3:15). There was really nothing ordinary about Jesus. When He spoke, it was with great power. When He worked, it was also with great power. One might imagine that it would not be possible to associate Jesus with the normal. Yet, in this text, that is precisely what the citizens of His home town do. The home town group have great difficulty believing that He was anything more than a familiar neighbor. He will actually be offensive to them!

“ Mk 6:1 And He went out from thence, and came into His own country; and His disciples follow Him.”

HE WENT OUT FROM THENCE. Jesus has just left the house of Jairus, where He had raised his young daughter from the dead. Matthew records that “*as they went out*” a dumb man that was possessed of a demon was brought to Him. Jesus cast out the demon, and the dumb man spake. It is written that “*the multitude marveled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel*” (Matt 9:32-33). Thus, the extraordinary ministry of Jesus is again highlighted. His fame was spreading everywhere, as the people associated Him with great things. Many of the people did not hesitate to bring impossible cases to Him, persuaded that He was able to do what other men could not do.

It appears to me that our day could well do with a fresh impression of the Lord Jesus

Christ. There is altogether too much association of Him with the mundane, or everyday things, and the ordinary. A sense of the presence of Jesus is unusually rare, which accounts for the hesitancy of people to cast their care upon Him. But it was not so in this case. The people knew when Jesus was moving, and many took advantage of any access to Him that was made available to them.

HE CAME INTO HIS OWN COUNTRY. Other versions read, “*He came into His home town,*” NASB and “*went to His hometown.*” NIV “*His native place.*” NAB This is elsewhere identified as Nazareth (Lk 2:38). Luke refers to Nazareth as “*where He had been brought up*” (Lk 4:16). Matthew says that after the death of Herod, Joseph took Jesus and Mary and “*came into the land of Israel,*” “*and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called as Nazarene*” (Matt 2:20-23). This precise statement is not found in any of the Prophets. It appears that the meaning is that Jesus would be derided – like “*a root out of dry ground*” in whom no comeliness was perceived (Isa 53:2). You may recall that when Nathaniel heard of Jesus of Nazareth, he replied, “*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:46). In this case, Jesus’ identity with Nazareth seemed to contradict any notion that He was the Messiah. In fact, some objected to saying Jesus was the Christ because of where He had lived. It is written, “*But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*” (John 7:41-42). The people had reasoned that because the Messiah was “*the rod out of the stem of Jesse*” (Isa 11:1), a “*Bethlehemite*” (1 Sam 16:1,18; 17:58), David was from Bethlehem (1 Sam 20:6), Bethlehem was “*the city of David*” (Lk 2:4), and Micah prophesied the Messiah would “*come forth*” from Bethlehem (Mic 5:2), the “*Christ*” could not possibly have come from Nazareth.

It is my understanding that Jesus was deliberately raised in the mean city of Nazareth in order to fulfill those prophecies concerning any lack of comeliness in the Savior. It was not that He had an ugly or uncomely appearance. Surely children would not be attracted to such a Person, and disposed to sing His praise (Matt 21:15). One of the reasons for His uncomeliness was the area in which He was raised – a place of contempt from which religious men thought nothing good could come.

This is now the second time Jesus has come to His home town, Nazareth. He also came there at the very beginning of His ministry. It was there that He announced His manifesto, reading from the prophet Isaiah, and announcing that the words of the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah had been fulfilled in the ears of the people (Lk 4:16-21). The people all took note of His “*gracious words,*” declaring, “*Is not this Joseph’s son?*” Jesus then told them they would ultimately say to Him, “*Physician, heal thyself*” (Lk 4:22). He then told them of God’s discreet historical blessings upon certain Gentiles – blessings that transcended those that were being experienced by the Jews of that time. Upon hearing these words, everyone in the synagogue was “*filled with wrath.*” They got up, cast Jesus out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill where they intended to “*throw Him down the cliff.*” However, Jesus passed through the midst of them and “*went on His way*” (Lk 4:28-30).

Now Jesus comes to His home town again. It is as though He was giving them a second chance to receive His gracious words. He will be received no better this time, although they will make no attempt to take His life. He was a citizen of whom they did not boast.

HIS DISCIPLES FOLLOWED HIM. This is a trait of all true disciples – Christ’s “*sheep.*” They follow Him! Jesus said of His people, “*they follow Me*” (John 10:27). Jesus further declared that if anyone wished to be His disciple, they had to “*follow*” Him, going where He goes (Matt 16:24; 19:21; Lk 9:23; John 12:26). For example, if Jesus says, “*For where two or three are gathered*

together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mat 18:20), then that is where His disciples are to be – among those who gather together in His name. Men are to pursue Jesus, not seek to merely involve Jesus in their personal affairs.

“ 2 And when the sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?”

WHEN THE SABBATH DAY WAS COME. Whatever you may think about honoring days, Jesus honored the Sabbath. It was His “*custom*” to be in the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Lk 4:16). He is frequently said to have been in the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Mk 1:21; 3:1-2; Lk 4:16,31; 6:6; 13:10).

TEACHING IN THE SYNAGOGUE. Jesus was noted for His teaching – something for which He is **not** noted in our time. Nicodemus referred to Him as a “*Teacher come from God*” (John 3:2). The term “*Rabbi*” was ascribed to great teachers, and thus Jesus was so called (John 1:38,49; 3:2; 6:25). Seven times it is said of Jesus, “*He taught them*” (Matt 5:2; 7:29; 13:54; Mk 1:22; 2:13; 4:2; 10:1). Once, upon seeing a great multitude, Jesus “*taught them many things*” (Mk 6:34). During the last phase of His ministry, Jesus “*taught*” His disciples extensively concerning His death (Mk 8:31). Eight times, Jesus is described as “*teaching*” (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 21:23; Mk 6:6; Lk 5:17; 13:10,22; 23:5). He taught in the Temple every day (Matt 26:55; Mk 14:49; Lk 21:37).

What is “teaching?” In many “church” circles, “*teaching*” is not fashionable. There is more of a bent to entertainment-type activities that require less thoughtful involvement by the people. I have often wondered how Jesus would respond to some of the trivial type gatherings that are convened in His name – or if any time would even be allotted to Him for “*teaching*.”

The word “*teach*” comes from a word than means “to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them . . . Impart instruction, instill doctrine into one,” THAYER and “to cause to learn or cause to know.” LOUW-NIDA In teaching, Jesus was acquainting people with the “*kingdom of God*,” the “*mind of the Lord*,” and “*the will of the Lord*.” He “*taught*” His disciples regarding His death (Mk 9:31), acquainting them with the circumstances that would surround it. He “*taught*” the people concerning the purpose of the Temple, which as intended to be “*the house of prayer*” (Mk 11:17). In all of this activity, Jesus was acquainting the people with a different order of things – an eternal order. It was a means of orienting people for salvation, and preparing them for the blessing of the Lord. Generally, His teaching was not a mere discussion.

Proper teaching has the same ministry today. It serves to neutralize the contamination of the mind that is caused by being in this world. It assists in placing the mind within the circumference of blessing, and removing it from the futile climes of this present evil world. This is to be one of the chief facets of the singing of the church – “*teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*” (Col 3:16). It would be revolutionary if the modern church insisted that its song writers deliver songs aimed at “*teaching*.”

ASTONISHED HEARERS. The teaching of Jesus was not like that which was common. He did not deliver normal Sabbath discourses, or traditional synagogue jargon. To be “*astonished*” is to be amazed, astounded, overwhelmed, and bewildered. FRIBERG The idea is that what Jesus said sharply contrasted with what other teachers were saying, and with the ordinary manner of thought. Jesus never made any inquiry about what the people wanted to hear, or what were the political, social, or domestic issues of the day. He operated by a heavenly agenda, and therefore His teaching did not

blend with what the people were accustomed to hearing. There was also a note of authority in His words (Matt 7:29). That is, people sensed they had to do something with the words of Jesus. They could not hear them with indifference, regard them as inconsequential, or treat them as though they did not matter.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM? The people questioned the source of Jesus wisdom, and where He had obtained knowledge concerning the things of which He spoke. It certainly was not in any of the scribal schools, or from local rulers of the synagogue. His words were actually from another world, and they sensed it. What He was delivering could not have been obtained from their teachers or leaders. He had true wisdom, and thus could “*handle*” the word of God with spiritual expertise (2 Tim 2:15). And, the works He wrought with His hands were unparalleled. No one among them had ever seen lepers cleansed with a touch (Matt 8:3), or blind men touched and healed (Matt 9:29), or the deaf and dumb touched and healed (Mk 7:33). Once he touched the hand of Peter’s mother-in-law, and she was healed (Matt 8:15). He had even raised the dead son of a widow by touching the pallet on which the body was being carried (Lk 7:14). The people knew that what Jesus possessed was not received from men – in the synagogue, in the Temple, or any other place known to them.

What Jesus gives is totally unlike anything from this world. If He feeds people with bread and fish, it is quite different from what is procured at the market place. If He teaches, it is not like the scribes. If He works, it is not like the religious merchants of the day.

“ 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.”

Having witnessed the absolute uniqueness of Jesus, how will the people react to Him – the people among whom He was raised? Will they be grateful and make further inquiry concerning His wisdom? Here we will behold the unimaginable power of unbelief.

IS NOT THIS THE CARPENTER? This is the only place where Jesus is referred to as “*the carpenter*” – a craftsmen in wood. The term itself suggests that He was an excellent carpenter, which we should expect Him to be. It also infers that Joseph had passed away. He was, of course, the ultimate spiritual Craftsman, able to shape men who were hard by nature. He was also a builder with wood, like Noah, fashioning a habitation for the people of God. I have often thought how appropriate His pre-ministerial vocation was.

Matthew says the people responded, “*Is not this the carpenter’s son?*” (Matt 13:55). Luke also says that it was commonly “*supposed*” that Jesus was Joseph’s Son (Luke 3:23) – something that Jesus nor His parents apparently ever sought to refute. That would be like casting pearls to swine. The first time Jesus preached in His home town, the people said, “*Is not this Joseph’s son?*” (Luke 4:22).

THE SON OF MARY? This assessment was technically true – but they did not know the whole of the matter. This is also the only place where Jesus is referred to as “*the son of Mary*” – and the statement did not come from heaven, but from unbelieving men. The true assessment of Jesus is that He is “*the Son of God*” (Mk 1:1; John 1:34). Frequently the Spirit refers to Mary as Jesus’ “*mother*” (Matt 1:18; 2:11; John 2:1; 19:25; Acts 1:14). Never, however, does the Spirit teach us to think of Jesus as Mary’s son! We are expressly and consistently taught to think of Him as God’s Son (Acts 8:37; 9:20; Rom 1:3,4 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20). The use of the word “*Son*” in regards to His earthly lineage is doctrinally “*the Son of man*” (Acts 7:56). The Gospels contain 83 references to this term – all statements of Jesus Himself.

THE BROTHER OF? Matthew presents the people as making the same observation (Matt 13:55-56). The people were astounded that someone common to them had such unequalled wisdom and power. They thought of Him as one of five brothers, the others being James (Greek form of Jacob), Joses (Greek form of Joseph), Judah (Jude), and Simon. They were, of course, Christ's half-brothers. It is generally thought that Jesus' half brother James is the author of the book of James, and Jude the author of the book bearing his name. It is interesting that the people did not view them as Jesus' brothers, but Jesus as their brother, making them more significant than Jesus in their minds. What a miserable assessment of the Son of God!

HIS SISTERS. These "*sisters*," or half-sisters, are not named in Scripture. Jewish tradition says there were two sisters, and their names were Esther and Tamar. NICEPHORUS

Thus the peoples' minds were blinded by their familiarity with Jesus "*after the flesh*." It is no wonder that it is written, "*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more*" (2 Cor 5:16). There are still those who tend to think of Jesus "*after the flesh*." Such things as "the baby Jesus," how Mary must have viewed Him when He was young, and other such considerations only tend to obscure the Lord Jesus. They bring nothing to the table of edification.

THEY WERE OFFENDED AT HIM. Other versions read, "*bitter against Him*," BBE "*stumbled at Him*," YLT "*ashamed of Jesus*," LIVING "*turned angrily away*," WEYMOUTH and "*found a cause for stumbling over Him*." WILLIAMS The word "*offended*" means "to put a stumbling-block or impediment in the way; cause or make to stumble." THAYER That is, their familiarity with Jesus according to the flesh **caused** them to stumble over Him instead of being advantaged by Him. Higher and lower views are mutually exclusive. By this I mean that if a person considers Jesus from the lower point of view, He **cannot** see Him from the higher view. If, on the other hand, He is seen from the higher view, there is not even a desire to see Him from the lower view. Another thing to consider is this: the lower view of Jesus (according to the flesh) has no redemptive value. **There is no salvation in the lower view** – no remission, no empowerment, and no reconciliation. Here is the truth of the matter. If men insist on viewing Jesus as the answer to the political, social, and domestic challenges of life in the world, they will **not** be able to see Him as Lord and Savior. He will become a "*stumbling-block*" to them, so that they will gain absolutely no advantage from Him, even though they think they know Him. **Erroneous views of Jesus cannot yield genuine benefit!**

Jesus once said, "*And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me*" (Matt 11:6; Lk 7:23). One version reads, "*And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me*" (Luke 7:23). The person who stumbles over Jesus fails to see Him as He really is, and thus is not a partaker of the benefit He brings. Jesus is both a Foundation stone and a Stumbling-block. For those who insist on tailoring Jesus to meet their self-perceived needs, He becomes "*a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense*" – and such a Stone is put in place by God Himself (1 Pet 2:7-8).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 60

“ Mark 6:4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. 5 And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief. And He went round about the villages, teaching.”

(Mark 6:4-6; Matthew 13:57-58)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has returned to his home town – Nazareth. He had been rejected there during His first visit, right after His temptation in the wilderness (Lk 4:16-29). Now, after His fame had been spread abroad, and reports of His mighty works were beginning to fill the land (Matt 4:24; 9:26,31; 14:1), the people were still “*offended at Him*” (Mk 6:3). They still could not think of Him outside of their own fleshly familiarity with Him – “*the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and Simon,*” and whose “*sisters*” were also there with them. The marvelous words that Jesus had spoken, and the unparalleled works that He had wrought had not altered their small perception of Him. They could not think of Him outside of their familiarity of Him as their neighbor and fellow citizen. Even though they were “*astonished*” at His teachings, marveled at “*wisdom*” that was “*given unto Him,*” and were staggered by “*such mighty works*” as were “*wrought by His hands*” (6:2), we will find that unbelief prevailed, and their hearts remained calloused and hard against Christ. It is, therefore, possible to be remarkably impressed by Jesus, and yet remain in a position where He will not and cannot bless the individual. This reveals the absolute vanity of adopting an approach to religion that aims at impressing people, or capturing their attention. It is quite possible to do this, and leave the people still holding Jesus in contempt.

“ Mk 6:4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”

This is the response of Jesus to the reaction of the people. He does not ignore the fact that they were “*offended at Him.*” Those who imagine that Jesus, because of His omniscience and great love, can “handle” the uncomely responses of men to His words and works, need to think again, for they could not possibly be more wrong. In fact, both salvation and damnation are traced back to the human response to Jesus – and particularly to the Gospel that declared Him – the record God has given of His Son (Mark 16:16; 1 John 5:10-11).

NOT WITHOUT HONOR. The first time Jesus revisited Nazareth, and in response to their unbelief, He said to them, “*No prophet is accepted in his own country*” (Lk 4:24). Now He goes even further and refers to the lack of “*honor*” given to Him. After Jesus had spoken to the woman at the well, and additionally to a vast host of Samaritans, He said as He returned to Galilee, “*that a prophet*

hath no honor in his own country” (John 4:44).

What does it mean to be “*without honor?*” Other versions read, “*despised,*” DARBY “*not accepted,*” IE “*fails to be honored,*” WILLIAMS and “*without honor (deference, reverence).*” AMPLIFIED The word “*honor*” means “*to fix a value to, revere, venerate,*” THAYER “*respect,*” FRIBERG “*To attribute high status to someone,*” LOUW-NIDA and “*to hold in honor, value, prize.*” LIDDELL-SCOTT Here, “*honor*” has to do with perceiving the Lord as valuable, to be desired and preferred above all else. He is perceived as occupying the highest status, and being worthy of the greatest admiration. He is valued more highly than anything else, and the individual is totally unwilling to forfeit the advantage of being in His presence.

How does Deity react to a lack of honor – a deficiency of respect, and the absence of preference? What is the response of the Lord when He is not preferred above all else, admired more than anything, and held in the highest regard? We do not need to speculate about this, for the Lord has spoken. During the time of Malachi the people had adopted a totally unacceptable view toward the Lord. Therefore God said, “*A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honor? and if I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise My name*” (Mal 1:6). Note that the lack of honor equated to “*despising*” the Lord. To “*despise*” the Lord is to fail to esteem Him, to disdain Him, and to hold Him in contempt.

And, precisely how was this lack of honor made known? It was by the offering of inferior things upon the altar: “*polluted bread,*” “*the blind for sacrifice,*” together with the “*lame and sick.*” and even animals that had been killed by predators (Mal 1:7-8,12-13). The priests “*departed*” from God’s law, caused many to stumble, and corrupted the covenant (Mal 2:8). They even “*robbed God*” by failing to bring “*all the tithes into the storehouse*” (Mal 3:8-10). One only needs to briefly consider these things to see that Christ is being deprived of honor in our day as well. This lack of honor, as in the times of Malachi, and during Christ’s ministry is not said to be among the Gentiles, or those who claim no identity with God. It is rather found among those who “*profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him*” (Tit 1:16).

The lack of veneration for Jesus is seen in the approach of the people to “*the Lord’s day,*” hearing the Gospel, engaging in an earnest pursuit of Jesus, and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. As we will see, none of this is innocent, nor will it be ignored by Jesus.

IN HIS OWN COUNTRY. This equates to his “*home town,*” NASB or where He was brought up – the vicinity in which He was raised, and where He was commonly known. This is where He did carpentry work, and became known as a member of Joseph and Mary’s family.

AMONG HIS OWN KIN. These are “*his own relatives,*” NKJV “*his relations,*” BBE “*among his kinsmen,*” DARBY and “*his own kindred.*” DOUAY These are His maternal-relations – those related to Him in the flesh. Well into his ministry, Jesus’ half-brothers said to Him, “*Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world*” (John 7:3-4). The Spirit provides an explanation for their words: “*For neither did His brethren believe in Him*” (John 7:5). He was “*without honor*” among His relatives. On another occasion, when His relatives heard of His exhaustive ministry, and how He and His disciples did not even have time to eat, “*they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself*” (Mark 3:21). He was “*without honor among His own kin.*”

IN HIS OWN HOUSE. On one occasion, upon finding Jesus in the Temple at twelve years of age, Mary said to Him, “*Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.*” When Jesus responded that He must be about His Father’s business, “*they understood not the saying which He spake to them*” (Lk 2:48-50). On another occasion, Mary associated Jesus with the provision of wine, to which He responded, “*Woman, what have I to do with thee?*” (John 2:3-4). Without honor in His own house! This is knowing Christ “*after the flesh,*” something that is forbidden (2 Cor 5:16).

“5 And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.”

Does knowing Jesus “*after the flesh*” have any effect upon Him working among the people? Is it really of no consequence when demeaning views of Jesus are entertained? What of those who do not venerate Him, and give Him the precedence in their lives? What is His reaction to those who withdraw honor from Him in order to satisfy lower desires and devote themselves to lesser interests? How do you suppose He reacts to dismissing the assembly of the righteous because it is a holiday? – or does anyone imagine that this has nothing to do with honoring or not honoring the Lord Jesus? What may we expect Jesus to do among us when we view him with carnal familiarity? For those in Nazareth, such familiarity had to do with knowing the mother, brothers, and sisters of Jesus. It had to do with knowing His former occupation among them – when He did things that were not immediately and obviously related to His mission to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15), and bring the sons of God to glory (Heb 2:10).

In our time the circumstances have changed, but the principle remains the same. Some are familiar with Jesus as One who can help them with their problems. Others connect Him with Sunday School and its slanted literature, singing brief and shallow choruses, and certain holidays of the year. But they do not think of Him as the “*Captain of our salvation*” (Heb 2:10), or the One who “*ever lives to make intercession*” for us (Heb 7:25), or is going to appear to punish His enemies and reward His saints (2 Thess 1:9-10). They do think of themselves as having been “*called into the fellowship*” of Christ (1 Cor 1:9). Their lives cannot be described as an earnest quest to “*win Christ, and be found in Him*” with the righteousness that is from God by faith (Phil 3:8-9). They actually have a demeaning view of Jesus which does not require them to seek Him, listen to Him, obey Him, live for Him, and look for Him. The entire posture of their life is one of withholding honor from the Lord’s Christ. Will Jesus work mightily among such a people, hastening to answer their prayers, heal their sick, and deliver them from all manner of evil?

COULD DO NO MIGHTY WORK. Here is what is said of that miserable environment in which Jesus is “*without honor.*” “*He could not do any miracles there!*” NIV or, “*He could do not deeds of power there,*” NRSV or, “*He was unable to do any work of power there,*” BBE or “*He was not able to do even one work of power there.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew says, “*And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief*” (Matt 13:58).

Do you suppose if they had only read a book on miracles, or “The Prayer of Jabez,” that this situation would have been corrected? Perhaps a series of workshops on “Tapping into the power of God” would have done the job. Indeed, such suggestions are nothing more than nonsense. It was not their lack of knowledge that inhibited Jesus, but their lack of faith. They did not honor Jesus as the Son of God, and thus He could not work among them.

Some might doubt that unbelief has such an effect upon the Living God – and yet this verse remains. It is even in all of the translations! One of Asaph’s Psalms reads, “*Yea, they*

turned back and tempted God, and **limited the Holy One of Israel** ” (Psa 78:41). Some versions reduce the strength of the phrase by reading, “pained,” NASB “vexed,” NIV “provoked,” NRSV and “incensing.” AMPLIFIED While these fanciful translations might appear to be technically correct, they are spiritually misleading. **The fact of the matter is that a pained, vexed, provoked, and incensed God does not bless the people!** He does not work for good among them! This Psalm is explaining WHY they were rejected by God. It culminates by saying, “When God heard this, He was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel” (Psa 78:59). He “forsook” the tabernacle, let the enemies take the sacred ark, gave the people to the sword, was angry with His inheritance, consumed their young men, did not allow their maidens to marry, and caused the priests to fall by the sword (vs 60-64). The mighty works of God, devoted to blessing the people, CEASED among them. He could do no mighty work.

HEALED A FEW SICK FOLK. This is why Matthew says, “He did not *many* mighty works” (Matt 13:58). Mark makes this a modifying expression: “*except that He laid His hands on a few sick folk and healed them.*” NKJV Healing, then, is not the mightiest work of all! Here a few folk were healed in a context in which it is said that Jesus “could do no mighty work.” Among other things, we see that miracles and mighty works cannot break the hold of unbelief – else He would have done them. It is once said of God’s response to Israel, “So the LORD could **no longer bear it**,” NKJV and thus their land became a desolation (Jer 44:22). It is possible to “provoke the Lord” (1 C or 10:22), but woe to the person who does so!

The eyes of the Lord are looking for a person “whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chron 16:9). He looks to the person “that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at” His Word (Isa 66:2). The “few sick folk” that Jesus healed no doubt fell into this category – but there were precious few of them, and therefore Jesus was limited in what He could do. **I do not believe the average churchman has any awareness of the limiting power of unbelief.**

“ 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.”

HE MARVELED. Other versions read, “He wondered,” NASB “He was amazed,” NIV “was greatly surprised,” BBE “He could hardly accept the fact,” LIVING and “He was utterly amazed.” ISV The word “marvel” means “astonished or surprised.” Ordinarily, such a response would **not** be attributed to the Lord Jesus who, it is written, “needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man” (John 2:25). This marveling, amazement, or astonishment, however was not because Jesus saw something He did not know was there, or because He learned something of which He was not aware. This marveling was the expression of an absolutely righteous Man, with an unflawed holy character. What He saw, in this case, was abrasive to His spirit. This was the reaction of His heart, not His mind.

There are two occasions during which it is said that Jesus “marveled.” The first occasion was the great faith of the Centurion: “When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Matt 8:10; Lk 7:9). The second is this text. Nowhere in all of God’s Word is Christ ever said to marvel, except in these two cases – nowhere. All of the other marveling was on the part of men toward Christ.

BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF. And what is it that caused the Lord Jesus to “marvel?” It was the remarkable degree and pervasiveness of their unbelief! There is a similar expression concerning God’s reaction to Israel. “And He saw that there was no man, **and wondered** that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it

sustained Him” (Isa 59:16). This reflected no deficiency of Divine knowledge, but makes known how staggering the effect of unbelief and ungodliness is upon the Lord.

What is “*unbelief*?” From the standpoint of language it is “want of faith, unbelief . . . “a failure to trust, lack of trust, lack of faith . . .” Here, the people did **not** bring their sick from surrounding regions to lay them at Jesus feet, as they did in other places (Matt 4:24). They did not pack the house where He was teaching, so that no one could come close, as they once did in Capernaum (Mk 2:2). They did not come to him when they heard of the great things He did, as when He withdrew Himself to the sea (Mk 3:8). To them, He was only a hometown man who had gained some popularity – they really saw nothing extraordinary in Him.

Unbelief stops a person from doing great works against the hosts of darkness (Matt 17:20). Wherever unbelief is perceived – even if it is in His disciples – Jesus “*upbraids*” and rebukes those in whom it is found (Mk 16:14). “*Unbelief*” makes a person “*stagger*” at the promises of God, so that they cannot be embraced (Rom 4:20). It caused certain Jews to be “*broken off*” the Jewish tree, and excluded from the promise to Abraham (Rom 11:20). A heart in which “*unbelief*” is found departs “*from the living God*” (Heb 3:12). It was because of “*unbelief*” that a whole generation of Israelites “*could not enter*” into the promised land (Heb 3:19; 4:6). “*Unbelief*” will cause a person to “*fall*” (Heb 4:11). The “*unbelieving*” – all of them – “*shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Rev 21:8).

Now, in Jesus’ hometown, where they should have been able to associate His impeccably holy life with His message, there was such an alarming degree of unbelief, that it caused Jesus to marvel. **And, if this can be said of the town where Jesus was raised, what will be said of a town where the marvelous Gospel of Christ has been preached, the truth made available to the people, and the Holy Spirit promised?** How will heaven react to a generation that does seek Jesus, trust in Him, look to Him, and live for Him? I will tell what will result from such a circumstance. He will do “*no mighty work*” among them! If any are helped by Him, it will be a remnant of people who have dared to believe on the Lord Jesus when it was not fashionable to do so.

THE EFFECTS OF WORLDLY THINKING. Solemnly we are reminded that “*the carnal mind is enmity against God,*” and that “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*” (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 2:14). Wherever this mind-set is found, “*unbelief*” will dominate the people. And wherever unbelief prevails, Jesus will “*do no mighty work!*” **In my judgment, this explains the presence of mundane and powerless religion, where form is exalted, and charlatans and religious opportunists prosper.**

HE WENT ABOUT TEACHING. Jesus left Nazareth and began going through the villages, or small towns, “*teaching.*” This is what He began doing during the first of His ministry (Matt 4:23). It is what He did in the middle of His ministry (Matt 9:35). It is also what He did as He entered the latter phase of His ministry (Lk 13:22). He was acquainting people with the Living God (Lk 10:22), and the rule of God (Mk 1:14-15). He was shedding Divine light “*in the region and shadow of death*” (Matt 4:16). The “*Dayspring from on high*” (or heavenly “*Sunrise*” NASB) had visited the people, just as Zechariah had prophesied, and He was giving “*light to those that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*” (Lk 1:78-79). As the supreme Teacher, Jesus was a Distributor of spiritual light, illumination, and revelation.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 61

“ Mark 6:7 And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; 8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: 9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10 And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.”

(Mark 6:7-10; Matthew 10:5-11 ; Luke 9:1-4).

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has already chosen the twelve, naming them “*apostles*” (Lk 6:13-16; Matt 10:1-4; Mk 3:13-19). These were chosen for two reasons: (1) That “*they should be with Him*,” and (2) “*that He might send them forth to preach*” (Mk 3:14). These were men of special choice, distinct from other disciples so far as receiving and function are concerned. They were given to see and understand more because of their foundational role in the church (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14). They have been “*with Him*” for approximately 1 1/2 years, hearing Him preach and beholding his wonderful works. Now, for the first time, Jesus will send them out to preach. He will empower them for their mission, and give them instructions on the manner in which they were to go. It ought to be noted that no person should preach or teach until they have spent time with Jesus – until they are acquainted with Him, His purpose, and the thrust of His work and message. Others, who seek to give a valid witness, are confined, as Jesus said, to a testimony of “*how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee*” (Mk 5:19). **When it comes to preaching and teaching, human philosophy, opinion, and second-hand knowledge have no place.** Divine power is never said to be granted for the transmission of such inferior knowledge. The modern church knows very little of this.

“ Mk 6:7 And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits.”

HE CALLED TO HIM. Whether it is in the matter of initial salvation, or in Divine employment, human involvement commences with a “*call*” – a Divine initiative. Andrew and Peter were “*called*” to discipleship (Matt 4:18), as well as James and John (Matt 4:21). Those who are justified are first “*called*” (Rom8:30). The works of God are not accomplished by mere volunteers, but by those who have been summoned into the presence of the Lord.

THE TWELVE. The expression “*the twelve apostles*” is mentioned three times in Scripture (Matt 10:1 INITIAL CALL ; Lk 22:14 THE LAST SUPPER ; Rev 21:4 GLORIFIED CHURCH). These men are absolutely unique. They are referred to as “*the twelve*” twenty-three times (Matt 20:17; 26:14,20,47; Mk 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10,17,20,43; Lk 8:1; 9:12; 18:31; 22:3,47; John 6:67,71; 20:24; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5). He took them “*apart*” to teach them (Matt. 20:17; Mk 10:32), He sat down with them for special times of instruction (Matt 26:20; Mk 9:35). One time He

went out to Bethany with them (Mk 11:11). He taught them in the evening (Mk 14:17). When He went preaching throughout the villages “*the twelve were with Him*” (Lk 8:1). When the hour of His sacrifice approached, He had the Passover with “*the twelve apostles*” (Lk 22:14). When the church was under way and a crisis arose, it was “*the twelve*” that called the multitude together to resolve the difficulty (Acts 6:2). Jesus made special post-resurrection appearances to “*the twelve*” (1 Cor 15:5).

Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is referred to as “*one of the twelve*” (Matt 26:14,47; Mk 14:10,20,43; Lk 22:47; John 6:71). However, “*Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place*” (Acts 1:25), and his place was filled by Matthias, fulfilling the Scripture (Acts 1:16-26). He was among “*the twelve*” in the book of Acts, and was among those to whom the resurrected Christ appeared, as in 1 Corinthians 15:5. These “*apostles*” stand in class by themselves, and are said to be “*first*” in the church (1 Cor 12:28).

BEGAN TO SEND THEM FORTH. By saying He “*began to send them forth,*” Mark means that this was the beginning of several occasions. In this Jesus did not accompany them. They would learn by experience to conduct themselves as stewards sent forth by their Master.

TWO AND TWO. Jesus sent the twelve out in pairs – six different groups – for “*two are better than one*” (Eccl 4:9). They could encourage one another, and discuss the things of God that they were sent forth to proclaim. There have been several holy pairs: Moses/Aaron (Ex 4:29), Joshua/Caleb (Num 32:14), Paul/Silas (Acts 17:4), Paul/Barnabas (Acts 13:2,43), and the “*two witnesses*” of Revelation (Rev 11:3). Later, when Jesus would send out seventy, He would also do it in pairs – “*two and two*” (Lk 10:1).

Matthew reports that Jesus sent them to “*preach,*” commanding them “*Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*”

HE GAVE THEM POWER. Mark says Jesus “*gave them power over unclean spirits.*” Luke says He “*gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases*” (Lk 9:1). He summarizes Christ’s commission by saying He “*sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick*” (Lk 9:2). Matthew reports that Jesus said, “*And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils*” (Matt 10:7-8). He adds that they were not to charge for their ministry – “*freely ye have received, freely give,*” or “*Freely (without pay) you have received, freely (without charge) give.*” **AMPLIFIED**

Just as Jesus had “*life in Himself,*” and was therefore able to confer life (John 5:26), so Jesus had “*authority and power*” in Himself, and was thus able to delegate that power. This power is never said to have been communicated by the Apostles to other men. Jesus alone can delegate this such power over disease, the forces of darkness, and death itself.

This was not a power given to everyone! In this case, it was given only to “*the twelve.*” Later, and only when He was disposed to do so, Jesus gave power to “*heal the sick,*” and to cast out demons (Lk 10:9-17). Even then, these things were to accompany the message that He had given them. **It is wholly inappropriate for people who have nothing to say to seek for gifts that are said to accompany and validate a message!**

It ought to be noted that there is a purpose for spiritual gifts or abilities. If Jesus did not send “*twelve*” on a mission, they did not receive the power. Those who imagine that these aptitudes are given to every disciple, and that they ought always to be evident in the church, have erred in their judgment. Jesus never did give power in a wholesale and indiscreet manner. In this text, out of all of

the multitudes that followed Him, only twelve were given the power. The healed Gadarene demoniac, for example, did not receive power to cast demons out of others. His commission was simply to tell what had been done to him. If Jesus gives this power, men have it. If He does not, they do not.

“ 8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse. 9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.”

Jesus is going to send the twelve out with no resources. They are going to have faith, and learn to trust the Lord for their needs. Without faith, their mission will seem impossible under the circumstances that Jesus imposes upon them.

HE COMMANDED THEM. During our tenure with Jesus, at some point, we must be susceptible to the commands of the Lord. Twice Jesus “*commanded*” a multitude to sit down (Matt 14:19; 15:35). When He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead He “*commanded to give her meat*” (Luke 8:55). When Jesus sent the disciples to get a colt on which He could ride, He “*commanded*” them what to do (Matt 21:6). When He broke the fish, He “*commanded*” the disciples to set them before the people (Mk 8:7). When Jesus heard Bartimaeus calling for mercy, He “*commanded him to be called*” (Matt 10:49). He told His disciples that if they did what He **commanded** them, they were His “*friends*” (John 15:14). When it came to the matter of His disciples loving one another, He **commanded** them to do so (John 15:17). It is always a matter of grave concern when people shrink back from obeying the Lord.

TAKE A STAFF, NOTHING ELSE. As Jesus sent the twelve out in pairs, they could not pack a suitcase. He said they could take a “*staff*,” no doubt to assist them in negotiating the rugged terrain. Luke reads, “*Take nothing for your journey*” (Lk 9:3). Both Matthew and Luke say that Jesus forbade them to take “*staves*,” or “*staves*” – both are in the plural (Matt 10:10; Lk 9:3). The idea is that those who had a staff could take it, but those without one were not to procure one for their journey. In other words, if they ordinarily traveled with a staff, they could use one on this journey. If they did not, they were not to obtain one for this mission.

NO SCRIP. They could not take a “*scrip*” (**not** “*script*,” but “*scrip*,” or leather bag). This was used to carry supplies or provisions. Matthew reads, “*nor scrip for your journey*” – the normal supplies taken on a journey (Matt 10:10).

NO BREAD. They were to take no food with them – not even the bare minimum of supplies for their hunger.

NO MONEY. Matthew says, “*provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses*” (Matt 10:9). They could have nothing with them that would allow them to make a purchase.

PUT ON SANDALS, BUT NOT TWO COATS. Mark says they could put on “*sandals*.” Matthew says they were to take no “*shoes*.” Shoes and sandals are not the same thing. The word “*sandal*” refers to a sole made of wood or leather, and bound upon the foot with thongs. The word “*shoes*” refers to a more thorough covering of the feet. The idea is that they were to cumber themselves with two sets of shoes for negotiating different environments.

The phrase “*two coats*” means a change of raiment or clothing.

THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED. In these prohibitions, we see the avoidance of encumbrance, burden, or inhibition. Convenience is often a burden, and was thus to be avoided on this mission. In sending the twelve out, Jesus insisted that they not travel in an ordinary manner.

Matthew adds a word that shows why Jesus spoke in this way to His disciples: “*for the*

workman is worthy of his meat” (Matt 10:10). Luke says, “*for the laborer is worthy of his hire*” (Lk 10:7). Paul wrote to Timothy, “*The laborer is worthy of his reward*” (1 Tim 5:18). That is, these early missionaries were going to have to depend on the hospitality of their hearers. They would have to learn to trust the Lord to supply their needs through those to whom they preached, and upon whom they showed compassion.

This time, the “*twelve apostles*” would be more generally received than later. That is why they were not to provide for their journey. Later, however, this would not be the case. Following Christ’s death, the religious landscape was changed. Preparing His disciples for this, and prior to His death, Jesus spoke of this change. “*When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one*” (Luke 22:35-36). Jesus was not advocating physical warfare. Rather, He was alerting His disciples to the hostility that would arise after He had returned to heaven. The reason for this change should be obvious. While Jesus was among men, the devil focused upon Him, tempting Him, and raising up the people against Him. When Jesus returned to heaven, Satan was expelled from those lofty climes (Rev 12:9). It is then that launched an initiative with the “*remnant of the woman’s seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus*” (Rev 12:17).

In our text, however, the disciples would be more readily received, and would become acquainted with some ways in which the Father would provide their daily bread.

“ 10 And He said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.”

ENTER INTO A HOUSE. There would be no need for “*the twelve*” to take provisions with them, for others would entertain them. Since Jesus was sending them out in pairs, no household would be unduly burdened by entertaining all twelve of them at once – another practical reason for sending them out “*two by two.*”

Matthew provides a little further insight into this matter. The apostles did not impose themselves upon anyone. Neither, indeed, were they to go from house to house in an effort to find who was hospitable. Jesus said to them, “*And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy*” (Matt 10:11). Upon arriving in a town, the apostles were to search for a man who was “*worthy,*” “*respected,*” BBE “*godly,*” LIVING “*good,*” WEYMOUTH or “*deserving.*” WILLIAMS They were to inquire concerning any person who was upright and feared the Lord, and were thus ready to receive the “*gospel of the kingdom.*” I do not doubt that such people were also noted for their hospitality, and proneness to “*entertain strangers*” (Heb 13:2).

This, of course, exposes the utter fallaciousness of those who would have us neglect the righteous in preference for the unrighteous. When Jesus walked among men, these were the people who sought Him out, and not vice versa (Matt 9:10; Mk 2:15). Such also came to John the Baptist (Lk 7:29). The message of the forgiveness of sins that John announced and Jesus expounded, was appealing to those who had a deep sense of their sin.

If a holy entourage like “*the twelve apostles*” came to our town, and inquired concerning who was “*worthy,*” would our names be mentioned? Who would be among those whose homes were open to them? Jesus taught His disciples to be particular about the houses in which they resided. In fact, He will make a very strong point of it in the succeeding verses.

While there is certainly a sense in which the best of men are “*not worthy of the least*” of God’s benefits (Gen 32:10), there is a perspective of men in which worthiness is legitimate,

and even must be apparent. The disciples once recommended a centurion as being “*worthy*” because his kindness to the Jews (Lk 7:4). Jesus spoke of those who would be “*counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead*” (Lk 20:35), and “*counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass*” (Lk 21:36). We are urged to “*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*” (Eph 4:1), and “*walk worthy of the Lord*” (Col 1:10). The apostles were to seek out such souls, and abide with them. That is how Jesus reasoned on the matter.

ABIDE UNTIL YOU DEPART. Once the appropriate house had been determined, the laborers were to remain there until they left that area: “*stay there until you leave town.*” NKJV Matthew says, “*and there abide till ye go thence,*” or “*until you leave.*” NIV (Matt 10:11). Luke says, “*whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart,*” or “*take your leave from there*” (Luke 9:4). Jesus said something similar to the seventy when He sent them out: “*And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house*” (Luke 10:7).

SOME APPLICATIONS. There are several things to be seen here.

First , the particular mission on which they were sent forbade them to longer long in one place. They were to conduct their ministry like Jesus conducted His. It is said of His ministry, “*And when it was day, He departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him [tried to keep Him] NKJV , that He should not depart from them. And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent*” (Luke 4:42-43). They were not to settle down in one place, but spread the Gospel as far and wide as possible.

Second , they were not to be an imposition on their host. As long as their ministry required, they could enjoy the gracious hospitality of their host – but not one moment longer.

Third , moving about “*from house to house*” would take away from their ministry, having to repeatedly locate someone who was “*worthy*” to entertain them.

Fourth , moving about “*from house to house*” leave an impression of instability, and not provide for the optimum blessing of their gracious host. It would appear as though they were difficult to be pleased, and thus neutralize their message.

Fifth , the laborer must learn contentment, for “*godliness with contentment is great gain*” (1 Tim 6:6). Moving about tends to develop a spirit of discontentment, which is a great sin, and is to be avoided at all cost.

The servant of the Lord must develop a godly practicality that allows for the maximum amount of labor for the Master, the least burden upon gracious souls, the development of a contented spirit, and the ready recognition “*worthy*” souls. All of these require that the disciple spend a lot of time with the Master. The words that Jesus delivered to these twelve men were more easily received within the context of His own ministry, where He had already lived them out.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 62

“ Mark 6:11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. 12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”

(Mark 6:11-13; Matthew 10:14-15 ; Luke 9:5-6).

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has chosen twelve apostles that they might be with Him, and that they might preach (Mk 3:14). He knew that His tenure in the world was limited. He was sent into the world to lay down His life, and to take it up again (John 10:17-18). As soon as that was accomplished, He would be returning to heaven to mediate the new covenant, intercede for His people, and direct the affairs of His church. Everything He did was related to that mission and return. The twelve men that He chose were to occupy a key position in His church, He would direct the course of that church through their words, and they would pick up the work where He left off. Never are men to consider them as anything but His Apostles – His ambassadors, and those through whom He would establish the church. What had been kept secret since the world began would be revealed to them (Eph 3:5), and they would therefore be known as “*first*” in the church (1 Cor 12:28). Their words were to be remembered (2 Pet 3:2; Jude 1:17) because of the unique position into which Jesus placed them. **No church can be sound who is not grounded in their teaching.** In our text, Jesus sends them on their first preaching mission. They were to abide in the house of a “*worthy*” host while they filled the area with the good news of the Gospel. Now He gives them some further instruction.

“ 6:11a And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them . . .”

Because of the corruption of our society, there is not a general sense of the necessity of hearing the Word of the Lord, or of holding the Apostles of Christ in high regard. Because of the undue exaltation of self-worth, human opinion, and intellectual ability, men tend to place more worth on their own ideas. They feel they are free to reject the word of the Lord, or neglect the Apostles, in favor of other preferences. However, this is a total misconception, and that is confirmed in our text. If men do not receive the word of those whom Jesus sends, it is not because they are “*free*” to reject them, but because they are deceived and bound. When the Lord sends messengers to such people, it is their opportunity to be freed from delusion. If they refuse those messengers, a sin of the greatest magnitude has been committed.

WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE YOU. Other versions read, “*If they will not take you in,*” BBE “*does not welcome you,*” NJB and “*if a village won’t welcome you.*” NLT Here the text is speaking of a village or town, not of a particular house. Matthew adds that this applied to both a house that would not receive them, and a city as well. “*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that **house or city**” (Matt 10:14).*

Jesus did not hide from His disciples the fact of rejection. It was something to which they would be subjected, and with which they must be acquainted. They could not ignore this rejection, or pretend as though it did not exist. Nor, indeed, were they to make an effort to mitigate or reduce the possibility of that rejection. The rejection was two-fold: they would not be **received** or **heard**. Both of those go together, and the one cannot be isolated from the other. There can be no attempt to reduce the possibility of rejection by not delivering the message they were commissioned to give.

NOT HEAR YOU. Not only could a place in the city not be found that would entertain them, they could not get a hearing. The people did not want to hear their message – what Jesus sent them to **say**. He does not tell the disciples to first make friends of the people, and then deliver the message. He does not tell them to sponsor some unrelated public event, and then speak at the close of it. He does not suggest that they sponsor a public meal to get the people in, then deliver their message. Here was a case where Jesus sent them forth to say something. The disciples were to make it clear from the very outset that this is why they came into the city – to deliver a message: “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand!*” (Matt 10:7), or “*to preach the kingdom of God*” (Lk 9:5). Now, what will they do if the city does not want this message?

SHAKE OFF THE DUST UNDER YOUR FEET. “*When ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet,*” or “*shake off the dust from the soles of your feet.*” NASB Luke reads, “*shake off the **very dust of your feet***” (Lk 9:5). Let nothing from that city cling to you – not even the dust of their roads and wayside! When Jesus sent out the seventy, He gave similar instructions. “. . . *say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off*” (Luke 10:11). Do you suppose you could have convinced “*the twelve*” that it was really of no consequence if men did not hear what they were given to say? If the condition of the city was that they could stay as long as they did not speak, does anyone imagine they would have submitted to such a condition, and remained there without speaking?

A TESTIMONY AGAINST THEM. There was to be no question about why they were leaving those who rejected them. The shaking off of the dust of that city was to be done publically “*for a testimony against them.*” When Jesus commissioned the seventy to do this same thing He told them to say, “*Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, **we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you***” (Luke 10:11). That is, the opportunity to participate in the benefits God was bringing was placed squarely before them. Yet, because they refused the messengers of Jesus, the opportunity was withdrawn. This deed – shaking off the dust from their feet for a testimony against them – involved “*the twelve*” **disassociating themselves from those who had rejected them.** This is a most sobering word, indeed. Yet, you can scarcely find a person in the Christian community who would acquiesce to our Lord’s instructions.

This response was practiced by Paul and Barnabas when they confronted obstinate Jews in Antioch of Pisidia. When they were “*expelled out of their coasts,*” it is written, “*But they **shook off the dust of their feet against them**, and came unto Iconium*” (Acts 13:51). Paul did a similar thing when he confronted the opposition of Jews in Corinth: “*he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles*”

(Acts 18:6).

Most every person who has spent any time preaching has confronted those who refuse to hear. Sometimes they are even elders and church board members. Wherever such a thing is experienced, it is recorded in the books of heaven, and will not be forgotten.

“ 11b Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.”

Just how serious is it for men – any men – to reject the message sent forth by the Lord Jesus? We will see that such a rejection has eternal ramifications. Whenever and wherever men choose to gather to themselves teachers who deliver a message that is tantalizing to the flesh, it is evidence that a falling away has already occurred. Thus it is written, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”* (2 Tim 4:3-4). **Such a condition is so common that I do not know of a single “church-planting” program that begins with the preaching of the Gospel.** All such programs begin with surveys, various community programs, youth works, purported worship services, and the likes. Jesus will show us the gravity of a **message** that is rejected.

VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU. The word “*verily*” means “*assuredly,*” or “*so be it,*” and “*this is indeed true.*” THAYER What follows is faithful and unchanging – something that fixed, and cannot possibly be changed. Other versions read (Matt 10:15), “*Truly I say unto you,*” NASB “*I tell you the truth ,*” NIV and “*I solemnly tell you.*” WEYMOUTH

The solidity and unchangeableness of Jesus’ words are confirmed in His frequent use of this word: “*Verily.*” **The Gospels have Him using this word 103 times!** Twenty-five of those times it is used twice to introduce a saying – “*Verily, verily.*” Every time our Lord used this word, it confirmed that He was “*full*” of truth (John 1:14), and that His words “*shall, not pass away*” (Matt 24:35). And what word will Jesus now say concerning those who reject His messengers and the word they were sent to deliver?

IT SHALL BE MORE TOLERABLE. “*It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha.*” Matthew reads, “*for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah*” (Matt 10:15). Jesus made the same observation concerning those who rejected **the seventy**, whom He also sent out: “*But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city*” (Luke 10:12). He said the same of those who rejected **His own words** . “*But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee*” (Mat 11:24).

What does “*more tolerable*” mean? It means “*more bearable,*” NIV “*be better,*” BBE “*easier,*” GENEVA “*comfortable,*” MRD “*better off,*” NLT or “*able to be endured.*” THAYER

And what is it that is said of Sodom and Gomorrah? How are we asked to consider them, and what is to come into our minds when we hear those names? “*Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*” (Jude 1:7). And again, “*And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly*” (2 Pet 2:6). How could it be possible to be in a worse state than those cities?

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. Jesus is not speaking of what happened to these wicked cities in this world – but how they will fare in the when the assembled universe stands before the Lord. **He**

means that the day of judgment will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah to bear than for those who have rejected His messengers and their message!

Jesus is not suggesting there is a possibility that Sodom and Gomorrah will survive the day of judgment. Such a notion would dull the power of His words. He is rather saying they will were “*condemned*” to be consumed with “*eternal fire*” for **something of less magnitude** than rejecting the Gospel, turning away its messengers, and refusing to receive the love of the truth. This by no means reduces the sins of which they were guilty: “*fornication*” and “*going after strange flesh*” (sodomy). Those are sins that still condemn people, excluding them from the kingdom of God and bringing the wrath of God upon them (Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5-6). Yet, all sin is not alike, and all sin is not on the same level. **The response of a person to the Gospel of Christ and the good news of the Kingdom is of even more weight than their response to the lure of such base and condemning sins as fornication and going after strange flesh!**

The day of judgment will be a time of comparison, as well as the exposure of the words and deeds of men. Nineveh, who “*repented at the preaching*” of condemnation by Jonah will be compared to those who rejected the preaching of salvation in Christ Jesus (Matt 12:41). The queen of Sheba, who traveled “*from the uttermost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,*” will be compared to those who were subjected to the word of a righteousness from God, and yet did not extend themselves to hear that word (Luke 11:31). And, Sodom and Gomorrah, who spurned the word of righteous Lot, will be compared with cities that spurned the only Man who every “*came down from heaven*” to do “*the will of Him*” who sent Him (John 6:38). In my judgment, this solemn word is rarely declared to our generation. Yet, it is a true word, and men will be held accountable for how they have responded to the Gospel.

“ 13 And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”

With such an awesome commission, “*the twelve*” went forth, doing precisely what the Lord told them to do. Luke says, “*And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel*” (Luke 9:6).

Their immediate, precise, and thorough obedience chronicled the very nature of the kingdom of God. Those who have really been in the presence of Jesus, have really believed Him, and have really been sent forth by Him, really do what He says! This is involved in our Lord’s telling statement, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*” (John 10:27). Where these qualities are not found, we are **not** dealing with Christ’s “*sheep.*”

MEN SHOULD REPENT. This was not a strange message, for John the Baptist had come preaching this also (Matt 3:2). Jesus Himself also came preaching repentance: “*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt 4:17). Although the record does not say that Jesus told them to preach that men “*should repent,*” they knew this was a proper message, for it was what Jesus preached. The “*kingdom of heaven*” was at hand, but those who did not repent would have no part of it or benefit from it.

Precisely what does it mean to “*repent?*” From the standpoint of language alone, “*repent*” means “to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins,” THAYER and “a change in the way one thinks, change one’s minds, and be converted.” It involves “feeling remorse, regret, and feeling sorry.” FRIBERG In repentance a person sees their condition, turns from it in sorrow and remorse, and takes hold of the truth of God. You may recall that Jesus “*upbraided*” certain cities “*because they repented not*” (Matt 11:20). Following the exaltation

of Christ, the very first word delivered to inquiring souls was “*Repent*” (Acts 2:38). Shortly after that, Peter said to another group, “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*” (Acts 3:19). Paul reminded the Athenian philosophers that God “*now commandeth all men every where to repent*” (Acts 17:30). This was a necessity when John the Baptist preached. It was a necessity when Jesus preached. It was a requirement when Jesus sent out the twelve. It was also required after Jesus ascended back into heaven. Men are to change! **They are to change their way of thinking – their view of themselves, the world, the Lord Jesus, and their purpose.** Sadly, the modern church does not appear to require this change – but God does, and no one will be received by Him until this is done.

THEY CAST OUT MANY DEVILS. When Jesus empowered and sent out “*the twelve,*” they assaulted the kingdom of darkness, casting out “*many demons.*” It is also written of Jesus’ early ministry, He “*cast out many devils*” (Mk 1:34). Now, more than a year later, the same thing is said of the initial ministry of “*the twelve.*” Remember, we are speaking of the land of Israel, a land that God Himself referred to as “*My land*” (Isa 14:25; Jer 2:7). Now, it is as though the land had nearly been overrun with demons. It was in this sense that people were said to have “*sat in darkness*” (Matt 4:16), for “*darkness*” is the only habitat in which demons can survive.

With the Law and its ceremonies in place, demons were found in abundance. With a plethora of religious leaders – high priests, priests, rulers of the synagogues, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers – Satan and his hosts were working with no apparent restraint until they confronted Jesus or those He empowered. We should be able to see the parallel in our time.

THEY ANOINTED WITH OIL MANY THAT WERE SICK. This is the first time in the New Covenant Scriptures when anyone was said to be anointed with oil. The only other reference to anointing the sick with oil is James 5:14. It is not clear if they made an association with the “*anointing oil*” of the tabernacle or not (Ex 30:25). It does appear, however, that God had somehow impressed this upon their spirit, and that it was a general knowledge among the faithful, as confirmed in James’ directive. It is not possible to form a hard and fast law about anointing the sick with oil, for there are only two references in the whole of Scripture that speak of it. To me, this confirms that there is a dimension of Divine direction that is purely the result of intimacy with the Savior Himself. “*The twelve*” knew what to do because they had been with Jesus. That is the point, whether He spoke the word, or inwardly directed them.

AND HEALED THEM. The oil, then, was not intended to be of a medicinal nature, for then there would have been no miracle to it. We also know this is the case by the report of Luke, who leaves out the matter of the soil: “*And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where*” (Luke 9:6). This was owing to the empowerment by Jesus: “*He gave them power . . . to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease*” (Matt 10:1). Who but the Lord from heaven can confer such power upon men?

A COMMENT. This account accents the faith of “*the twelve*” when they went out. They did not experiment, but simply fulfilled the word of Jesus, even though they had never before done anything like this. This is the first record of any follower of Jesus casting out demons or healing the sick. There is no record of any failure on their part.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 63

“Mark 6:14 And king Herod heard of him; (for His name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. 15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.”

(Mark 6:14-16; Matthew 14:1-2 ; Luke 9:7-9).

INTRODUCTION

For the first time, Jesus had empowered and sent out the twelve apostles. They had commenced going through all of the towns and villages, preaching the kingdom of God, and that men “*should repent*,” healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, and announcing that the kingdom of heaven was “*at hand*” (Matt 10:7; Mk 6:12; Lk 9:1-2). They were drawing the attention of the people to something outside of themselves – “*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*.” They were introducing people to a power outside of themselves – healing, raising the dead, and casting out demons. They were familiarizing people with the need for real change – “*men should repent*.” They were not calling men to a new set of rules, or presenting to them special disciplines for life. God was doing “*a new thing*” in the earth, and it was the business of Christ’s messengers to confirm this to the people. As Isaiah prophesied, a way was being made “*in the wilderness*,” and “*rivers in the desert*” (Isa 43:19). The “*day of salvation*” was about to commence – a day in which God would make something out of man – a “*new creation*” (2 Cor 5:17). In sending forth His disciples, Jesus was adjusting the people’s perception of Himself – acquainting them with the absolute preeminence of Deity in salvation. Men were being shown that improvement – particularly spiritual improvement – is not self-induced. It is the result of the working of the Lord. Man’s part is to know his condition, and of his own powerlessness to change it.

“Mk 6:14 And king Herod heard of Him; (for His name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.”

KING HEROD HEARD OF HIM. It is interesting that the record of Herod hearing of Jesus follows the preaching and working of “*the twelve*.” I do not doubt that first-hand reports of Christ’s personal works had reached his ears, for the awareness of Jesus was spreading throughout the land. It is written of Jesus, “*And His fame spread throughout all Syria*” (Matt 4:24). Two healed blind men “*spread abroad His fame in all that country*” in which they resided (Matt 9:31). Christ’s “*fame*” also “*spread abroad throughout all the region of Galilee*” (Mk 1:28). A leper who had been healed “*began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter*” (Mk 1:45). A man who had been healed of deafness and dumbness did the same (Mk 7:36). After raising Jairus’ daughter “*the fame hereof went abroad into all that land*” (Matt 9:26).

The Pharisees “heard” about Jesus (Matt 12:24). Scribes heard of Him, and “came from Jerusalem” to hear Him (Mk 7:1). The “chief priests” and “elders” became aware of Him (Matt 21:23; 26:59). **Now, the report of Jesus has penetrated the political world** – “king Herod heard of Him.” Matthew and Luke refer to him as “Herod the tetrarch” (Matt 14:1; Lk 9:7) – “tetrarch” meaning “ruler over the fourth part of the country.”

Herod was a member of the Herodian family. The Herod of our text was the “Herod Antipas” of history. He is the one who later sought to “kill” Jesus, and of whom Jesus said, “Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:31-32). He is also the one before whom Jesus was ultimately tried, and who became friends with Pilate in the wicked opposition to Jesus (Lk 23:12). This Herod, according to history, died around AD 39.

There was “Herod the Great,” as history calls him, father of the Herod of our text. He is the one who sought to kill the infant Jesus (Matt 2:1-22). History records that he died not long after the Savior was born (AD 4). This is the Herod that rebuilt the Temple that Jesus twice cleansed, a project that took “forty years” (John 2:20).

There was also a third “Herod,” who was slain by an angel of the Lord when he received praise from the people as though he was a God (Acts 12:21-23), which death occurred in AD 44. This is the Herod that killed James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1-6).

What a despotic family! The first Herod opposed Jesus when he was born. The second Herod opposed Jesus when He ministered, and is associated with His death. The third Herod opposed the chief Apostles of Christ after He had been exalted in heaven.

HIS NAME WAS SPREAD ABROAD. What does “His name was spread abroad,” or “His name had become well known,” NKJV mean? It means that Jesus Himself was becoming more fully known. And why so? **This was being done by means of what He has said, and what He had done.** Solomon once observed, “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Prov 20:11). How much more is this true of the Lord Jesus. His “doings” revealed who He was. His words revealed His wisdom, His purpose, and the Source of His mission. His works revealed His mercy, tenderness, and compassion. His words to the religious leaders, and the cleansing of the Temple, revealed His absolute intolerance of sin. The casting out of demons revealed His superiority over the devil and all of his hosts. His attendance at the synagogue and exposition of Moses and the Prophets made known His love for and honor of the Word of the Lord. All of that is involved in “His fame.”

Knowledgeable people could make an association of this Jesus with the promises of God through the Prophets. “His name” coincided with what God had said about the coming Savior. “And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; and they shall abide: for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth” (Micah 5:4). This is an area in which the modern church has **not** done well. They have tended to associate Jesus with the resolution of contemporary problems rather than with the prophecies and promises of Almighty God, the Architect of our salvation. When Saul of Tarsus was converted, he was found “proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22). He did the same later in a synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3). He did the same in Corinth (Acts 18:5), and in Rome (Acts 28:23). Apollos did the same throughout the region of Achaia (Acts 18:28).

Jesus’ “fame” was also doubtless spread abroad through the ministry of “the twelve,” as they worked and delivered their glad message in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

MIGHTY WORKS DO SHOW FORTH THEMSELVES. Although I have made this point before, it bears mentioning again. Where Jesus is found, He is also found working. If He cannot work because of unbelief, He will eventually leave. An absence of God-glorifying works confirms the absence of Jesus Himself, for He cannot be hidden. Get Jesus into the house, and where there is faith, His works will “*show forth themselves.*”

“ 15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.”

Herod heard of Jesus, and concluded that he was John the Baptist, risen from the dead. This observation will be covered in the next verse.

OTHERS SAID. Here, it is important to see that those who are confronted with the real Jesus will have something to say about Him. This is because Jesus IS unique. There is none other like Him. What He says overshadows what others say. What He does dwarfs what others do. What people say about “*Jesus*” will reveal whether they have heard of the real Jesus or of “*another Jesus*” (2 Cor 11:4).

This matter of what people are saying about “*Jesus*” is important, as confirmed in Christ’s question to His disciples: “*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*” (Matt 16:13).

IT IS ELIAS. This is the Greek version of “*Elijah.*” At the time Jesus asked that question (some time after our text), His disciples replied that some were saying He was Elijah (Matt 16:14). Therefore, this view of Jesus circulated for some time – at least a year or so. Why did they say this? It is because of Malachi’s prophecy: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*” (Mal 4:5-6).

This prophecy had awakened hope in the heart of many Israelites. When John the Baptist came, he was so unique the people asked him, “*Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No*” (John 1:21). This has confused some, for Jesus once told His disciples that John the Baptist was Elijah. However, he was not the total fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy, but only a type of it. Rather than “*restoring all things,*” the people “*knew him not, and did to him whatever they wished*” NKJV (Matt 17:12). Jesus preceded that statement by saying, “*Indeed, Elijah IS coming first and WILL restore all things*” NKJV (Matt 17:11). The prophecy of Malachi that was fully answered in John the Baptist is found in the third chapter Malachi: “*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me*” (Mal 3:1). Isaiah also spoke of this (Isa 40:33). These people, then, did not see Jesus as the promised Messiah, but as one who would prepare the people for Him.

A PROPHET, OR ONE OF THE PROPHETS. “*A prophet*” doubtless refers to the promise of “*a prophet,*” foretold by Moses (Deut 18:15,18). Those who heard John the Baptist asked him, “*Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No*” (John 1:21). This observation was certainly never made concerning any of the scribes or Pharisees.

“As one of the prophets:” that is, “*like one of the prophets of long ago.*” NIV He certainly was not like any modern teacher, and few genuine prophets appeared to be then alive. John the Baptist was a prophet – “*yea more than a prophet*” (Matt 11:9). At the time of Jesus birth, Simeon and Anna were prophets (Lk 2:25-27, 36). Now, multitudes of the people counted Jesus “*as a prophet*” (Matt 14:5), and he was certainly not like any then current prophet.

Luke records, “*and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again*” (Luke 9:8). These were not thinking of a new prophet – one of the prophetic order, so to speak, as some others thought. Rather they considered it entirely possible that one of the former prophets had risen from the dead – even though there was no historical precedent for thinking in this manner. Later, the disciples would report to Jesus that some thought “*that one of the old prophets is risen again*” (Lk 9:19).

SOMETHING TO BE NOTED OF A CULTURED PEOPLE. Even though Israel was not noted for any degree of spiritual stability, God had cultured them to think in certain ways. Being introduced to the real God, and “*hewed*” by real prophets (Hos 6:5), it was not difficult for them to think of someone coming back from the dead. They had no trouble thinking of seeing spirits (Lk 24:37), an evil spirit dominating a person (Mk 9:17-18), or the exertion of supernatural power (Matt 9:8). These persuasions were not mere superstition, but were based upon very real displays of Divine power throughout their history.

Today, we have a spiritually **uncultured** society – even in much of the professed church. The thinking of the people is more cultivated by the world than by God. Thus, it is quite easy for some to consign any miraculous events to the past only – and some even doubt that they took place then. In a culture like this, “*salvation*” and Divine “*care*” are explained in terms of this world. Training, discipline, free will, education, and the likes are areas in which explanations for change are found. In the average American city, to say nothing of a church, the appearance of Jesus could not possibly be thought to be an old prophet risen from the dead. Such a notion is completely foreign to much contemporary thought. The reason for this circumstance is that hearts and minds have not been exposed to the real Jesus, or the true Word of the Lord; thus are spiritually crude and unrefined. It is a sad state of affairs.

“ 16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.”

HEROD HEARS THE REPORTS. People who see the real Jesus **do** speak of Him, either disparagingly or with great wonder. I do not believe Jesus was ever in a place, and it remained a secret that he was there. As soon as He arrived, the word of His presence began to be spread (Matt 22:34; Mk 2:1; Lk 1:65; John 12:18). Mark says of His ministry, “*but He could not be hid*” – even though He once “*entered into a house, and would have no man know it*” (Mk 2:1). That is why Herod heard the reports. **Jesus, together with what He said and did, could not be hid.**

Contrary to the thoughts of many, the main work is not letting people know about Jesus. Rather, it is to get Jesus into the vicinity, and having Him indwell the people. Jesus is never idle. As He Himself confessed, “*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*” (John 5:17).

IT IS JOHN. A great consciousness of Herod’s evil deed smote him: “*It is John whom I have beheaded!*” His bread had come back to him on the waters (Eccl 11:1)! Solomon meant to do good to people, even if they seem to throw it away, and you will still reap a harvest. In Herod’s case, he sowed a deed when he had John the Baptist “*beheaded,*” and now it had come back to haunt him. I will cover this more thoroughly in verses 17-29, which provide the sordid details of John’s martyrdom, together with why Herod had him beheaded.

This is something similar to the experience of Saul of Tarsus. You may remember that he “*consented*” to the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1), the witnesses who spoke against, and stoned Stephen, laying their garments at his feet while they committed their grievous deed (Acts 7:58). Paul did not forget that dreadful day (Acts 22:20), nor did Jesus. When the Lord appeared to Saul as he was going about to persecute those who believed on Christ, He reminded Saul, “*It is hard for thee to*

kick against the pricks,” or “*goads*” NKJV (Acts 9:5; 26:14). That is, his conscience pummeled him every time he recalled that day when Stephen died, his face being seen “*as it had been the face of an angel*” (Acts 6:15).

So it was with Herod. The report of Jesus awakened the bitter memory of what he had done to John. Only eternity will fully reveal the incriminating effects of that memory.

HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD. What fear this must have struck into the heart of Herod! Matthew gives the same report “*This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead!*” (Matt 14:1). Even Herod knew that there is more to man than a body, and that all life does not conclude at death. It was John himself that Herod thought had “*risen from the dead.*” He certainly was not right in his assessment of the situation, but his thinking was within the realm of very real possibility. **The further a people get from God, and the more that worldly wisdom dominates their thinking, the less they are prone to think of the dead being raised.** Such a people will devote themselves to attempting to extend life in the flesh. Insightful people devote their efforts to preparing for the life that is after death.

MIGHTY WORKS DO SHOW THEMSELVES IN HIM. Matthew records Herod’s observation in this manner: “*And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him*” (Matt 14:2). This is a most intriguing perspective, for while he walked among men “*John did no miracle*” (John 10:41). He was not noted for what He did, but for what He said. Notwithstanding, he was such a spiritually distinctive man, that it was a marvel that he did **not** do any miracle. Notice how precisely this is stated: “*that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.*” NASB That is, only a power external to himself could have wrought such wonders. Even Herod knew this.

LUKE’S GOSPEL. Luke adds yet another facet of this account. He states that when Herod first heard about Jesus “*he was perplexed , because that it was said of some , that John was risen from the dead*” (Luke 9:7). In distinction from Matthew and Mark, this was Herod’s **first** reaction, while the other writers focus on his **final** thoughts on the matter. Perhaps he had adopted the view of the Sadducees, who did not believe there was a resurrection (Matt 22:23). History tells us that the Sadducees had a very prominent political inclination, so they would have probably been viewed by Herod as the more favorable Jewish sect. At any rate, at first it confounded Herod that a report was being given that John had risen from the dead.

Luke informs us that in his initial response Herod also reasoned, “*John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things?*” (Luke 9:9a). However, as he thought upon the matter, Herod soon arrived at the conclusion, “*This IS John the Baptist*” (Matt 14:2); “*It IS John, whom I beheaded: he IS risen from the dead*” (Mk 6:16).

The brashness of Herod, and the oft bold nature of unbelief is seen in Luke’s further words concerning Herod’s response: “*And he desired to see him*” (Lk 9:9b). **This was not the inquiry of faith, but of carnal curiosity** – a propensity that still exists among men. Herod did not seek a blessing, but like the Athenians only delighted in “*some new thing*” (Acts 17:21). He would be granted his wish later, but it would not be under the circumstances he desired.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 64

“Mark 6:17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. 18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. 19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: 20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”

(Mark 6:17-20; 1:14; Matthew 14:3-5 ; Luke 3:19-20)

INTRODUCTION

There are key figures in human history – men who played a key role in “*the record God has given of His Son*” (1 John 5:10). Our text mentions two of them – John the Baptist, cousin, friend, and forerunner of Jesus, and Herod, worldly king, fickle foe, and enemy of Jesus. According to appearance, Herod was the more prominent of the two, being “*king*,” and seemingly able to do his own will among the people. John the Baptist appeared to be the weaker. Jesus said of him, “*they did to him whatever they wished*” NKJV (Mk 9:13). Yet, according to heaven, John the Baptist was the most prominent, with a greater person not having existed before him (Matt 11:11). From heaven’s vantage point, worldly prominence is brief and of no real significance. Those who seek after the world’s approval are foolish indeed, for the world and its desires are going to pass away (1 John 2:17). In this section we will see how absolutely unwise it is to seek the approbation of men. Here, in Herod, we have a sterling example of the flesh and how it reacts in the realm of religion. It is inquisitive yet calloused, seeming interested, yet quite willing to oppose those who declare the truth of God.

“ Mk 6:17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. 18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.”

HEROD HIMSELF. The deed that will now be discussed was one willingly committed. This was not something that merely occurred during Herod’s reign – it is something that “*Herod himself*” did. He is the one who commissioned this, and it is credited to him.

We have here a example of “*the books*” in which the deeds of men are recorded (Dan 7:10; Rev 20:12). Just as surely as this deed of Herod was recorded, so the deeds of men have been written in the heavenly records. Just as surely as Herod’s deed was made known, so will the deeds of men be chronicled to an assembled universe. The only hope of any person is to have an offsetting entry of repentance and faith in Christ.

JOHN BOUND AND PUT IN PRISON. This took place early in Christ’s ministry, not long after his baptism. Note that Herod not only put John in prison, but bound him there also. It is written,

“Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee” (Matt 4:12). Matthew says that Jesus began his ministry after this (Matt 4:12-15). John points out there was a slight overlap in the ministries of John and Jesus: *“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison”* (John 3:22-24). About 1½ years after Jesus began His ministry it is written, *“Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples”* (Matt 11:2). This imprisonment, then, was a key point in Scripture. It is the point at which John began to *“decrease,”* and Jesus began to *“increase”* (John 3:30). This is certainly not the way men would have made the transition from John the harbinger, or forerunner, to Jesus the Savior.

HERODIAS. *“Herodias”* is mentioned six times in Scripture (Matt 14:3,6; Mk 6:17,19,22; Lk 3:19). All of them have to do with the incident that is here described. This is all that we know of this woman. She is the opposite of holy women like Elizabeth, Anna, Dorcas, and Phebe – about whom very little is known. Notwithstanding the small amount of information known about Herodias and those holy women, the Spirit delivered to us the kernel of who they were. The Lord left Herodias’ record with not doubt that she was a wicked woman.

THE MORAL TRANSGRESSION OF HEROD. Herod has married his brother’s wife. Even when Herodias was married to Herod, Matthew refers to her as *“his brother Philip’s wife”* (Matt 14:3). Luke also refers to her in exactly the same way (Lk 3:19). History tells us that Herodias was the daughter of one of the sons of Herod the great, Herod’s father. Philip was also one of the son’s of Herod the Great, as well as the Herod of our text. The whole matter is fraught with transgression and sensuality, and is very grievous. The Law forbade a brother to lie with his brother’s wife (Lev 18:16), or take her as his wife (Lev 20:21). It did permit someone to marry their brother’s wife until he had died (Deut 25:5). At this point, Philip was still alive, and Herod had taken his wife Herodias unto himself, to be his own wife.

JOHN’S WORD AGAINST HIM. Herod was not a Jew, and was not in covenant with God. Yet, he was not above the Law of God, and John knew it. John had said to Herod himself, *“It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.”* Matthew reads, *“It is not lawful for thee to have her”* (Matt 14:4). Luke says of John the Baptist that Herod was *“reproved by him”* (Lk 3:19). He goes on to say that this was not the only matter concerning which John reprovved Herod: *“AND for all the evils which Herod had done”* (Lk 3:19). Luke also adds that the imprisonment of John was an additional *“evil”* charged to Herod’s account: *“Added yet this above all , that he shut up John in prison”* (Luke 3:20).

Although John’s primary ministry was to *“prepare the way of the Lord,”* readying the people to recognize and receive Him (Mk 1:3), he was a general herald of righteousness as well. No true servant of God can blithely, or casually, disregard iniquity. In a day when transgression is easily tolerated in the church itself, John the Baptist, *“filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth”* NIV (Lk 1:15), stands in stark contrast to the insipid preachers who now dominate the religious scene. He was surely a thorn in the side of public sinners – even a government official. You may remember that he once said to a *“multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, ‘O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance”* (Lk 3:7-8). Matthew says this multitude was *“many of the Pharisees and Sadducees”* (Matt 3:7). It is challenging to ponder how John would preach in our time.

One of the evidences of a falling away is when professed *“Christians”* become tolerant of and indifferent about iniquity. As David well said, *“Ye that love the Lord, hate evil”* (Psa 97:10). One of the marks of a wicked person is this: *“he abhorreth not evil”* (Psa 36:4). Those in

Christ are exhorted, “*Abhor that which is evil*” (Rom 12:12:9). John the Baptist was such a person.

“ 19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not.”

It is interesting that Herod was not the one that was upset with John, but his wife Herodias. Herod laid hold of John, bound him, and threw him into prison, “*for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife*” (Matt 14:3). It is also arresting to consider that even though Herod “*had married*” Herodias, the Spirit refers to her as “*Philip’s wife.*” In the eyes of the Lord, this was not a legal marriage, even though it was honored by men. Jesus did allow for divorce under certain conditions – namely that of fornication (Matt 5:32). Paul also adds that a believer is not under “*bondage*” to remain married to an unbeliever if they are not willing to dwell peaceably with them (1 Cor 7:15). Even then, however, Paul presented the possibility that the believer might “*save*” the unbeliever (1 Cor 7:16). It is the business of the body of Christ to be informed in this area, and to conduct themselves in a God-glorifying manner. Today, we are told, there are actually more divorces among professing Christians than among unbelievers.

I understand that this is a very sensitive subject, and that professing believers are by no means agreed concerning it. However, we do well to adopt the kind of spirit made known in John the Baptist. Immorality is not to be tolerated as though it did not even exist.

A QUARREL AGAINST JOHN. Herodias did **not** have a “*grudge*” NASB against John because multitudes of people went out to hear him (Matt 3:5). It was not because John called men to repentance, announcing that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt 3:2), or because he baptized Jesus (Mk 1:9). Her objection was to John’s rebuke of Herod – a stinging rebuke, indeed, because he said it was **not** lawful, or right, for him to be married to her. Her marriage to Herod was unlawful in the eyes of God. Rather than repenting, Herodias “*set herself against*” ASV John, and was “*bitter*” BBE toward him.

Accenting the word “*against,*” some versions read that she “*laid wait against him,*” GENEVA and “*laid snares*” DOUAY for him. Other versions point out how her hatred of John festered in her wicked heart: “*Herodias nursed a grudge against John.*” NIB

Like wayward Israel, Herodias “*refused to return*” from her waywardness (Hos 11:5), and “*hardened*” her “*neck, and would not hear*” (Neh 9:29). That is the manner of “*the flesh.*” It “*refuseth reproof*” (Prov 10:17) and “*instruction*” (Prov 13:18), and will not give heed to the word of the Lord. She viewed what was “*not lawful*” as being right, and was thus classed among those who “*call evil good, and good evil*” (Isa 5:20).

It is the nature of flesh to oppose those who expose it – whether it is political flesh or religious flesh. It is well said of the “*carnal mind*” that it “*is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom 8:7). Whether it is childish flesh, nonreligious flesh, or religious flesh, “*the carnal mind*” always sides against God and for self.

SHE WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM. How far will “*the flesh*” or “*the carnal mind*” go in its opposition to the truth? The “*flesh*” is like a “*bottomless pit,*” the depth of which is beyond all imagination. In the case of Herodias, she “*wanted to put him to death.*” NASB

Herodias was to Herod what Jezebel was to Ahab. When that wicked queen heard what Elijah had done to the prophets of Baal, she sent a messenger to him who said, “*So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time*” (1 Kgs 19:2). The flesh does not hesitate to express itself vehemently.

Taking the life of the righteous is not a strange reaction. Cain, who was a child of the devil (1 John 3:12), carried out his despotic desire, killing righteous Abel (Gen 4:8). The “chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill” Jesus (Lk 22:2). Some Jews who heard “Peter and the other apostles,” were “cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them” (Acts 5:33). When Saul of Tarsus was converted and “spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus,” the Jews “went about to slay him” (Acts 9:29).

All of this confirms that the truth has an abrasive effect upon the carnal mind. It so agitates the flesh that it will go to virtually any length to quiet the voice of the person of God. Today, in our country, “the flesh” has come up with some more sophisticated ways of opposing those who speak in the name of the Lord. Character assassination or turning the deaf ear to the man of God is common. Yet, all such reactions are regarded in heaven to be in the same category as Herodias, who looked for an opportunity to kill John the Baptist.

BUT SHE COULD NOT. Other versions read, “She was not able to do so,” NIV “she was powerless,” NLT and “But she could not have it to be done.” WILLIAMS Herodias could very well have sought to kill John the Baptist for over a year – from the time of his word to Herod until he was finally beheaded. Her will, however, was subverted, or sabotaged, by the God of heaven until John had completed his course. There is a sense in which godly mortals are immortal until their work is done. Thus John remained like a thorn in Herodias’ side, and there was not a thing she could do about it. “The heavens **DO** rule” (Dan 4:26).

“ 20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”

HEROD FEARED JOHN. It may not have appeared this way outwardly, but “Herod was afraid of John.” NASB Other versions read he “was in awe of John,” NJB “respected John,” NLT and “had a reverential fear of John.” AMPLIFIED Although wicked men are not forward to acknowledge it, there is something about a righteous person that is intimidating to the flesh. It is a portion of the Divine nature that is shining forth through the godly to the ungodly. This kind of fear is not sufficient to turn a person to the Lord, and is finally overcome by unbelief. It is the kind of fear that made some people afraid to join with the disciples after Ananias and Sapphira had been killed by the Lord (Acts 5:13). This kind of fear is all but absent in our time because of the gross carnality that is found among professing believers.

HE WAS JUST AND HOLY. Here the Spirit informs us of the qualities that moved Herod to be afraid of John: “he was a righteous and holy man.” NIV “Just,” or “righteous,” refers to the conduct of John – to how he appeared before men. There was nothing about his conduct that moved people to connect him with “this present evil world.” “Holy” emphasizes separation from the world and unto God. Not only was it obvious that John did not belong to this world, it was also conspicuous that he belonged to God Almighty. He was not merely a person who conducted his life in an unconventional manner – like a hermit, or weird recluse. His words and his manners spoke loudly of his devotion to the Lord.

Matthew tells us a little more of Herod’s response to John. “And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet” (Matt 14:5). Thus, when Herod would have carried out the desires of wicked Herodias, he could not do so because he was afraid of the retaliation of the people. They considered John to be a “prophet,” sent forth from God. The same thing was said of those who sought to kill Jesus. “And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people

was astonished at His doctrine ” (Mark 11:18). And again, “*And He taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him*” (Luke 19:47-48).

An Observation. If all who were professing “*Christians*” were actually convinced of the truth of God, and of the need for His messengers, it would be far more difficult to oppose the truth, or pass laws that inhibit the expression of that truth.

HE OBSERVED HIM. Here, “*observe*” does not mean “looked at him.” It rather means he kept John in a state where he could be observed – that is, he did not kill him. Therefore, other versions read, “*protected him,*” NKJV “*kept him safe,*” NASB and “*kept him in custody.*” NAB In other words, until John finished his course, the Lord used Herod to protect him from Herodias.

WHEN HE HEARD HIM. Apparently, while John was imprisoned, Herod took the opportunity to hear him. When he heard him, “*he did many things*” – that is, did many strange and inconsistent things. Other versions read that when he heard John he was “*very perplexed,*” NASB “*greatly puzzled,*” NIV “*much troubled,*” BBE “*disturbed,*” NLT and “*was in doubt.*” IE The idea here is that Herod could never settle in on John’s words. He was pulled between good and evil, never quite able to embrace the truth, but never able to push it from himself either. Of course, the consequences of such a reaction are just as condemning as outright unbelief and rejection. This is the condition to which Elijah referred when he said to the people, “*How long halt ye between two opinions*” (1 Kgs 18:21)? Joel referred to it as being “*in the valley of decision*” (Joel 3:14). It is a condition in which one waffles back and forth between interest and disinterest.

AND HEARD HIM GLADLY. Notwithstanding his perplexity and lack of decision when he listened to John, there was something about the man of God that was intriguing to Herod – “*he used to enjoy listening to him.*” NASB and “*found a pleasure in listening to him.*” WEYMOUTH To Herod, there was a kind of fascination about John and his words. In a sense, Herod was like Agrippa, another member of the Herodian family, who was “*almost persuaded*” (Acts 26:28). To Herod, John the Baptist was something of a refreshing novelty – like a lion-tamer in a circus. He liked to hear him – but not good enough to abandon his sin and call upon the name of the Lord. He was willing to hear John, but not willing to repent.

How often I have seen this kind of person – one who likes to hear what is said in the name of Jesus, but only from a novel point of view. There is something different about the Gospel that tugs at the human spirit – the idea of repentance that leads to remission, and of separating from the world and a consequent reception by the Lord. In a sense, it is challenging to hear a message that speaks of throwing inferior things away in order to appropriate superior things. But, alas, it takes faith to actually discard the cursed and embrace the blessed – to cease to linger between two opposing opinions, or remain sitting in the valley of decision. Herod has a staggering number of offspring who remain until this very hour!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 65

“Mark 6:21 *And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; 22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. 23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.”* (Mark 6:21-23; 1:14; Matthew 14:6-7)

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of the Spirit’s explanation of the death of John the Baptist. From the standpoint of John himself – an illuminated view – as soon as Jesus appeared on the scene, John’s person and ministry began to decrease. He said of this, *“He must increase, but I must decrease . He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all”* (John 3:30-31). By *“earthly,”* John meant things experienced upon earth, as Jesus also used the word in John 3:12 (referring to the new birth). The particular point to which I draw your attention is the *“decrease”* of John’s prominence among men. How would this take place? By what means would the attention be shifted from John to Jesus? Of course, one of the means was John’s affirmation that Jesus was *“the Lamb of God”* (), the *“Bridegroom”* (John 3:29), and *“He that cometh from heaven”* (John 3:31). The passage we are considering adds another dimension to this matter. John also was made to *“decrease”* when Herod had incarcerated him, finally killing him. Like Paul the apostle (2 Tim 4:7, when John’s ministry was concluded, he was martyred, glorying God in his death, even as Peter did in his (John 21:19). The life of many a servant of God has ended in this fashion. It is one of the mysterious aspects of the *“ways”* and *“judgments”* of God (Rom 11:33).

“Mk 6:21 *And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee.”*

When we remember that Herod is a vivid portrayal of the flesh, we will gain all the more from the inspired record of some of his deeds. They will not make sense, for *“the flesh”* is erratic, fickle, unstable, and vacillating. It is noted for being *“double minded,”* making a person *“unstable in all of his ways”* (James 1:8). This is precisely why those who are *“in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom 8:8), for God is not served by fits and starts, ups and downs, and unpredictable and inconsistent responses. In this text, we will also see that *“the flesh”* will go out of its way to please men – even though it can sometimes reason that such actions are wrong. It is important to take hold of this, for there is a tendency in the Christian world to be naive and *“simple”* about the nature of things in this world.

Remember, the man before us “*heard of the fame of Jesus*” (Matt 14:1), and even “*desired to see Him*” (Lk 9:9). He also “*feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy*” man (Mk 6:20). He also listened to John “*and heard him gladly*” (Mk 6:20b). However, it ought to be observed that **Herod never went out to hear John during his ministry, nor did he actively pursue Jesus as, for example, Nicodemus did** (John 3:1). At the time of Jesus’ betrayal and imminent death, the vacillating character of Herod was again seen. When Jesus was brought before Herod, he was “*glad to see Him,*” and “*hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.*” However, before the night was over, he joined with “*the men of war*” in treating Jesus with contempt and mocking Him (Lk 12:8-11).

We should not be deceived when men show a casual interest in Jesus, and desire some limited exposure to Him. Flesh can, like Herod, muster up some sober interest in Jesus, acknowledge when men are holy, and even occasionally enjoy hearing a man of God. However, as we will see, flesh is also quite capable of doing the most wicked things as well. It is this latter tendency that completely voids the former, showing it to be nothing more than a deceptive appearance. There is nothing of lasting genuineness in it.

A CONVENIENT DAY. Other versions read “*an opportune day,*” NKJV “*a strategic day,*” NASB “*the chance came,*” BBE and “*a seasonable day.*” YLT So far as flesh was concerned, this was when “*Herodias’ chance finally came.*” NLT She had been nursing a grudge toward John, but had not been able to carry it out (Mk 6:19). That “*grudge,*” or “*quarrel,*” KJV did not gradually fade away. It rather festered in her, and grew worse with time. That is the nature of “*the flesh.*” It is seen in the way in which David’s enemies plotted to get rid of him (Psa 25:19; 119:10; 140:5). Jeremiah’s enemies “*devised devices*” against him (Jer 11:19; 18:18). Christ’s enemies “*sought to kill Him*” (John 7:1) – that is, they looked for the chance to carry out their murderous desires. Certain Jews who opposed Paul were found “*laying wait in the way to kill him*” (Acts 25:3).

In all of these cases, and especially in our text, the wicked looked intently for a time that would give them the advantage – a change to carry out their desires. That is the manner of the flesh. Its desires do not gradually go away, as though if they are neglected long enough, they will simply die. Some, completely oblivious of this nature, actually teach men to abstain from sin by mere habit, thinking that, with time, their sin will weaken and be unable to express itself. Thus they are, as Paul said, “*subject to ordinances,*” thinking that the secret to triumph is in a habit or a routine (Col 2:20-23). This is a serious error in judgment.

We do not know how long Herodias’ diabolical desire suppurated, or festered, in her heart. But the time finally came when she perceived the circumstance was to her advantage. Her desire had not weakened, but had only grown the worse. Now, it would burst forth in a shrewd and calculating expression. Her chance had come.

It ought to be noted that if we do not “*mortify our members that are upon the earth*” (Col 3:5), a “*convenient day*” will finally arrive when they can express themselves and be satisfied. While men may choose to refer to such sins as “*making a mistake,*” “*falling into sin,*” or “*doing something wrong,*” the following is what really has happened. The desires of the flesh, not being crucified, not only grew stronger, but maintained an alert posture, seeking the opportunity to express themselves. When that opportunity arrived, they broke forth unrestrained.

HE MADE A SUPPER. Herod’s birthday arrived, and “*was kept*” (Matt 14:6), by throwing “*a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee.*” NKJV This would provide an atmosphere that gave the devil the advantage. Pride would become most dominant in Herod. The surrounding nobles would become witnesses to a vile promise he would make, thus making it

incumbent, in Herod's mind, to keep it. A public event in which honor was being bestowed upon Herod gave the flesh the advantage – and Herodias knew it.

It is always dangerous to be in an environment in which undue attention is being given to the flesh. That is an area where Satan is given a “*place*” (Eph 4:27), and he is provided an “*advantage*” that enables him to overcome us (2 Cor 2:11). How vigilant we must be (1 Pet 5:8-9).

“ 22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.”

You may remember that a similar feast was thrown by Belshazzar “*for a thousand of his lords.*” It was at that feast that the Lord caused a hand to write the message of Belshazzar's demise upon the wall. Before that night was over, the kingdom of Babylon fell and Belshazzar was killed (Dan 5:1-31). I suppose the systematic theologian might postulate that this is the kind of thing that always happens at heathen feasts – that it is a sort of pattern of Divine working. However, this is not at all the case, as our text will confirm.

THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS CAME IN. Matthew says, “*the daughter of Herodias danced before them*” (Matt 14:6). This was not a coincidence. It was a strategy of Herodias – to be more specific, a “*device*” of the devil. As at the feast of Belshazzar, there had no doubt been a lot of drinking, giving “*the flesh*” even more advantage. As it is written, “*it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any*” (Prov 31:4-5). But Gentile kings care not for such wisdom, and were thus noted for their imbibing, and consequent flawed judgment (Dan 5:1,4).

Now, no doubt in an even further weakened state, a young woman comes and dances before the assembly. So far as the flesh was concerned, the night belonged to her. It was a festive occasion. Herod was in a happy and unarmed moral state. He was surrounded by a battery of his politicians and chief men of the city. It was even his birthday! The time was “*convenient,*” and at the critical point, this young woman entered the room.

A DANCE THAT PLEASSED THE FLESH. The word translated “*dance*” means “*patterned rhythmic movements of the whole and/or parts of the body.*” LOUW-NIDA This was not a cultured dance, or one like David, who “*danced before the Lord with all of his might*” (2 Sam 6:14). It was not a dance in which the Lord was praised (Psa 150:4). Rather, this was a provocative dance that stirred up the flesh. It was one purposefully designed to weaken Herod and make him speak foolishly and rashly.

The people of God must realize that the devil will appeal to their moral weaknesses – that is precisely why they cannot afford to keep them, much less nurture them. This is the real reason why the Spirit leads us in mortifying “*the deeds of the body*” (Rom 8:13-14). More is involved in these “*deeds*” than simply doing what is wrong. These are like enemies in the promised land, and if we do not rid ourselves of them by the grace of God, they will prove to be “*pricks*” in our eyes and “*thorns*” in our side, “*vexing*” us throughout the entirety of our lives (Num 33:55).

Should the people of God choose to ignore the admonition to “*mortify*” their “*members that are upon the earth*” (Col 3:5), it is certain that a day will arrive for them, even as one did for Herod. A time will come when circumstance will be against us, and the “*old serpent*” will reach through to uncrucified lusts, and move them to sin. The only way to avoid this is to “*crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts*” (Gal 5:24). To ignore this word is to make sin and falling

inevitable. All of this is actually lived out in this text. It is not so much that Herod himself was especially weak – although that is true. He had made a choice to **ignore** the summons of John the Baptist to repent. He had chosen to **not** engage in a quest for Jesus, of whom he had heard many things. This put him squarely in the domain of “*the flesh*,” and of “*this present evil world*.” **That made sin inevitable, unavoidable, and certain, for sin cannot be avoided while choosing to remain in the domain where it thrives!** While this may seem very apparent, there is hardly a place in the church-world where this is known with any degree of conviction and confidence. That is the reason why sin appears so unrestrained. It is why people suddenly fall into sin, much to the consternation of all who know them. We should not be ignorant about such things. Transgressors have refused to crucify the flesh and mortify the deeds of the body. They have occupied places in their minds, and perhaps in their bodies as well, where “*the flesh*” has the upper hand. They have not “*put off the old man*,” and consequently they have also refused to “*put on the new man*” (Eph 4:22-24). When a person – any person – gives the opportunity to sin, and the advantage to the devil, sin **will** erupt.

THE PROMISE OF A WEAKENED MAN. In a moment of personal pleasure Herod said, “*Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.*” Up to this point, the daughter of Herodias has not asked for anything – she has only “*danced.*” Her dancing, however, was designed to so weaken Herod that what she asked would, in fact, be granted. Remember, it was her mother who had plotted this whole matter.

Thus, acting with all the cunning of the devil himself, Herodias has manipulated Herod into a place where her objectives can be realized. She could not cause the death of John the Baptist herself, so she will fulfill her desire through weak and vacillating Herod.

“ 23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.”

There is no record of Herod ever caving in to the desires Herodias’ daughter before this. She was Herodias’ daughter from a former husband, perhaps by Herod’s brother, Philip. Here, this daughter had not pleased Herod because of any respect for him, or for honoring his birthday. She had, at the instigation of her mother, appealed to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye, and it had weakened his will. That is what lust does.

HE SWARE UNTO HER. Matthew reads, “*Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask*” (Matt 14:7). The idea is that Herod first promised to give her whatever she asked, and then “*confirmed it with an oath.*” This, of course, made the promise sure, leaving no doubt of what Herod would do. As it is written, “*For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife*” (Heb 6:16).

On Taking Oaths. Some have taken the position that it is always wrong to make an oath or swear. This view is based upon our Lord’s words, “*But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*” (Mat 5:34-37). However, **Jesus was speaking of hasty and deceptive oaths that were designed to promote men’s own will.** There are proper oaths, made in good conscience, and for correct reasons. God Himself swore with an “*oath*” to Abraham (Lk 1:73; Heb 6:13). He also “*swore with an oath*” to David (Acts 2:30). God also confirmed His promise to the “*heirs of the promise*” with an “*oath*” (Heb 6:17-18). He also used an “*oath*” to confirm Christ was a “*Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*” (Heb 7:21,28).

Some examples of oaths taken by Paul include the following: “*I would to God*” (Acts 26:29), “*For God is my witness*” (Rom 1:9), “*I say the truth in Christ*” (Rom 9:1), “*I call God for a record upon my soul*” (2 Cor 1:23), “*The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not*” (2 Cor 11:31), “*we speak before God in Christ*” (2 Cor 12:19), “*before God, I lie not*” (Gal 1:20), “*God is my record*” (Phil 1:8), “*God is witness*” (1 Thess 2:5), “*I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not*” (1 Tim 2:7), and “*I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels*” (1 Tim 5:21). All of these were appeals to the Lord to attest to the truth of what Paul said. They were not in the category of swearing “*by heaven,*” or “*the earth,*” or “*Jerusalem,*” or one’s “*head*” (Matt 5:34-36). The motive was the promotion of the truth of God, not carnal self interests.

In our text, Satan is working through Herodias, who is, in turn, working through her daughter. It is Satan who has filled Herod’s heart with such pleasure that he has blurted out a rash oath in the presence of his subordinates – an oath that proved to be impossible to ignore.

UNTO THE HALF OF MY KINGDOM. Here we see the malice of Satan as well as the stupidity of Herod. “*Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.*” NKJV This must have been a rather common promise among heathen kings. It is the same promise Ahasuerus made to Esther: “*What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom*” (Esther 5:3,6; 7:2). With both Ahasuerus and Herod, the promise was that any request would be honored with this single limitation – it could not exceed the person being given one half of the kingdom.

This is also the kind of promise Satan made to Jesus: “*And saith unto him, All these things [the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them] will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*” (Matt 4:9).

Now, the words of Solomon will be fulfilled in Herod: “*Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth*” (Prov 6:2). Again he wrote, “*The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips*”(Prov 12:13). And again, “*A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul*” (Prov 18:7). Once again Solomon warned, “*Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few*” (Eccl 5:2).

In the text before us, Herod does not have the faintest idea what the daughter of Herodias will request. He has thrown open a door that he will regret is left standing ajar. This is the manner in which Satan works. Here the adversary of humanity works through Herodias, then her daughter, then Herod the king. In a way, we have here an example of “*evil communications*” corrupting good manners. Although Herod’s motives were not holy, it was good that he desired to see Jesus. It was also good that he enjoyed hearing John the Baptist speak to him. Both of these were doors of opportunity through which the blessing of the Lord could have been obtained. Instead, he indulged the flesh, and when he did, he went against his own better judgment. That is the nature of the devil and the flesh, through which he works, and we do well to make due note of it. Improper company and displays of the flesh are a duet that will consistently yield bad results.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 66

“ Mark 6:24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. 26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.” (Mark 6:24-28; Matthew 14:8-11)

INTRODUCTION

The immediate ministry of John the Baptist has come to a close. He will now minister indirectly, being held in high regard by all who believe on Christ Jesus. His influence was most remarkable. Twenty-five years after this event, in Corinth Greece, over 1,700 miles as the crow flies, Apollos knew only “*the baptism of John*” (Acts 18:25). Twenty-seven years later, Paul would encounter some disciples of John in Ephesus Asia, over 1,300 miles away as the crow flies (Acts 19:1-5). What a staggering influence he had – even beyond the region of Canaan. His popularity was unparalleled – until the time came when he must yield to the Son of God, for whom he was preparing the people. We are reading of his decrease – a decrease in the area where Jesus preached. Yet, the nobility of his ministry did not pass away, nor did the effectiveness of his call to repentance. The spotlight was removed from him, but he was not consigned to the sea of forgetfulness. There is something to be learned in all of this. The fact that God’s servants are not in the limelight does not mean they are no longer known, nor that their ministry has come to an end. To this very hour, John the Baptist continues to minister to the hearts of men whose desires are bent toward heaven.

“ Mk 6:24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.”

WHAT SHALL I ASK? Although the details are not provided, it was Herodias who arranged for her daughter to dance lustfully before Herod. Now, even though Herod has told her he will give her whatever **she** wants, up to the half of his kingdom, she returns to the one who commissioned her for further directions. This was Herodias’ desire, and not her own.

This is the manner in which Satan works, tempting and luring simple souls into his snare. Like Herodias, he does not divulge his purpose at the first, but gradually draws unsuspecting souls into his trap, so they will have no alternative but to do his will. Thus Paul wrote, “*But I fear, lest by any means , as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your*

minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor 11:3). You see this lived out in the daughter of Herodias. She is sent into an environment that tended to weakness. She performed a deed that allowed for the extensive expression of the flesh. She was then provided with an appealing opportunity. Thus, blinded to the malice of her mother and the vacillating nature of Herod, she is brought where moral slavery was inevitable.

Therefore we are given the solemn admonition, “*Neither give place to the devil,*” an “*opportunity,*” NASB or a “*foothold*” NIV (Eph 4:27). Satan can “*fill*” a person’s “*heart,*” just like he did in the case of Ananias (Acts 5:3). He can “*get an advantage of us*” (2 Cor 2:11), but he does so subtly, leading men into areas where they are easily vulnerable to his tactics.

So, caught in the snare of Satan’s purpose (for he was behind this whole matter), the daughter goes to her wicked mother for further instructions.

THE HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Matthew’s account omits the daughter returning to her mother, and simply reports the summation of the matter: “*And she being instructed of her mother.*” There was no hesitation on the part of Herodias. She had intended this from the very beginning. It only remained for her to set the snare, even though John was no longer in public life, being bound and incarcerated. Herod had even done this “*for Herodias’ sake*” (Mk 6:17). However, being dominated by Satan, that was not sufficient for Herodias. It was not enough to curtail his activity, or merely remove John from public life.

There is a very real hatred that “*the flesh*” has for the things of God and those who declare them. As it is written, “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom 8:7). This “*enmity*” is also against those who speak the Word of the Lord. As Jesus prayed on the eve of His betrayal, “*I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:14).

There is such a thing as being in a state where the Word of God will be vigorously opposed – a state where a person will resort to any means to rid themselves of the thunder of God’s Word. It may drive the convicted ones to stone Stephen (Acts 7:58-59), and do so to Paul as well (Acts 14:19). There are no depths to which “*the flesh*” will not stoop to stop the sound of God’s messengers. Unlike the time of Herod, the “*earth*” is helping “*the woman*” in our place and time (Rev 12:16). It is not lawful in our land to resort to such open opposition. But do not be deceived by this circumstance. Just as surely as the fact that Herodias “*could not*” openly kill John (Mk 6:19) did not dampen her hatred of him, so what appears to be accommodating circumstances has not demolished the hatred of this world for the sons of God. Those dominated by “*the carnal mind*” will hate and oppose those who lift their voices against iniquity. They will extend themselves against the saints as far as they are able, and will have no regrets for doing so.

SHE CAME WITH HASTE. The daughter of Herodias wasted no time, lest Herod’s fluctuating mind change. Even though it was an extremely repulsive thing that she was told to do, she did it with haste, smothering any tendency to be merciful. She was “*hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*” (Heb 3:13). Do not imagine for a moment that you can yield to the devil without becoming eager and swift to do the very things that mandate condemnation. In this case, the daughter’s feet were “*swift to shed blood*” (Rom 3:15). **I WILL THAT . . . Matthew reads that** she said, “*Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger*” (Matt 14:8). Mark says that she “*asked , saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.*” Matthew accents the **request** , while Mark places the stress on it being a **response** to Herod’s word,

“ask of me” (Mk 6:23). Matthew says this is what Herodias “instructed” her to do (Matt 14:8). A “charger” is a dish, plate, or platter. “Silver chargers” were used in the tabernacle service for meal offerings (Num 7:13-85). Now the request is made for a most unique use of a platter – so present the head of the man of God.

“26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.”

Herod has played into the hands of the devil in a number of ways. First, he did not go out to hear John the Baptist, but was content to be acquainted with him from afar, even knowing he was a holy man (Mk 6:20). Second, he did not pursue his interest in Jesus (Matt 14:1). Third, he did not give heed to the word of John, when told it was not lawful for him to have his brother’s wife (Mk 6:18). Now, an occasion will arise that he will not be able to resist. He has played the fool for too long! The unlawful marriage in which he found himself would now result in one of the most despotic acts of human history.

SORRY – BUT NOT SORRY ENOUGH. When Herod heard the request of Herodias’ daughter he was not only “sorry,” but “*exceeding sorry,*” or “*greatly distressed.*” NIV Other versions read, “*deeply distressed,*” NAB “*made very sorrowful,*” YLT and “*deeply pained and grieved and exceedingly sorry.*” **AMPLIFIED As deep as his sorrow was, it was not deep enough.** His was not a “godly sorrow” which “*worketh repentance,*” but “*the sorrow of the world*” that “*brings death*” NIV (2 Cor 7:10) – not only of Herod himself, but of John the Baptist as well.

We do well not to confuse this kind of sorrow with “*godly sorrow.*” Wherever there is no repentance (and Herod did not repent), there has only been superficial sorrow – a sorrow that will soon pass, leaving not so much as a single benefit behind.

Some people, like Cain, cry out that their punishment is too great (Gen 4:13). Others, like Esau, bitterly weep over their errors, yet “*find no place for repentance,*” and thus are “*rejected*” (Heb 12:17). Still others are like Judas who “*repented himself,*” being “*seized with remorse,*” NIV yet can do nothing but despair and take their own lives (Matt 27:3).

We do well not to be unduly impressed by such carnal sorrow. It is never attended by repentance or holy resolve, and this is unworthy of even the slightest dignity. A sorrow that is not followed by a hearty change of mind is utterly worthless. It may be dignified by the wisdom of this world, but it will not be honored in heaven.

FOR HIS OATH’S SAKE. Herod had sorrow all right, but he also maintained his desire to be honored and respected by men. He had taken an oath before his subordinates, and he would rather them respect his word than preserve God’s holy man. His oath was hasty and foolish, and even he knew this. Yet, he refused to admit it. It is no wonder that believers are solemnly told, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9). There is such a thing as a rash vow. Jephthah made one when he said he would offer to God the first thing that met him – and it proved to be his daughter (Judges 11:29-40). Another was when the Israelites determined to destroy the Benjamites (Judges 10:1-21:25). Solomon pointed out how foolish it is to make a vow, considering it **later**, rather than before it is made: “*It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry*” (Prov 20:25).

Thus, Herod placed a greater value on his oath than on the life of John the Baptist.

FOR THEIR SAKES. Herod chose to please men rather than confess the error of his oath. To him, it seemed a greater disadvantage to be perceived in an unfavorable manner by his staff, than to

be seen as supporting and defending a man of God.

It is no wonder that Paul wrote, “. . . *do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should **not** be the servant of Christ*” (Gal 1:10). And again, “. . . *so we speak; **not** as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts*” (1 Thess 2:4). Even servants are told to avoid being “*menpleasers*” (Eph 6:6); much more, those who occupy positions of authority.

Get the picture. The meal, or banquet, was still, going on, and Herod was so distracted by the occasion, that he ignored his own conscience in favor of those gathered about him: “*nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat . . .*” (Matt 14:9). Let no person imagine for a moment that “*evil communications*” do not “*corrupt good manners*” (1 Cor 15:33). It is still true, “*a companion of fools shall be destroyed*” (Prov 13:20).

It is not by mere chance that David spoke so clearly about the matter of the company men keep. “*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful*” (Psa 1:1). Herod was, in fact, being counseled by the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful. In such a circumstance, there is no question about what he will do. When a person – any person – chooses to be in such a situation, all moral and spiritual power leaves, and the victim is left under the total control of the wicked one.

HE WOULD NOT REJECT HER. It is no wonder, therefore, that we read, “*he was unwilling to refuse her,*” NASB or “*he did not want to slight her [by breaking faith with her].*” AMPLIFIED Her request was a bad one, and he knew it. He was sorry to hear what she had said, but overcame his sorrow by actually desiring to do what she said – for ignoble reasons.

“27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.”

IMMEDIATELY. Thinking only of how he would appear to his court, Herod immediately “*sent an executioner,*” Some versions read, “*sent forth a soldier of his guard.*” ASV The idea is that Herod immediately summoned someone in the vicinity who had a suitable weapon. Matthew says that he “*commanded it (John’s head) to be given [to] her*” (Matt 14:9). It was wrong, yet Herod ordered it to be done immediately. He was sorry, and his conscience smote him, yet Herod made no delay in fulfilling the stated desire of Herodias’ daughter. Flesh does not tarry! Some professing believers tarry, but “*the flesh*” does not!

COMMANDED HIS HEAD TO BE BROUGHT. This command was given during the banquet, as his court “*sat at meat with him.*” Now they would see how he was a man of his word – dependable, and to be trusted – at least that is what he thought! There are some people who cannot implement their own wicked will, and we are thankful for it!

HE BEHEADED HIM. A grotesque picture, indeed! The soldier who was dispatched “*went [and] beheaded John in prison.*” NIV The sons of Rimmon beheaded Ishbosheth **after** they had killed him, brought his head to David (2 Sam 4:7-8). David “*cut off*” the head of Goliath **after** striking him to the ground with a stone (1 Sam 17:51). The Philistines “*cut off*” the head of king Saul **after** finding him dead (1 Sam 31:9). But John apparently died in the beheading itself – in the prison, with not so much as a spark of mercy.

HE BROUGHT HIS HEAD TO THE DAMSEL. The execution brought John’s head in a platter as he was commanded, and “*presented it to the girl.*” NIV Apparently the daughter

remained at the birthday celebration until the dastardly deed was done. I do not know if she had ever seen John the Baptist before. If so, this was indeed a grisly introduction!

Of course, when flesh has its way, it is not repulsed by the most gruesome sights – particularly when they implement its own will. There are no depths to which flesh cannot descend. It is like a “*bottomless pit.*” Woe to the person who ventures to open it!

THE DAMSEL GAVE IT TO HER MOTHER. The daughter of Herodias took the platter, or “*charger,*” on which John’s head was placed, and “*brought it to her mother*” (Matt 14:11). Mark says she “*gave it to her mother.*” Herodias told her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist to be given to the daughter herself. However, the daughter knew well that this was no gift to her, but was wholly intended to be given to her mother, who was plagued by the continued presence of John the Baptist.

Thus ended the life of one of the greatest men who ever lived. Jesus said that among those “*born of women,*” there had not “*arisen a greater than John*” (Matt 11:11). Luke says, “*a greater prophet*” (Lk 7:28). Yet, now he is dead – beheaded at the whim of Herodias, wife of a man who liked to listen to him. It appeared as though Herodias had won the controversy between them. But no person of sound mind thinks this is the case. What takes place in this world – all of it – will be subject to thorough examination on the day of judgment. It is then that the final word will be delivered on the matter. **All earthly judgments are tentative.** If they are proper judgments, they will be ratified and confirmed on the day of judgment. If they are flawed judgments, they will be thrown down and overturned on the day of judgment, and God will overcome (Rom 3:4).

Those who imagine that godly men are always made “*the head*” in this world (Deut 28:13) are far from being right, even though such words may sound good. Abel the righteous was killed by Cain the wicked. Holy prophets of God were slain by wicked Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4,13). Zachariah the prophet was slain “*in the court of the house of the Lord*” (2 Chron 24:21-22). Stephen was stoned by the Jewish council (Acts 7:58-60). James the apostle was killed by Herod – the son of the Herod who killed John the Baptist (Acts 12:2).

In all of these cases, it appeared as though the ones martyred lost, while their oppressors won. However, the record has been left for us to read, **not** to cause us to fear the world or our enemies, but to remind us that their cases will be fully resolved on “*the day of judgment.*” While the death of these men occurred at the hand of their enemies, the judgment of their enemies will be accomplished as the ones they slew take the judgment seat, judging the world (1 Cor 6:2).

In the meantime, we are not to be unduly alarmed when we are hated, maligned, and even aggressively opposed by the ungodly. We are strangers in this world, they are not. That means that the very **worst** we can possibly receive is in **this** world, while the very **best** our enemies can receive is also in **this** world.

I look forward to the day of judgment when Herodias, her daughter, Herod, his court, and the executioner will stand before John the Baptist. They were all complicit in his death – all of them! Just as surely as Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel “*gathered together*” against Christ (Acts 4:27), so all of these were gathered together against John.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 67

“ Mark 6:29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. 30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. 31 And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.”
(Mark 6:29-32; Matthew 14:12-13)

INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist has just been beheaded according to the desire of Herodias, and by the command of Herod, who thought only of his own reputation. Thus the ministry of Christ’s “*forerunner*” was concluded – but not before he had prepared the way for the Lord as he was commissioned to do. He was to “*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Lk 1:17). According to the word of Gabriel the angel, he turned “*many of the children of Israel*” to the Lord (Lk 1:16). He called upon the people to “*make His paths straight,*” clearing away obstacles that stood between them and the Lord, repenting, and confessing their sin. John’s preaching was of such a nature that “*all men were in expectation,*” even wondering if he was “*the Christ*” (Lk 3:15). It had been a long time since Israel had seen a public figure that was undoubtedly holy, and declared a message of someone other than himself. People might tend to think John should remain as a salient influence among the people. After all, he was not competing with Jesus – at least not in word or deed. His role in God’s great salvation, however, was never intended to be an ongoing one, but one that was introductory – getting the people ready for Jesus. Now, as is the manner of the Kingdom, all of the preeminence must be given to Jesus Himself, for He is the Savior of the world, not John. John led people to repentance, and baptized them “*for the remission of sins*” (Mk 1:4). However, that was all in anticipation of “*the Lamb of God,*” who would do something John could not do – “*take away the sins of the world*” (John 1:29). Therefore, by default, the attention must be turned toward Jesus. If this was not necessary, John would not have been beheaded.

“ Mk 6:29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb . . . And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.”
(Matt 14:12).

This event occurred well into the ministry of Jesus, and yet John still had many disciples – many followers who held on to his teachings. Even when he was in prison, they remained his disciples.

We are told that John taught his disciples to pray: “*And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples*” (Luke 11:1). It was on this occasion that Jesus delivered, what is commonly called, “the Lord’s prayer” Lk 11:2-4). John’s disciples also were noted

for frequent fasting: “*And they said unto Him, Why do the disciples of John fast often , and make prayers . . . ?*” (Luke 5:33; Matt 9:14; Mk 2:18).

Once, while John was in prison, his disciples reported to him the rapidly growing ministry of Jesus: “*And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John showed him of all these things*” (Luke 7:16-18). It was at this time that John sent his disciples back to Jesus to inquire whether or not He was the Christ. No doubt he did this for their sake more than for his own. We also read that Jesus eventually “*made and baptized more disciples than John*” (John 4:1).

JOHN’S DISCIPLES HEAR. Somehow, through the providence of God, word of John’s death reached his disciples: they “*heard of it.*” Their lives were so ordered that they were exposed to profitable reports. They also did as Jesus told His disciples to do: “*Take heed what ye hear*” (Mk 4:24). It is possible to maintain associations and frequent environments where significant reports are never given. There is a society of people among whom nothing of any godly worth is ever reported or discussed. Reports of John’s death would not be found in such places. The fact that John’s disciples “*heard of*” John’s death is a commentary on the kind of relationships they maintained.

THEY BURY JOHN’S CORPSE. This must have occurred very soon after John was beheaded. Mark says John’s disciples “*came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.*” Matthew says “*they took up the body, and buried it*” (Matt 14:12). In so doing, they “*sowed*” John’s body in the hope of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:42-44).

A Case for Burial. In these days, cremation is rapidly becoming one of the preferences for handling the bodies of the dead. Those endorsing this practice contend that what we do with the body is of no consequence at all, and scoff at any objections to the practice of cremation. They reason that “*God is able to gather ashes together in the resurrection.*”

Throughout history, however, those who have been acquainted with God have consistently practiced burial – the interment of the body, versus consuming it by fire. People who are specifically said to have been “*buried*” include Sarah (Gen 23:19), Abraham (Gen 25:9), Deborah (Rebekah’s nurse – Gen 35:8), Rachel (Gen 35:19), Isaac (Gen 35:29), Leah (Gen 49:31), Jacob (Gen 50:13-14), Joseph (), Miriam (Num 20:1), Aaron (Deut 10:6), Moses was buried by God Himself (Deut 34:6), Joshua (Josh 24:29-30), David (Acts 2:29), Solomon (1 Kgs 11:43), John the Baptist (Matt 14:12), Stephen (Acts 8:2), and even the Lord Jesus(1 Cor 15:4). Jesus was even “*anointed*” for His “*burial*” (Matt 26:12).

Cremation was introduced to the Western world around 1,000 B.C. It had its roots in heathen nations, and was associated with heathen gods. History records that around 100 AD, although cremation was a “*status symbol*” of Rome, it was “*stopped because of the spread of Christianity.*” BRITANNICA It was not until 1874 that cremation was again accepted by the Western world, beginning with Britain. The first crematorium was built in America in 1876. Even then, it was exceedingly rare with only 8% of the dead being cremated during the 1970’s. BRITANNICA

Examples of cremation include Achan and his family (Josh 7:25), wicked priests slain by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:20), and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24-25). When God judged Moab, sending a fiery judgment upon it, one of the reasons sited for Him doing so was, “*he burned*

the bones of the king of Edom into lime” (Amos 2:1-2).

THEY TELL JESUS. John’s disciples did the proper thing after they had buried the body of John – *“they went and told Jesus.”* No doubt it was a difficult report to deliver. A great man of God had been seemingly brought down by a fickle despot. There was no justice in it, to be sure. Yet, this was the means by which John *“decreased,”* giving way to the One whom God *“sent into the world”* to resolve the dilemma of sin. However, the Almighty God was not indifferent to the grievous death of John, a servant described as *“a man sent from God”* (John 1:6). The whole matter will be fully addressed on the day of judgment.

“30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.”

Mark now resumes the narrative that he had begin prior to the word about John the Baptist. The word concerning the death of John was apparently delivered to Jesus around the same time the apostles returned from their mission. Remember, it was said of that charge, *“And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them”* (Mark 6:12-13). This was the occasion when Jesus instructed them to remain in one house while they were in a city, and to shake the dust off their feet off against the house that did not receive them (Mark 6:7-11).

THE APOSTLES GATHER TO JESUS. Now, *“the apostles”* have returned from their labor, and they *“gathered themselves together unto Jesus,”* or *“gathered around Jesus.”* NIV Luke says they did this *“when they were returned”* (Lk 9:10). Later, the *“seventy”* who were sent out will do the same thing (Lk 10:17). These men had a lively sense of their responsibility to the Lord who had commissioned them. A soon as they had completed their Kingdom business, they returned to the One who sent them out.

There is a threefold sense in which this is, and will be, fulfilled toward present day servants. First, it is the business of everyone who senses Jesus has sent them forth, to return to Him. Second, those who do the work of the Lord should find some disciples to whom they can report their labors (Acts 4:23; 14:27; 15:4). Third, a day has been appointed when all of Christ’s stewards will give an account of their labors directly to the One who made them stewards (Rom 14:12; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 4:5). Our approach to our labors for Christ must not be attended with anything that causes these responsibilities to become obscure.

THEY TELL HIM WHAT THEY HAD DONE AND TAUGHT. The apostles *“told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.”* Luke says they *“told Him all that they had done”* (Lk 9:10). Right here, we are being exposed to the kind of people Jesus sends, and how they react to that sending. Those who are really laboring for the Lord have no compunctions about reporting what they have *“done”* and *“taught.”* It is possible to give a report that has evil effects, as the report of the ten faithless spies, who *“brought up an evil report of the land”* and *“discouraged the heart of the people”* (Num 32:9,32). However, a cognizance of the person of Christ is conducive to more forthright and honest reports.

Thus the apostles reported “what they had done.” It goes without saying that their report had to correlate with their commission. Mark tells us they *“cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them”* (Mark 6:13).

Jesus had given them several instructions. **1** – They were to *“take nothing for their journey”* (Mk 6:8). **2** – They were to abide in the same house as long as they were in a city (Mk 6:10).

3 – If someone did not receive them, they were to shake the dust of their feet off against them (Mk 6:11). **4** – They were not to go “*into the way of the Gentiles,*” or “*any city of the Samaritans*” (Matt 10:5). **5** – They were to go “*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt 10:6). **6** – They were to preach, saying, “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt 10:7). **7** – They were to “*heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils,*” or demons (Matt 10:8). **8** – They were to “*freely give,*” not charging for their services (Matt 10:8). **9** – When they entered into a house, they were to “*salute it*” (Matt 10:12). **10** – If the house was “*worthy,*” they were to let their “*peace come upon it*” (Matt 10:13a). **11** – If the house was not “*worthy,*” they were to “*let*” their “*peace return*” to them (Matt 10:13b).

However they may have reported concerning what they had “*done,*” it had to be in strict comportment with what Jesus said they were to do. It appears to me that this kind of mindset is exceedingly rare in our time. This is owing to the near-total absence of a working knowledge of the Scriptures, Christ’s Person, and the purpose for godly labors.

The apostles also reported “*what they had taught.*” This responsibility is passed along to everyone who professes to speak in the behalf of Christ, or to in some way represent Him. **What is being taught?** Jesus told the apostles to preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand – or about to be gloriously revealed. Mark tells us that they “*preached that men should repent*” (Mk 6:12). I do not believe there are many professed preachers who could make a correlation between preaching the closeness of the Kingdom and calling men to repentance.

There is an enormous number and variety of things being preached today that by no means are in synch with the “*gospel*” that God sends men to preach (Rom 10:15). Men must get away from such contaminating messages, “*purging*” themselves of those who teach such things, as they are commanded to do (2 Tim 2:16-21).

I suggest that it is an excellent practice to report back to the Lord precisely what you have taught. Lay it before Him, with an acute awareness that your soul is in His hands (Ezek 18:4). **What you cannot report to Him is never suitable for either embrace or declaration.**

“ 31 And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.”

Matthew tells us that this was Jesus’ response to the report of the death of John the Baptist. “*And his disciples came . . . and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it , He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart . . .*” (Matt 14:12-13). Mark says He responded after the disciples had given their report of what they had “*done*” and “*taught.*”

Here was a mingling of the bitter and the sweet – the pleasant and the unpleasant. In a way, sorrow was blended with joy – sorrow for John’s death, but rejoicing in the fulfillment of a Divine commission.

Salvation causes the soul to be versatile so that “*bitter herbs*” and nourishing meat with pleasant “*bread*” can be eaten at the same meal (Ex 12:8; Num 9:11). It is no wonder that this seeming admixture is frequently mentioned in Scripture. “*By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and , behold , we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things*” (2 Cor 6:8-10). Blessed is the person who does not maintain a kind of fairytale view of life.

HE SAID UNTO THEM. Jesus responds to the report of John, and the report of His disciples – at the same time. He is not oblivious to sorrow or to joy. He knows when hearts are heavy, and when hearts are wafted heavenward in the wake of faithful labors.

COME YE YOURSELVES APART. It was time to go away from the multitudes – time to take leave from their vigorous labors. Matthew says that Jesus Himself “*departed thence by ship into a desert place apart*” (Matt 14:13). How He must have recalled the day when He was baptized by John in the River Jordan, and how John had clearly identified Him as “*the Lamb of God*” (John 1:29,36), “*the Son of God*” (John 1:34), “*the Bridegroom*” (John 3:29), He that would “*baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire*” (Matt 3:11), the One who was “*mightier*” (Mk 1:7), and the One who would “*thoroughly purge His floor,*” gathering in the grain and burning the chaff (Matt 3:12). John had identified Jesus as “*He that cometh from above is above all*” (John 3:31), the One who “*speaketh the words of God,*” and to whom God gave the Spirit “*without measure*” (John 3:34). John knew who Jesus was, while multitudes saw Him as nothing more than a temporary deliverer. It is no marvel that Jesus departed for a season to a desert place and solitude.

But Jesus does not go alone. He takes His apostles with Him. He has a mind to be with those whom He has chosen. The very fact that He has determined to ultimately gather His people, that they might be “*with*” Him where He is, makes this no strange occasion (John 14:3).

REST A WHILE. What a considerate word is this – “*and rest a while!*” The word “*rest*” carries the idea of refreshment, and gaining strength. The apostles had been going through the land, entering into cities and preaching, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons. All of them had been active, for Jesus had sent them out “*two by two.*”

Once, after the churches had undergone a considerable time of persecution, they were granted some “*rest*” from the Lord. “*Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied*” (Acts 9:31). This was a period of refreshment, refurbishment, comfort, and encouragement. Like the “*rest*” of our text, it was intended to ready the disciples for further labors.

It ought to be noted that only those who “*labor in the Word and in the doctrine*” are provided such a “*rest.*” There is no Divinely provided rest for those who flay the air like a shadow-boxer (1 Cor 9:26). Those who spend their time in profitless endeavors, or self-centered activities, are offered no “*rest.*” Their problem is that they are doing the wrong things. If they are worn out, then they ought to cease doing what is wrong in order that they might do what is right. Then, rest will be given to them in due time.

THEY HAD NO LEISURE. The flow of people coming to and from Jesus was so significant that He and His disciples “*did not even have time to eat.*” NASB Rare, indeed, are activities of this sort, that do not even provide time to eat. However, it is the nature of truth, and a love for it, to so engage both heart and mind, as to consume one’s whole interest.

By definition, “*leisure*” is “*convenient time.*” STRONG’S or “*to have opportunity.*” THAYER Activities were so incessant that a window of opportunity did not even open for them to eat. In our “*church world,*” this kind of spiritual activity is totally unknown. In fact, the modern church insists upon building all religious activity around leisure, so that anything that interrupts the normal is despised and rejected.

You will note that such an approach to religion is nowhere associated with Jesus. He

set the standard for denying self, crucifying the flesh, and loving the Lord with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength. Those to whom He gives “*rest*” welcome it with great gladness (Matt 11:28).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 68

“Mark 6:33 *And the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him. 34* **And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. 35** *And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: 36* **Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.”** (Mark 6:33-36; Matthew 14:13-15; Luke 9:10-12)

INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist has been beheaded, and his disciples have buried his body and told Jesus. About the same time, the twelve apostles return from their mission, and tell Jesus all that they had taught and done. As confirmed throughout the Gospels, Christ Himself is the center of all activity. The people are gathered to Him. The reports are made to Him. He is the One who sends the disciples out. He is the One to whom they return. He gives the directive to go apart for a season and rest. When the disciples began to follow Jesus, His agenda became their agenda. His purpose became their purpose. His will became their will. Their lives now centered wholly in Him. In this we obtain a very vivid picture of what it means to follow Jesus. Eighteen times the Gospels contain the words *“follow Me!”* (Matt 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Mk 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Lk 5:27; 9:23,59; 18:22; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 13:36; 21:19). All of them were spoken by Jesus, and referred to men going after Him. Jesus said this was one of the unique traits of His sheep (John 10:27). This is being lived out in our text. It is all a way of confirming that men are blessed while they are in the process of following Jesus. He alone determines their direction and objective.

“Mk 6:33 *And the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him.”*

THE PEOPLE SAW THEM DEPARTING. Matthew says the people *“heard”* of Jesus departing (Matt 14:13). The idea is that those who saw Him leaving quickly spread the word, and others also came to see them leaving the area.

After Jesus had raised Jairus’ daughter He *“departed from there”* (Matt 9:27). After He had healed a woman’s daughter in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He also *“departed from there”* (Matt 15:29). There was a time when He *“left Nazareth”* (Matt 4:13), *“departed from Galilee”* (Matt 19:1), *“departed into a mountain”* (Mk 6:46), and *“departed and went into a desert place”* (Lk 4:42). Once, after speaking to a group of doubters *“He left them”* (Matt 16:4). Another time, after the people were displeased when the children praised Him, *“He left them”* (Matt 21:17). Another

time, upon hearing that the Pharisees had heard He “*made and baptized more disciples than John,*” “*He left Judea*” (John 4:3).

The point is that Jesus did not remain in one place, and therefore His presence was not to be taken for granted. However, those who listened to what He said, and were earnest in their quest for Him, were **aware** when He left. It goes without saying that this kind of sensitivity is a requisite for following Jesus. Those who are distracted, and turned aside from an awareness of His presence and purpose, are not able to follow Him.

MANY KNEW HIM. Some had been exposed to Christ and His followers enough that they “*recognized Him.*” NASB Some versions read “*recognized them.*” NASB/NIV This makes the reading a bit clumsy: i.e. “*the people saw them,*” and “*many recognized them.*” This redundancy is not required by the language of the text itself. Further, it does not lend itself to a proper perspective of the text. The point is that the people saw Jesus and His disciples leaving. However, some in the number fastened on the Lord Jesus Himself, being able to recognize Him – and it was to Him that they will gather, not to His disciples.

Knowing Christ is an essential aspect of salvation. It is an area in which we are expected to grow, becoming more and more familiar with Him. Paul, for example, described his life as an extended effort to “*know Him*” (Phil 3:10). Speaking for those in the body of Christ, the writer of Hebrews cries out, “*We know Him*” (Heb 10:30). John describes knowing Him as being confirmed by retaining His commandments – or the truth being in us (1 John 2:2-3).

This text confirms that knowing Christ involves being able to recognize Him – to perceive when He is coming, when He is leaving, and what He is doing. Knowing Christ is not a mere theoretical experience – like knowing George Washington existed. When Jesus is known, there is a holy familiarity with Him, so that He can be distinguished from His disciples, even though He is one with them. Our unity with Christ is very real, but we are not so closely blended with Him that there is no distinction between us and Him.

So it is in our text. Some were able to recognize Jesus among His disciples. It is a blessed day when the Lord Jesus can be recognized among those with whom He is found. As it is written, “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt 18:20). It is possible for Jesus to be within view, yet be unrecognized by some. You may recall that when the resurrected Christ appeared to his disciples while they were fishing in vain, and directed them where to cast their nets for a great catch, it was John who cried out, “*It is the Lord*” (John 21:7). No one will really pursue the Lord until they are able to recognize Him. Progress in spiritual life depends upon this recognition.

THEY RAN TOGETHER TO HIM. They ran on foot, coming out of all the cities, and “*outwent them,*” or got to the destination “*ahead of them.*” NASB Jesus and the disciples were going by boat, and the people were running on land. They had been perceptive, seeing the direction the boat was headed. It is estimated the distance by land from the place they started was about twenty miles. Luke says the desert place to which He sailed belonged to the “*city called Bethsaida*” (Lk 9:10).

Such eagerness! They “*ran afoot*” in a zealous group, reaching the area of Bethsaida before Jesus and His disciples arrived. Both Matthew and Luke say the people “*followed Him*” (Matt 14:13; Lk 9:11). Mark accents the success of their quest: they “*came together unto Him.*”

It ought to be observed that there is no record of the people ever pursuing the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, or lawyers with such zeal. How is it that they were so unrelenting in their pursuit of the Lord Jesus? We have here an example of the drawing power of the Savior. The world

was being introduced to a people being made “willing in the day of His power” (Psa 110:3). Here is a demonstration in the flesh of what would be fulfilled following the atoning death of Christ: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” (John 12:32). We should expect that those who are actually being drawn to Christ will pursue Him with at least as much zeal as those in this text.

“ 34 And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things.”

WHEN JESUS CAME OUT. The meaning is when Jesus “came out” of the boat. Other versions read, “when He went ashore,” NASB and “When Jesus landed.” NIV Notice, although Jesus **and** His disciples were in the boat, the attention is fixed upon Jesus Himself. He is the One who is said to have landed, come out of the ship, and went ashore. The reason for this is that it is **His** agenda that was being served – **His** mission from the Father.

HE SAW MUCH PEOPLE. Matthew says He “saw a great multitude” (Matt 14:14). Luke says, “and He received them” (Lk 9:11). We learn from this that those who approach Jesus, or come to Him, are duly observed. The Lord remains acutely aware of those who are seeking them, even though He may appear to be oblivious of them, as in the case of Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46) and the “woman of Canaan” (Matt 15:23). Those who come to Jesus are to be aware of this Divine attention, and persevere in their petitions. It is said that Jesus spoke the parable of the woman pleading with the unjust judge “to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lk 18:1). It is not that there is an impenetrable wall between men and God, and the longer they pray, the more they weaken the wall, until it finally gives way. Rather, it is that God is faithful to reward faith, though He sometimes “bears long” with us.

MOVED WITH COMPASSION. Both Matthew and Mark say that Jesus was “moved with compassion toward them” (Matt 14:14). This is an expression of the Divine nature. Even so, it is not something to be taken for granted. Moses admonished the people to rid themselves of “the cursed thing” that God might have compassion upon them (Deut 13:17). The Psalms frequently refer to the Lord being “full of compassion” (Psa 78:38; 86:15; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8). Jeremiah affirmed that “His compassions fail not” (Lam 3:22).

“Compassion” involves Divine love, mercy, and pity—a feeling of sympathy. This is a moving, or compelling response to seeing the deficiencies of fallen humanity. Mark says He had compassion on them “because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.” They were curious, interested, and had expended themselves to get to Jesus – but they had no shepherd; no one to show them the way. They had priests, rulers of their synagogues, Pharisees, scribes, and doctors of the Law – but no shepherd; no one who knew the way and could direct them with skill and understanding. That is why Jesus had compassion upon them!

There is something about Divine compassion that ought to be noted. It is more than a mere feeling or inclination. When the Lord has compassion upon someone, He does something about their condition. That is why He testified of His compassion, “I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15). From one point of view, our salvation is confirmation that the Lord has had compassion upon us.

THE EXPRESSION OF HIS COMPASSION. How will this marvelous compassion of Jesus show itself? What will it move Jesus to do? Mark says, “He began to teach them many things.” That means those who are not “instructed unto the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 13:52) are at a decided disadvantage. They are candidates for compassion, and are like wandering

sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew says, “*He healed their sick*” (*Matt 14:14*). Unless a person has an extraordinary measure of faith (like Paul – 2 Cor 12:10), there is often a distracting element to sickness. Jesus saw this was the case, and thus gave the people proof of His compassion upon them, and confirmed His profound care for them. Note: it was “*their sick*” – the sick that were among those who ran to get to Jesus, and arrived at the region of Bethsaida before Jesus finally got there by boat. Eagerness like that is sure to be met with Divine compassion.

Luke says, “*He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing*” (Lk 9:11).

He received them. What a blessed thing it must have been to be assured of Christ’s reception! It is one thing for men to “*receive*” Christ. It is even more wonderful when He receives them. As it is written, “*Christ also received us to the glory of God*” (Rom 15:7).

He spake unto them of the Kingdom of God. There is a monumental deficiency in being ignorant of Divine government and control – of the carrying out of an “*eternal purpose.*” In the midst of their domination by Rome, Jesus spoke of another kingdom – a superior one. Some of them were no doubt familiar with Daniel’s prophecy of that kingdom (Dan 2:44), and of Isaiah’s prophecy of the increasing kingdom of the Messiah (Isa 9:7). Jesus declared this kingdom was “*at hand*” (Mk 1:15) – and was even in their very midst (Lk 17:21). It was a kingdom that would liberate the captives, and destroy the one who had taken them prisoners.

He healed them that had need of healing. Who are those who have such a need? Technically, it is those who cannot be helped by anyone else!

“ 35 And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: 36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.”

THE DAY WAS FAR SPENT. We do not know how long Jesus had been ministering to the people – teaching them and healing their sick. Later, when He would feed 4,000 souls, it would be after they had been with Him for “*three days*” (Matt 15:32). By saying “*the day was far spent,*” or it was “*already quite late,*” NASB indications are that the people had spent the better part of the day with Jesus – and that was after they had ran on foot for approximately twenty miles to get to Him. The people apparently had no sense of time, but were enthralled with Jesus.

I do not know the precise origin of brief “church services,” and the “get-out-at-noon” mentality. However, it has certainly brought no lasting advantages to the church. Until a person is willing to spend time with Jesus, at personal inconvenience, it is not likely that many benefits will be received from Him. Brief exposure to Jesus is like sowing sparingly. At the very best, there is only very sparse reaping – and that is the most favorable view.

THIS IS A DESERT PLACE. Jesus had left an area of teeming activity in favor of an isolated area – “*a desert place*” (Mk 6:33). Matthew says “*a desert place apart,*” “*a lonely place,*” NASB or “*a solitary place.*” NIV The word “*desert*” means “solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited . . . wilderness, uncultivated region.” THAYER It is an area where people do not ordinarily congregate, and the works of men are not found. Not even the trace of the plough is found there. Any vegetation that may be found grows of its own accord, and is not owing to human activity.

Such a place is highly conducive to sound thought, prayer, and spiritual refurbishment, for there is not much of man in it. It is not so much that men are there surrounded by “*nature*” in all of its beauty, for it is a desolate area, not one of rich foliage and flowing streams.

The disciples bring all of this to Jesus’ attention, confirming there were no means of obtaining food in this area. And beside all of this, “*the time is far passed,*” or “*it’s already very late.*” NIV In other words, there is no time for them to return to their homes.

SEND THEM AWAY. The disciples knew that the people were interested in the words and works of Jesus, and therefore they would not leave of their own accord. Because of this, they urged the Lord to personally “*send them away.*” Luke tells us that it was “*the twelve*” who made this request (Lk 9:12). **It is of note that Christ’s disciples had remained with Him, even though He was technically teaching the multitudes and healing their sick.** True disciples must learn to stay with Jesus, even when He is ministering to someone else. They will often learn many things through observing His dealings with other souls that cannot otherwise be learned. Also, it is good to seek a thorough deliverance from any view of Christ’s dealings that has only to do with personal needs and preferences.

Go into the villages. The “*desert*” area in which they found themselves is said to have belonged “*to the city called Bethsaida,*” so it was nearby. It was the native home of Peter, Andrew and Philip (John 1:44; 12:21). It was also close to Capernaum and Chorazin (Matt 11:21; Lk 10:13). There were apparently some additional smaller villages in that area.

Find lodging. Luke tells us “*the twelve*” also asked the Lord to send the people away to find a place to “*lodge,*” or spend the night. This indicates the lateness of the hour did not allow them to make it back to their own abodes.

Obtain food. Mark says “*to buy themselves bread.*” Matthew says to “*buy victuals*” (Matt 14:15). Luke says to “*get victuals*” (Lk 9:12). “*Bread*” refers to loaves of bread, made with flour. “*Victuals*” refers to “*food*” or “*supplies*” required for a meal. All of this, of course, was to be at the expense of the multitude: “*buy themselves bread*” (Mk 6:36). Luke tells us that this suggestion was made in sufficient time for the requested action to take place – “*when the day began to wear away*” (Lk 9:12). They has no doubt thought the matter out as thoroughly as they could.

THE LORD WAS IN CONTROL. This whole account must be seen from a higher perspective – higher than the one embraced by the disciples. Actually, the Lord had detained the multitude in order that He might do this work, as ordained by the Father. These were works that Jesus said “*bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me*” (John 5:36). He further said He could only do what He saw the Father doing. “*The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise*” (John 5:19). Jesus, therefore, not only saw this multitude as sheep without a shepherd, He also saw them as those for whom His Father was about to provide a miraculous meal. Therefore, He taught them and healed their sick until it became evident that they needed food, and that none was naturally available where they were.

It should not surprise us if we also find ourselves in situations where help and assistance is not to be found. That condition, however, is far from being a hopeless one.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 69

“Mark 6:37 *He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? 38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39 And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.”* (Mark 6:37-40; Matthew 14: 16-17; Luke 9:13-15; John 6:5-10)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus had left Galilee and sailed with His disciples across the Sea of Galilee to a desert place belonging to Bethsaida. Attracted to Jesus – or more precisely, being drawn to Him – the people had ran afoot around the Sea, arriving at the area where He was headed before He and His disciples did. In keeping with His word that those who came to Him would not go hungry (John 6:35), and that He would not drive them away from Himself (John 6:37), the Lord had compassion upon them, teaching them many things and healing those who had need of healing. It is important that we obtain this perspective of the Savior. Those who “*come*” to Him in the sense of His promise will not remain in a spiritually impoverished state. It is not possible to abide in Christ and remain spiritually emaciated. Jesus will not allow that to happen. So, if a soul remains spiritually starved, it is only because the individual is not with Jesus. The environment in which the person remains is minus Jesus – He is not there. We also know that Jesus will not send anyone away who comes to Him. This is because the drawing of the Father is revealed in the coming of the individual: “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*” (John 6:37). This is being made known in the circumstances of this text. The day had passed, and nightfall was coming upon them. Realizing the circumstances, but not yet perceiving the sufficiency of Christ, the twelve disciples have suggested that Jesus send the multitude away to find food and shelter. If Jesus follows their suggestion, it will contradict what He later revealed about not turning anyone away. Now we will see how He will resolve the dilemma.

“ Mk 6:37 *He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?”*

GIVE YE THEM TO EAT. Here is an aspect of the Lord Jesus that we do well to learn. He does not see crises as men do, and we ought not to expect Him to do so! The disciples have seen a situation that, to them, was hopeless, and they have addressed Jesus just as though their assessment was correct. Their evaluation of the external circumstances was correct. They were in “*a desert place,*” the day was “*far passed,*” and the people had “*nothing to eat*” (Mk 6:35-36). So far as diagnosing the appearances, they had done as well as any alert person could do. However, they had not taken into consideration that the Lord Jesus was there. They had only thought in

terms of the people being there.

Even though they were positive the people needed to leave, and that they would not leave unless Jesus sent them away, Jesus flatly contradicts their assessment. Matthew records that Jesus said, “*They need **not** depart!*” (Matt 14:16). Men should not expect the Lord to have a purely human perspective of things! Although He is a “*Man*” (1 Tim 2:15), “*the Son of man*” (Matt 8:20), and was “*tempted in all points as we are*” (Heb 4:15), yet He did not, and He does not, think as a man. This is because He does not **see** things as a man. The disciples saw a helpless situation. Jesus saw this as an occasion in which God was going to work for His glory.

Jesus, seeing that the work was about to be done, gives the apostles an opportunity to be the ones through whom the work will be accomplished: “*Give ye them to eat!*” Both Matthew and Luke record precisely the same words (Matt 14:16; Lk 9:13).

John gives us an even closer view of the occasion. He says that Jesus, upon seeing the multitude, said to Philip, “*Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to **prove him** : for He Himself knew what He would do*” (John 6:5-6). Jesus was not asking for suggestions. He was not considering all of the possibilities, or attempting to discover what would be the appropriate thing to do. He already knew what He was going to do. He was testing the disciples – trying their faith and opening a door of opportunity to them.

Putting these Gospel records together, we see several important things. First, this was a work on God’s agenda. Jesus saw it immediately and was prepared to enter into the work. Second, this was a test for the disciples, to see how much they had really perceived, and how they could think through a circumstance. Third, it was a test of the people, to see how serious they were about following Jesus. Oh, the dread of simplistic approaches to the work of God!

SHALL WE GO AND BUY? Mark says the disciples responded as if it was appropriate for them to go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread. Is that what Jesus wanted them to do? Note, Jesus did not say “Go and buy bread,” or “Go and find bread.” He said, “*YOU give them something to eat.*” NKJV Somehow, during this whole event, they had come to sense what Jesus would say, and taken a survey of their financial resources. It appears that their combined resources were two-hundred pennies – enough for a two-hundred days supply of food. This would have included the treasury, maintained by Judas (John 12:6; 13:29), and the personal resources of each of the twelve. That would averaged out to a little over two weeks financial resources for each of the disciples. Those, therefore, who think of Jesus as maintaining a great treasury need to rethink their carnal view. This is Jesus and His disciples toward the ending part of His ministry, and on this day, they did not have three weeks provisions among them! Notwithstanding, if that would have been enough, they would have bought bread for the multitudes.

John says that Philip answered Jesus, “*Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little*” (John 6:7). We conclude, therefore, that this is what they had among themselves. A “*penny*” is considered to have been a day’s wage (Matt 20:2) – which was not designed to provide for a savings account. This is what was necessary to maintain a day of life – “*our daily bread.*” Philip knew that this amount of bread would be less than 4% of what would have been needed to feed 5,000 men. If we include woman and children in the group (which Jesus did), the total crowd was probably close to 25,000, which would made 200 pennyworth of bread be less than 1% of what was required.

Notwithstanding all of these circumstances, the Master still says, “*Give them something*

to eat yourselves!” AMPLIFIED It ought to be clear to us that Jesus does not view our limitations as we do. He will speak to faith, knowing that faith does not reason after the manner of the flesh. Keep in mind that these very men had already been sent out by Jesus to do the impossible: *“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils”* (Matt 10:8). None of those things were in any way possible to the sons of men. Yet, they had not questioned the Master on His commission, and there is no evidence that they wrestled with doubt, or thought the commission to be undoable. But this is another occasion, another test, another opportunity. We will find that it is possible to pass one test, and fail the next.

“ 38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.”

We are beholding in this text the manner in which the Lord deals with His followers, and how He speaks with them. Properly seen by faith, this will assist in delivering us from overly-simplistic views of Christ – which views are actually only fleshly views, or knowing Christ *“after the flesh”* (2 Cor 5:16). Religious flesh veers away from any profound, deep, or extensive understanding of Christ, for it sees no need for such comprehension. Such people are quite satisfied with a shallow view of Jesus, unaware that such a view is completely unproductive. In fact, it is categorically said of those who know Jesus by faith that *“we know Him thus no longer.”* NASB There is, in fact, no place in redemption for a continued infantile view of Jesus or juvenile acquaintance with His manners. Admittedly, we all begin with a proportionately meager view of Him, but salvation is calculated to quickly move us beyond the borders of mere simplicity.

HOW MANY LOAVES? The unthinking person sees no sense in such a question. After all, such an one reasons, Jesus already knows the answer to the question, and the Lord has said, *“If I were hungry, I would not tell thee”* (Psa 50:12). However, Jesus is not asking for information but is rather proving His disciples. The test is for **their** benefit, not His – also for the observation of holy angels, and for us, *“upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Cor 10:11).

GO AND SEE. One versions reads, *“Go look!”* NASB Jesus asks them to see what resources are available – and remember, there is a crowd of five thousand men, besides women and children. What did they have to work with? It was important that **THEY** know this before **HE** did the work. Therefore, when calling Moses to the work of delivering Israel, the Lord ask him, *“What is that in thine hand?”* (Ex 4:2). It was a rod, and the Lord used it. When a poor widow sought help from the prophet Elisha he asked her, *“What hast thou in the house?”* (2 Kgs 4:2). She replied *“a pot of oil,”* and the prophet used that to meet her need. When Shamgar the Judge faced 600 Philistines, all he had in his hand was an *“ox goad,”* but that is what the Lord used to give him the victory. We could mention other things like the jawbone of an ass in Samson’s hand (Judges 15:15-16), or a sling and a stone in David’s hand (1 Sam 17:50). What we have is important when working for the Lord.

While we cannot make an inviolable law of this matter, God often does not work until we have assessed what we have – what is in our hand. What is there with which He can work? What is there we are willing to put into His hand. You will find that the most impoverished person has something, and that is really all that is necessary if it is joined to faith.

WHEN THEY KNEW. Other versions read, *“And when they found out.”* NKJV/NIV We do not know how long it took them to find out, but they did not return until they had the answer. Remember, the time was already late, which provided a further reason for hastening their research. Some cannot conceive of a Christ requiring so much activity by His disciples when He already knew what He would do. However, Jesus does not merely work to resolve the dilemma. He has in mind to make some other things known, as well as to tutor angels.

FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES. Matthew only records the answer of the disciples, and not the question of Jesus: “*We have here but five loaves, and two fishes*” (Matt 14:17). Luke accents how meager the supply was: “*We have **no more** but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people*” (Luke 9:13). John tells us that Andrew, Peter’s brother, actually delivered the word, citing the utter deficiency of the goods: “*One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but **what are they among so many?***” (John 6:8-9).

All twelve of the disciples had an opportunity to feed the multitude, but they thought it was necessary to buy bread. Philip also had a chance to feed them, but he considered that the money they had was insufficient to obtain even a very small portion for everyone. Andrew also was presented with an opportunity to feed the multitude – something God was going to do – but concluded that five loaves and two fishes were simply not enough.

The report of the disciples was absolutely correct: they did have five loaves and two fishes. The answer would have passed the test of any mathematician. A statistician would have been proud of their research, and how accurate it was. It certainly was not an easy answer to obtain, and therefore the academic master would have no doubt given them an “A+.”

But it was their reasoning upon the facts that was flawed. They could not take the loaves and fishes and divide them satisfactorily among 5,000 men, besides women and children. The difficulty was that they had not figured Jesus into the equation. Their mathematical equation was (5 loaves + 2 fishes) ÷ 5,000 men = . The proper equation was, (5 loaves + 2 fishes) ÷ 5,000 men + Jesus = Plenty of food for all. It should not surprise us that many professing Christians continue to calculate without Jesus.

“ 39 And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.”

As soon as the disciples deliver the information for which Jesus asked, He proceeds to work the works of Gold. He does not ask them for any further information. They have already said too much: “*Shall we go and buy?*” “*Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient.*”

“*We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.*” “*What are they among do many?*” Here was another case where many counselors were of absolutely no worth, even though Solomon said, “*in the multitude of counselors there is safety*” (Prov 11:14). That may be true in matters that are wholly of this world, but there is not a speck of truth in it regarding the workings of the Lord. In this case, the counsel of Jesus was thoroughly adequate, and no other word was needed.

Matthew says that Jesus responded, “*Bring them [the loaves and fishes] hither to me*” (Matt 14:18). Whatever we have must first be brought to the Lord. It must be presented to Him for use. Men must run from the inclination to launch out on their own, the asking the Lord to give them help. If Jesus could say “*the Father that dwelleth in Me, **He** doeth the works*” (John 14:10), what must be said of those who labor for and with Jesus Himself?

HE COMMANDED THEM. Jesus did not discuss, He commanded. He did not suggest, He commanded. This was because “*He Himself knew what He would do*” (John 6:6). There does come a time when human assessments, explanations, research, and the likes must come to an end. The work of God must proceed upon the basis of the Divine will, not the will of man. That is why Paul, once He knew the will of Jesus, asked no more for the thorn to be removed (2 Cor 12:9). That is why the early disciples, after trying unsuccessfully to go into Bithynia, and being previously blocked from going into Asia, finally determined to go to Macedonia. They then KNEW that was where the Lord

wanted them to go (Acts 16:6-9).

In spiritual life, there can be times of confusion, when we face the tenacity of flesh, and its inveterate bent downward. Men may offer this suggestion and that, presenting habits and morsels of worldly wisdom to assist us in putting down wayward desires. All of this is like searching for how many loaves you have, and it always finishes with the conclusion that you do not have enough. However, after you have done all of your research, and have presented all of your findings, the Lord issues the command that resolves it all: "*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth*" (Col 3:5). When we respond to that word, the work of the Lord will get under way, just as surely as it did in the case of the feeding of the five thousand.

MAKE ALL SIT DOWN BY COMPANIES. The seating had to be orderly, for large crowds naturally tend to confusion. Other versions read that they were to sit down "*in groups,*" NKJV "*by groups,*" NASB "*in rows.*" WILLIAMS In the army of Israel, God arranged the people by rank, and in order (Num 2:16,22). The warriors of Zebulun were noted for being able to "*keep rank*" (1 Chron 12:33). Those who fought for David, and were employed by God to make him king, were also described as men who could "*keep rank*" (1 Chron 12:38).

Jesus said to make the people sit down – that is, to ensure that they all did, in fact, do precisely that: "*sit down.*" Luke points out that this is exactly what they did. "*And they did so, and made them all sit down*" (Luke 9:15). John says there was "*much grass*" in that place (John 6:10). One can only imagine how those "*in the flesh*" would respond to such an order. Faced with fifteen or twenty thousand people, I can almost see the church board throwing up its hands in despair. After all, there were "*children*" present in this group also. Those who remain with Jesus, listening to Him and taking Him seriously, will **not** be frustrated by His demands. Somehow, they all appear quite doable when in His presence.

The New Covenant equivalent of this is, "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (1 Cor 14:40). God is not depicted as working for good in the midst of a chaotic environment. This is confirmed by the confusion that was sent upon the builders of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:7-8). It is most unfortunate that men have attempted to dignify both external and internal confusion in their religion. They imagine that by crediting chaotic conditions to the working of the Holy Spirit the whole matter is sanctified. If Jesus would not feed a dispersed and wandering multitude with natural bread what would lead a person to believe He would do so with spiritual bread?

IN RANKS BY HUNDREDS AND FIFTIES. Luke records Jesus saying, "*Make them sit down by fifties in a company*" (Luke 9:14). This possibly refers to two differing group sizes: hundreds and fifties. This would allow for a more orderly distribution. Some have supposed 5,000 men were 100 rows deep, and 50 men wide, which would calculate to 5,000. It appears as though this is the most probable. The people were thus arranged something like an orderly garden. It is also assumed by many that the "*women and children*" were in some way separated from the men. If so, they would no doubt have also been organized in an orderly manner. Those who have no heart for orderliness would have great difficulty obeying this word.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 70

“Mark 6:41 And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. 42 And they did all eat, and were filled. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.”

(Mark 6:41-44; Matthew 14: 19-21; Luke 9:16-17; John 6:11-15)

INTRODUCTION

In a grand demonstration of the nature of the ministry of Jesus, the people have pursued Him with zealous intent, and have stayed with Him through the day as He ministered to them, teaching them many things, and healing those who had need of healing. This is the kind of Prophet Moses said would come into the world: *“unto Him ye shall hearken”* (Deut 18:15). Later, Jesus would declare one of the marks of His salvation would be the people coming to Him: *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”* (John 12:32). That is, He Himself would be the center of attention and the Object of fervent quest. Under His influence, the people would not make the Temple the focus, or the keeping of the Law, or the disciples of Christ. Jesus Himself would be the center of attention. **Where this is not the case, NO spiritual food will be dispensed to the people.** Where Jesus Himself is not the Object of attention, no aspect of salvation will be truly experienced. Just as surely as these people could not have been fed if they were not consciously and willingly in the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, so those who are not deliberately and knowingly in the presence of the Son of God will not be given the *“bread of life.”* **Wherever other things are allowed to gain prominence over Jesus in the minds of the people, spiritual nourishment is forfeited – and where spiritual nourishment is forfeited, it is not possible to sustain spiritual life.** This is being lived out in the text before us, and we do well to give the more earnest heed to it. We are living in a religious environment where this is scarcely known.

“ Mk 6:41 And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.”

HE TOOK THE LOAVES. All of the Gospel writers point out that Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes (Matt 14:19; Lk 9:16; John 6:11). Matthew says that Jesus told the disciples, *“Bring them hither to Me”* (Matt 14:18). This was something that had to be done **before** the people could be fed: **the loaves and fishes had to get into Jesus’ hand.** The disciples had already revealed their lack of faith in this matter. They thought in terms of how much money they had, and how inadequate the available provisions were. They did, however, quickly obey when Jesus said to bring the supplies to Him.

There is a principle to be seen here. When feeding the flock of God, or distributing spiritual food, care must be taken to bring the provisions to the Lord Jesus. The servant of the Lord must master putting the texts in the hands of the Lord – laboring in the Word and the doctrine (1 Tim 5:17) with an acute awareness of Christ. Paul put it this way: *“For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ ”* (2 Cor 2:17), and *“our care for you in the sight of God ”* (2 Cor 7:12). **If a person ministers with a prevailing consciousness of the problems to be corrected, the people will not receive much.** The people in our text were hungry and needed food, but they could only be fed when the supplies were deliberately and willfully put into Jesus’ hands.

HE BLESSED THE LOAVES. *“He looked up to heaven, and blessed . . . ”* Matthew and Luke also make a point of Jesus looking *“up to heaven”* (Matt 14:19; Lk 9:16). At the Last Supper Jesus also *“took bread and blessed it”* (Matt 26:26). In so doing, **Jesus sanctified the food** before He broke it for distribution. Paul reminds us that food is sanctified for consumption *“by the word of God and prayer”* (1 Tim 4:5). I have observed many souls who made a practice of eating without prayer. This is not a comely practice. Even when Paul was in the midst of a storm, he encouraged the frightened passengers to *“take some meat: for this is for your health.”* He then *“gave thanks to God in the presence of them all”* (Acts 27:35). From a technical point of view, nothing that is not blessed by prayer is suitable for consumption.

We see here a picture of the necessity of the Lord’s blessing. If Divinity is not brought into the work, it is sure to fail. Human wisdom and power are not sufficient to engage in the work of the Lord. Thus the Psalmist wrote, *“Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain”* (Psa 127:1). It is only our *“labor in the Lord”* that is *“not in vain”* (1 Cor 15:58). That is, it is only as we work in fellowship with Him, being sustained and directed by Him, that our work will ever amount to anything that will bring glory to God or true satisfaction to us.

HE BRAKE THE LOAVES AND DIVIDED THE FISH. There were *“five loaves”* and *“two fishes,”* but He did not hand them *“whole”* to His disciples. **The multiplication took place in the breaking of the bread and dividing of the fish.** Breaking the bread and dividing the fish is paralleled to the widow pouring the oil from a single *“pot”* into many vessels of diverse sizes (2 Kgs 4:2-7). It is also parallel to the widow who daily prepared food throughout a lengthy period from one barrel of meal and a single cruse of oil (1 Kgs 17:12-16). She never put anything into the barrel or cruse, but continued to take from them until the famine ceased.

Here too, a valuable principle can be seen. The truth of God is much like the five loaves and two fishes. From one point of view, it does not look adequate for the multifarious needs of humanity. That is why many add to it the rules of logic, statistics, psychology, sociology, and other forms of human wisdom. Considering the complexity of human life, and the staggering challenges that face us, the truth of God, as revealed in Scripture, simply does not seem adequate. This delusion is owing to a lack of familiarity with the nature of the Kingdom. It is with *“use”* that adequacy is realized. It is written of spiritual aptitudes, *“even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Heb 5:14).

It is also said of the preached, or dispensed, Word of God: *“And the word of God increased ; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (Acts 6:7). And again, *“But the word of God grew and multiplied ”* (Acts 12:24). Just as the bread and fish were *“multiplied”* for consumption, so the word of God was ingested by those who believed, bringing spiritual profit and benefit to them.

HE GAVE TO HIS DISCIPLES. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say Jesus “gave” the supplies “to His disciples” (Matt 14:19; Lk 19:16). John says He “distributed to the disciples” (John 6:11). The disciples, in turn, distributed the food to the multitude. Here another principle is seen. It is the manner of the kingdom for the King to distribute the truth through those who are “holding fast to the Head” NKJV (Col 2:19). They, like the disciples who were with Jesus, then “minister” the “nourishment” to the other members of the body. Those who are dwelling in darkness must hear the Gospel from those who dwell in the Son, whom He “sends” forth with the bread from heaven (Rom 10:15). Jesus consistently distributes the truth through His people – those who walk in the light “as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7), maintaining the fellowship with Him, into which God has called them (1 Cor 1:9).

“ 42 And they did all eat, and were filled.”

THEY DID ALL EAT. Men, women, and children (Matt 14:21) all ate the same kind of bread – from the same supply: five loaves and two fishes. There was **not** a special bread for each group: more nourishing bread and meaty fish for working men, a lighter bread and more dainty fish for women, and a certain type of bread and very small fish for children. **The difference was in the portion, not the bread and fish themselves.** All of the bread, and all of the fish had the same nutritional value, with the only difference being in the portion.

We live in the day of religious specialties. Special gospels are prepared for special groups. There are even special Bibles being printed for special groups: men, women, children, teachers, students, young people, singles, etc. In this approach, the spiritual nutritional value of the material is reduced, so that what the children are given cannot possibly sustain the aged, regardless of the amount that is ingested. Without lingering too long on this matter, it will suffice to say that this is not the manner of the Kingdom of God. It rather reflects the wisdom of men and the way of the world. When Timothy was a child, the portions delivered to him were from the same source as nourished his mother and grandmother: “*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim 3:15). Every believer must become adept in handling the Word of God, so that the truth itself is not presented in a watered-down form. This will require a close walk with the Lord and a working knowledge of the Word itself.

THEY WERE ALL FILLED. Every Gospel writer makes a point of this – everyone was “filled” (Matt 14:20; Lk 9:17; John 6:12). No one was turned away that was in any sense hungry. Their appetites differed, to be sure, but they were “*all filled.*” John points out that every person ate “*as much as they would,*” “*as much as they wanted*” NKJV (John 6:11). There was no restriction. If your appetite required it, you could eat as much as you wanted.

This was also the way in which the manna was consumed by the Israelites. “*This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent*” NKJV (Ex 16:16). Here is how the distribution was made. Everyone in the family was provided “one omer” (about two quarts). If there was a family of six, that amounted to twelve quarts. From that supply infants, children, young men and women, mothers, fathers, and perhaps grandparents, were fed. The outcome was that everyone received enough to thoroughly satisfy their appetite. It is written, “*So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack . Every man had gathered according to each one's need*” NKJV (Ex 16:18): the same supply, but differing levels of consumption. Paul refers to this principle when writing the Corinthians (2 Cor 8:14-15).

Thus Jesus fed the multitudes using the same formulae as was employed in feeding Israel with manna: same food, same supply, same day – distributed to the people according to their various appetites or needs.

Here is a most vivid picture of edification – or the feeding and nourishing of the “*flock of God*.” Solemnly, the under-shepherds are told, “*feed the flock of God!*” (1 Pet 5:2). And how is this done? Just as surely as Jesus fed the whole of the multitude with “*five loaves and two fishes*,” so the people of God are to be fed with “*the good word of God*” (Heb 6:5). It is not right to divide them into special-interest groups and tailor the word for each of those groups. That may appear wise to men, but it is not the way God works. This is not to say that special blessings may not be sought for the little ones, as when “*they brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them*” (Lk 18:15). Matthew refers to “*little children*” (Matt 19:13), and Mark to “*young children*” (Mk 10:13). Here, however, we are speaking of feeding, teaching, or edification.

When Jesus was twelve years of age, he did not sit with the “*youth leaders*,” but with the “*doctors*,” or expert teachers of the Law (Lk 2:46). He was there to “*learn*,” and when required, He asked them questions: “*both hearing them and asking them questions*.” They also were astonished at the young Jesus, being amazed “*at His understanding and answers*.” He had been gathering from the same supply – the Scriptures – and had capitalized upon His access to the same God – growing in favor “*with God*” (Lk 2:52).

There is a certain incumbency placed upon the church when it comes together: “*that all may learn, and all may be comforted*” (1 Cor 14:31). When the Spirit moves through a member of the body, it is for “*the profit of all*” NKJV (1 Cor 12:7). The purpose for communicating an understandable message is “*that the church may receive edification*” (1 Cor 14:5). The saints are to seek to “*excel to the edifying of the church*” (1 Cor 14:12). Everything done in the assembly is to be “*done unto edifying*” (1 Cor 14:26). Yet, the church is not only comprised of the spiritually mature, but of novices as well. There are “*fathers*” who have a more profound understanding. There are “*young men*” who are noted for their zeal and are overcoming the wicked one. There are “*little children*” who only know their sins are forgiven and that God is their Father (1 John 2:13-14). But when the church comes together, Jesus feeds them all as He did the five thousand, besides women and children. The bread is the same, but the measure of it that is consumed is different. Our aim is that ALL will be filled.

“ 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.”

GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS! John tells us, “*When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost*” (John 6:12). The food continued to be served until everyone was filled. When it comes to dispensing the Word of God, I can only imagine what would happen if this rule was adopted in the average congregation – everyone eat until they are full!

Jesus said the reason for gathering up the fragments was “*that nothing be lost*.” An abundance of things from God does not mean that men can be wasteful! This principle was also taught under the Law. When reaping the fields, the corners were not to be reaped. The grain that dropped to the ground (“*gleanings*”) was not to be picked up. “*Every grape*” was not to be harvested. The reason – “*leave them for the poor and stranger*” (Lev 19:9-10). Nothing lost.

Here, “*fragments*” does not refer to the crumbs left by the multitudes, as crumbs falling from the table (Matt 15:27). This refers to pieces broken off by Jesus that were not consumed

by the multitude. This accentuates how abundantly God provides. If anyone is left hungry, it is **not** because enough was not provided! God can give us more than enough.

I have often pondered how excellent assemblies often experience the distribution of more heavenly bread than is apparently consumed. It is good to make a point of gathering up such goods and determine to muse upon them, *“that nothing be lost.”*

THEY TOOK UP TWELVE BASKETS FULL. Jesus started with five loaves and two fishes, and concluded with twelve baskets full of fragments that came from those five loaves. The twelve distributed the bread, and the twelve gathered the fragments – one basket each, which was more gathered by each disciple than the source of what was distributed! What is more, the baskets were *“full of fragments”* (Mk 6:43), for they *“filled twelve baskets”* (John 6:13).

This was visible proof that everyone had eaten until they were filled! Also, note that **Jesus** gave the command to gather up the fragments. The multitude was not as thankful as it should have been, leaving all of those fragments, and thinking nothing of providing for those who had nothing. They were not like Nehemiah: *“he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Neh 8:10).

Matthew reminds us, *“And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children”* (Matt 14:21). Mark, Luke, and John, mention only the 5,000 men (Mk 6:44; Lk 9:14; John 6:10). The Gospel writers did not place the stress on the numbers, but on the Lord who fed them.

It does not say what they did with these filled baskets, but it should not surprise me if they were not given to *“the lad”* who gave his food up to Jesus (John 6:9). What a testimony that would have been when he returned home.

THOSE WHO SAW THE MIRACLE. John tells us the reaction of some of the filled multitude. *“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world”* (John 6:14). This indicates that many did not have the faintest idea what had happened. They did not know about the lad with five loaves and two fishes, or the blessing and breaking of the bread by Jesus. Only those who were close were privy to what had really happened. Those who were at a distance had no way of knowing HOW the bread was supplied to them. Therefore, they could think no further than the bread. They were like the people at the wedding feast, who tasted miraculous wine, but thought it was part of a hidden supply of the host. They thought he had saved that wine until the last (John 2:9a).

However, those who ate the bread and fish, who were privy to what had happened, knew more of the situation. They *“saw the miracle,”* and drew a more proper conclusion about Christ. They concluded this was *“the Prophet”* that Moses said *“should come into the world”* (Deut 18:15,18). They were like the servants who filled and drew from the water pots at the wedding feast: they *“knew from whence it was”* (John 2:9b).

A WRONG CONCLUSION AND CHRIST’S REACTION. John tells us of the way the people who saw this miracle reasoned. *“When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone”* (John 6:15). Jesus will not serve purely personal interests. He came from God, and He serves the Father’s interests, fulfilling His purpose. If a people do not want what God has purposed to give in Christ Jesus, the Savior will not linger among them. I believe this answers a lot of questions concerning the obvious absence of Jesus among the churches. They may have eaten His bread, but they have not seen Him correctly. They have wanted Him to be the answer to their carnal wishes instead of seeing Him

as the exclusive means of participating in God's "*eternal purpose.*" Therefore, He has left them to their own imaginations.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 71

“ Mark 6:45 And straightway He constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. 46 And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray. 47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. 48 And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.”

(Mark 6:45-48; Matthew 14: 22-25; John 6:15-17)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has fed the multitude, and twelve baskets of fragments have been gathered up *“that nothing be lost.”* Now the Lord will orchestrate events so the disciples’ faith will be tested. He will make known the extent of the profit they have realized from the *“miracle of the loaves”* that they have just witnessed. Those who have a strong desire to see the miraculous must know this, that there is much more involved in witnessing the working of the Lord than satisfying human curiosity, or meeting an immediate perceived need. The Lord will also test those who have seen His works, to see what they have gleaned from them, and how they can associate that knowledge with what they face in life. This is involved in the trying of our hearts. As it is written, *“The LORD trieth the righteous”* (Psa 11:5). And again, *“but the LORD trieth the hearts”* (Prov 17:3). Jesus would have the churches know, *“I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works”* (Rev 2:23). Men are responsible to learn from what God does in their presence, whether it is Pharaoh, Israel, or the disciples of Christ. They become a custodian, or steward, of what is delivered to them. This is a kingdom manner that has been greatly, if not altogether, obscured by spiritual Babylon. We live in a time of religious self-centered-ism.

“ Mk 6:45 And straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while He sent away the people.”

HE CONSTRAINED HIS DISCIPLES. Now, Jesus must withdraw for a season, refurbishing His spirit, and spending time with His Father. This will be a time when even His disciples will not be allowed to remain with Him. While this did not appear to have occurred frequently, there were times when He sent His disciples away, unaccompanied by His immediate presence. We will find, however, that they were still within His watchful eye, even though He could not be seen by them.

Most of the other versions read that Jesus *“ made His disciples”* get into the boat and go before Him to the other side. Other versions read *“compelled,”* DARBY and *“caused.”* GENEVA The word *“constrain”* is a strong one, meaning *“to necessitate, to drive, whether by force, threats,*

entreaties, of other means.” THAYER People can be compelled by a severe threat, of by physical force, or by strong appeals, exceeding great rewards, etc. There are different ways to motivate people, to be sure. How did Jesus “constrain” His disciples? How did He move them to get into a boat, after a long day, and go to the other side, while He remained behind?

There is an aspect of Jesus and His disciples that is brought out in this text. “*My sheep hear My voice , and I know them, and they follow Me*” (John 10:27). The phrase “*hear my voice*” does not refer to a mere hearing of its sound. The word “*hear*” means understand, discern, and attend to. The sheep not only are able to recognize the voice of their Master, they are inclined to do what He says. That is one of their traits. Moses foretold this characteristic of the coming Messiah: “*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken* ” (Deut 18:15).

Jesus “constrained” His disciples by simply telling them what to do – like the Lord did Abraham when he left his home, (Gen 12:1-3), and when he was required to offer up Isaac (Gen 22:1-2). It was not necessary to threaten the disciples, or to offer them some unusual incentive to make the trip. His word was sufficient, just as it was for Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:6).

It is not certain that any individual who fails to hearken to the Lord is His disciple, or that such is even saved. Moses affirmed the people would hearken to Him. Jesus said His sheep knew His voice and followed Him. I gather this is an unvarying trait of the “*sheep.*”

Faith often requires that the children of God to move out with an element of uncertainty. In this case, the disciples knew where they were going, but did not know what would be experienced on the way. Abraham was called to leave his country, and kindred, and father’s house, “*unto a land*” that God would later “*show*” to him (Gen 12:1). The Spirit later witnesses to us of this occasion, “*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went* ” (Heb 11:8). Although there is this natural desire within man to have the future clear before he makes any decisive move, faith can move without knowing what is ahead, and do it confidently.

GO TO THE OTHER SIDE. Matthews says that Jesus constrained His disciples to “*go before Him unto the other side*” (Matt 14:22). They knew, then, that Jesus fully intended to follow them. Notwithstanding, they would have to make this trip without Him, as their faith was about to be tested. They had to do what was right, even though it would appear as though they were all alone in the doing of it.

HE SENT THE PEOPLE AWAY. Why was it that Jesus sent the multitude away? Why did He not continue teaching them. After all, they had ran on foot to be with Him. John provides some insight on this matter. Following the feeding of the multitude Jesus “*perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king*” (John 6:15). They had made no connection with Him being a Savior from sin, even though the prophets had clearly said this was the case (Isa 53:4-6). For this crowd, their earthly circumstance had obscured their spiritual condition. Even following His resurrection His disciples asked Him, “*Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” (Acts 1:6). Jesus did not say this would never happen, but replied, “*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power*” (Acts 1:7). This was not His primary mission, even though it appeared to be one of Israel’s primary desires. Now, having witnessed the miraculous feeding of such a multitude, some considered this was the time to make Him their king – like David was. He would surely restore the glory to them that was found in their history.

However noble such a desire may appear to men, here it meant the end of their time with Jesus. He “*sent the people away*” – it was time for them to separate company, for they were attempting to make Him a part of the world from which the Father sent Him to deliver them. It is essential that we comprehend that when our agenda becomes more prominent in our thinking that God’s “*eternal purpose,*” He will soon dismiss us from His presence.

“ 46 And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray.”

Jesus was a praying Man. This was because He saw all things clearly, realizing that, as a Man, He was wholly dependent upon the Father. Recognizing the direction in which the people were now thinking, the Lord quickly repaired to the Father. This would drive away the fleshly mist that had penetrated that place. Exposure to flawed thinking demands that time be spent with the God of heaven, whose “*work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He*” (Deut 32:4).

When the Lord Jesus “*dwelt among us*” (John 1:14), He lived by faith, putting His “*trust*” in God (Heb 2:13), and was “*led by the Spirit*” (Lk 4:1). In the fullest sense of the word **He** “*saw light*” while He was in the light of His Father’s glory (Psa 36:9).

Ponder the times when Jesus prayed. (1) Following “*all the city*” being gathered to Him, when He healed many. Early the next morning, Jesus “*departed into a solitary place and prayed*” (Mk 1:35). (2) After His fame had been spread abroad and great multitudes were drawn to Him, He “*withdrew Himself into a wilderness and prayed*” (Lk 5:15-16). (3) After healing a man with a withered hand in a synagogue, that was subsequently filled “*with madness*” (Lk 6:10-12), and before choosing the twelve apostles (Lk 6:10-13), “*He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*” (4) As He began to enter the last phase of His ministry, “*He went up into a mountain to pray*” (Lk 9:28). (5) After upbraiding the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, He “*thanked*” God that He had “*hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*” (Matt 11:25-26). (6) That dark night, on the even of His betrayal, He took His disciples and went into Gethsemane, telling them he was going to “*pray yonder*” (Matt 26:36-44; John 17).

Luke provides a general summation of the Lord’s manners, particularly as regards the latter part of His ministry. “*And in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives*” (Luke 21:37).

In these circumstances we behold at least three kinds of occasions when our Lord’s prayers were particularly noted.

- When making epochal decisions – as in the choosing of the twelve Apostles (Lk 6:12-13).
- When exposed to the multitudes and their wills and ways (Matt 11:25-26; Mk 1:35; Lk 5:15-16; 6:10-12).
- As He entered the latter part of His ministry and prepared for His appointed death (Lk 9:28; Matt 26:36-44; John 17).

It seems to me that in each of these general categories, the wicked one was particularly active. The Savior being endowed “*with the spirit of wisdom and understanding*” (Isa 11:3), He knew when prayer was especially critical to the completion of His mission. Those who think of prayer as merely “*talking with God*” do not think of these critical times that transcend the ordinary.

In the first matter – the choosing of the twelve – Satan no doubt sought to infiltrate the chosen with his own seed. Indeed, the purpose of God allowed for one of Satan’s seed to be part of the inner circle. However, that was in order to the fulfillment of Scripture. As it is written, “*While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled*” (John 17:12).

In the second matter – exposure to the multitudes – the adversary sought to turn Christ to lesser things. We know that He once offered Him “*the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*” (Matt 4:8), if He would only fall down and worship him. How the “*old serpent*” would have loved to turn Jesus aside to be a temporal King, engaging in some skirmishes with the Roman empire. And, what a cost would have been paid should that have happened, for the chief difficulty with the human race – sin – would never have been addressed.

In the third matter – laying down His life for the sins of the world – the devil’s efforts were raised to an even higher level. The temptation to seek a way out of this death was so strong that Jesus prayed in an agony, and his sweat was “*like great drops of blood falling to the ground*” (Lk 22:44). A special angel was dispatched from heaven to “*strengthen*” Jesus during that critical hour (Lk 22:43). How pivotal it was that the Savior know WHEN to pray.

In order to obtain “*grace to help in the time of need*” (Heb 4:16), it is imperative that we be able to recognize such a time. It is not enough to say every hour is a “*time of need,*” and that is not what the text means. There is such a thing as “*the evil day*” (Eph 6:13), when we are under special assault by the wicked one. Jesus referred to it as the “*time of temptation*” (Lk 8:13), and “*the hour of temptation*” (Rev 3:10). It is the time when we are being subjected to unusual and dangerous influences that go beyond the normal – like Job’s sufferings (Job 1-2) and Peter’s sifting (Lk 22:31). Jesus saw such times and withdrew for prayer.

“ 47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. 48 And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.”

Matthew tells us “*He was there alone*” (Matt 14:23). Mark compares where Jesus was to where the disciples were: “*the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land .*” John says of the occasion, “*And it was now dark, and Jesus was not with them*” (John 6:17). The disciples, we will find, were not aware of Jesus, but He was surely aware of them. When we are engaged in obeying the Lord, we may not always be as aware of Him as we prefer, but He is not ignorant of us. It is ever true, “*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*” (1 Pet 3:12). There may very well have been other ships on the sea that night, but the Lord was focused on the one in which His disciples were found.

HE SAW THEM TOILING IN ROWING. Other versions read, “*straining at rowing,*” NKJV or “*making headway painfully.*” RSV Here the disciples were, fulfilling the word of their Master, and yet difficulty was associated with their obedience. Being in the heart of the will of God does not mean things are easy because we are intent upon pleasing the Lord. Earthly ease is by no means an unvarying indication of Divine approval!

We ought to recognize that while Jesus is “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities,*” He does not always rush to our aid so as to minimize all of our discomfort. If we have this idea

about Jesus, life will become confusing to us, and seemed filled with irreconcilable contradictions. Far better to have the perspective of the disciples in this storm, and “*toil*” and “*strain*” in rowing through life, determined to get where Jesus has sent us. In New Covenant terms, that is remaining “*steadfast and unmovable,*” “*fighting the good fight of faith,*” and “*quitting like men*” (1 Cor 15:58; 1 Tim 6:12; 1 Cor 16:13).

THE WIND WAS CONTRARY TO THEM. They were rowing in one direction, and the wind was blowing hard against them. **A lot of effort was being expended with very little headway being made.** They were holding to their course, heading straight for Bethsaida as Jesus has said, but progress was slow. Matthew adds, “*But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary*” (Matt 14:24). John adds, “*And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew*” (John 6:18). The wind was blowing, and the waves were rising and thrashing against the bow of the ship. Yet, they were “*toiling in rowing,*” expending their best efforts to fulfill the word of the Master – and doing so without Him in the vessel.

There is a strong tendency in man to view trouble and difficulty as a curse instead of a test. Much of the religion of our day encourages such notions, even offering all manner of counseling and the likes to help people out of their trouble. Blessed are the persons who know this is not the case – who see difficulty as a test, and believe the Master sees them while they row, as it was, against the wind of trial and tribulation.

HE COMETH TO THEM. His great heart could not behold His disciples without coming to them. Their names were written, as the prophet Isaiah would say, “*upon the palms of*” His hands (Isa 49:16). The trial that was so difficult for them, of course, was no trial for Jesus at all – even when He was yet in the flesh among men, to say nothing of the enthroned Christ.

He came to them during “*the fourth watch,*” or about three in the morning, “*walking on the sea.*” John tells us the disciples had “*rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs,*” or “*three or four miles*” NKJV (John 6:19). They had probably been rowing for at least six hours, and possibly more. They were little more than half way across the sea, which was over seven miles across. Now, Jesus comes to them walking on the stormy water. He appears to traverse the distance quickly, the winds and the waves giving Him no trouble.

HE WOULD HAVE PASSED THEM BY. Here is another test for the disciples. When Jesus finally reaches them, He is seen walking right past them. Some versions read, “*He intended to pass them by,*” NRSV and “*He meant to pass them by.*” RSV Jesus did a similar thing after He had risen from the dead and was walking with the two on the road to Emmaus. It is written that “*He acted as if He were going farther*” NIV (Lk 24:28). When hearing Bartimaeus, Jesus proceeded on as though He did not hear him (Mk 10:48). He did the same with the woman from Canaan (Matt 15:23). Jesus taught us that God often “*bears long*” with those who cry out “*day and night unto Him*” (Lk 18:7). Part of the trying of our faith is the Lord waiting “*to be gracious*” (Isa 30:18) when we are toiling in rowing or fervently supplicating. It is one of His ways with which vast numbers of professing believers have absolutely no knowledge. Every confessing believer should aggressively seek deliverance from the idea that God exists to serve man, or that His compassion is to be interpreted in view of a purely human analysis. We must not stumble when it seems like the Lord is passing us by. Rather, let us call out to Him!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 72

“ Mark 6:49 But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50 For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. 51 And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. 52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.”

(Mark 6:49-52; Matthew 14: 26-33; John 6:19-21)

INTRODUCTION

We are being exposed to the real Jesus, and to how He interfaces with His disciples. In this case, He sent them to the other side of the lake at night, without His perceptible presence, and into an imminent storm. All of the circumstances that would attend their journey were not divulged to them before they started their journey. He did not tell them He would be watching them from afar, and He did not tell them He would come to them on the very storm that was making it difficult for them to fulfill His command. Whatever we may think of following Jesus, being His disciple, and obeying His word, these things are done primarily by faith, not by information. Answers are not always supplied at the beginning of the work, and we should not be surprised when we face things that are difficult and even frightening. Faith, of course, is equal to all of these challenges. It will move us to think properly, not forget former Divine workings, and be persuaded that the Lord will not leave us or forsake us. We must also remember that, while these Gospel accounts are a record of the disciples in their formative state and prior to Christ's enthronement, they do provide us with a vivid portrayal of the deficiencies of *“the flesh,”* and the marvelous benefits of genuine faith. Here we are seeing the Divine nature confronting the human nature.

“ Mk 6:49 But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50 For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”

Seeing Jesus was not always a pleasant experience. In order for pleasantness and comfort to accompany the sight of Him, it was essential that Jesus be recognized – and that is not automatic. Men do not always know when they are confronting Deity or heavenly powers – as when Jacob wrestled with a holy angel (Gen 32:30), or the two on the road to Emmaus confronted the risen Christ (Lk 24:15). This is because the Lord can come along in *“another form”* that appears common to men (Mk 16:12). Or, as in this text, the circumstances can appear so dominant that men do not recognize a Divine visitation.

THEY SAW HIM. They were in a storm, toiling in rowing – yet they were perceptive of what

was around them: “*they saw Him walking on the sea.*” John says that after rowing three or four miles, “*they see Jesus walking on the sea.*” It was night, and a storm was raging, yet their vision penetrated the darkness, and, however faintly it was, they saw a figure walking on the sea toward them. Jesus was making Himself known, faintly, but surely.

THEY SUPPOSED. Although they had no doubt been subjected to the teaching of the Sadducees, the disciples knew there was such a thing as spirits, which the Sadducees denied (Acts 23: 8). Matthew says, “*And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit ; and they cried out for fear*” (Matt 14:26). John says they saw Him “*drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid*” (John 6:19). Mark says “*they ALL saw Him, and were troubled.*” Now their situation appeared to be further complicated, even while they were in the very heart of the will of Jesus, doing what He had told them to do.

How often supposition complicates life, when we “*suppose,*” think, or reckon according to appearance. The word “*supposed*” means “to be of the opinion, to determine, or judge.” STRONG’S This is how they thought about the matter: “*a spirit*” was coming to them, walking on the water, and drawing close to their ship. What else could it possibly be!

HE TALKED WITH THEM. Mark says “*immediately He talked with them.*” Matthew says, “*straightway Jesus spake unto them*” (Matt 14:27). John says, “*He saith unto them*” (John 6:20). It ought to be noted that Jesus came to the disciples during “*the fourth watch*” (Matt 14:25; Mk 6:48). **That is the final watch** – the first being from 6:00 PM until 9:00 PM, the second from 9:00 PM until 12:00 AM, the third from 12:00 AM until 3:00 AM, and the fourth from 3:00 AM until 6:00 AM.

This is like a commentary on the nature of trials, which are technically the “*trial of your faith*” (1 Pet 1:7). While we may prefer brief trials that swiftly end, such tests do not serve the purpose of uncovering the depth of our roots and the stability of our faith. It should not surprise us when God “*bears long*” with us (Lk 18:7), and calls upon us to have “*patience*” while we do “*the will of God*” (Heb 10:36). Jesus may not speak with us for, what appears to be, a long time. However, His eye is upon us, and He is coming to us. Of that you may be sure.

BE OF GOOD CHEER. Both Matthew and Mark record this word: “*Be of good cheer.*” An alternate reading is “*Take courage,*” NASB or “*Take heart,*” NRSV and “*Be of good comfort.*” GENEVA He was saying “Do not be afraid of the storm!” “Do not be afraid of Me!” This saying is equivalent to “*Fear not: believe only*” (Lk 8:50). How can those who are afraid suddenly become courageous? The answer is in the Word of the Master, which brings grace and power with it to the hearer.

IT IS I. Jesus does not identify Himself by name. He only says, “*It is I!*” Matthew, Mark, and John all include this word. It is the language of the Shepherd to the sheep, and the sheep “*know His voice*” (John 10:4,27). They recognize it just as surely as Mary, who thought she was being confronted with the gardener when she came to the empty tomb. Yet, when the Master spoke her name, she knew who He was (John 20:15-16).

Here is an aspect of hearing the One who “*speaketh from heaven*” that is especially refreshing (Heb 12:25). Jesus will identify Himself to the attentive heart that remains alert to Him, even during the storms and difficulties of life. The awareness that the Lord is with you, even while the storm is raging, is sufficient to calm the heart.

BE NOT AFRAID. Sometimes, not being afraid is equivalent to “*Take up your bed and walk,*” or “*Lazarus, come forth.*” To be “*afraid*” is to be terrified, put to flight, and seized with

alarm. It is a time when all fleshly strength and wisdom fail. How is it that when these conditions prevail, when men are “troubled” and “cry out for fear,” that their hearts can suddenly become more calm? Is that something men can cause to happen within themselves? Indeed not! The effectiveness of the words “Be not afraid” is strictly owing to the Lord who spoke them. They reveal that His dominion extends to the human soul and spirit as well as to the elements of creation. **Before Jesus works, fear must first be overcome.**

“ 51 And He went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.”

THE EPISODE WITH PETER. Although excluded by Mark and John, Matthew provides an additional part of this account: the episode with Peter. Upon hearing the words of Jesus – “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” – Peter responded, “Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water” (Matt 14:28). What a bold request, indeed. The storm is still raging, and the waves are still dashing against the bow of the ship. I assume the disciples were still “toiling in rowing.” Jesus responds with a single word: “Come!” Yet, all of the grace and power to do what He says accompanies His word, for it is “with power” (Lk 4:32).

No sooner had Jesus said the word than “Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus” NRSV (Mat 14:29). Faith is the grand enabler, for “all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mk 9:23). But, alas, faith does not perpetuate itself. The person who owns it must fight to keep it (1 Tim 6:12). No sooner did Peter start walking on the water than “he saw the wind boisterous.” Being distracted by what he “saw,” he “was afraid,” and immediately found himself “beginning to sink” in the very waters on which he was triumphantly walking (Matt 14:30). What happened? What caused him to cease walking on the stormy waters, and instead begin to sinking in them. **It is what he saw! What he saw** caused him to walk on the waters, and **what he saw** caused, him to begin sinking in them. The storm had not changed. Jesus had not changed. The only thing that changed was his focus! Suddenly, the storm supplanted Jesus as being the main thing. **As powerful as the word of Jesus is, it will not sustain a person who shifts his gaze to the circumstances of life.** It is no wonder that we are admonished to run the race “looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:1-2).

Peter also had presence of mind to shift his attention back to Jesus. He did not, however, automatically rise to the surface of the stormy waters to again walk upon them. Those once rescued, should they begin to sink in the waters that once held them up, must be **rescued again!** Therefore Peter cries out, “Lord, save me!” (Matt 14:30). No sooner had the words fell from his lips than “Jesus stretched forth his Hand, and caught him,” keeping him from being swallowed up by the raging foam. But Jesus did not simply raise him to the surface again. He said to him, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matt 14:31). **Jesus never overlooks the smallness of faith or the presence of doubt.** Men may pretend as though they are not present, but Jesus will draw our attention to them, even while He is in the process of answering our sudden prayers.

HE WENT UP UNTO THEM. Having been brought to the surface of the waters again, Peter accompanied Jesus to the ship. We do not know how far they walked, but “when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased” (Matt 14:32). Mark simply says Jesus “went up unto them into the ship.” John says, “they willingly received Him into the ship” (John 6:21), no longer afraid and thinking him to be “a spirit.”

THE WIND CEASED. As soon as Jesus was in the ship, “the wind ceased.” John says, “immediately the ship was at the land whither they went” (John 6:21). They were only half-way across the sea, with three or four more miles to row – but the presence of the Master brought the trip to an abrupt conclusion. Without Jesus, they “toiled in rowing,” making little progress with great

difficulty. With Jesus being “*willingly received*,” they arrived at their destination suddenly, and without any human effort.

Those who have called upon the name of the Lord have surely experienced the abrupt conclusion of circumstances that have been very troubling – perhaps even life-threatening. There is no way to account for such a termination of adversity apart from the presence of the “*Lord of all*” (Acts 10:36). Trouble does not simply run its course, finally wearing out with time. Nor, indeed, is the course of life driven along by fate or unintelligent destiny. No person who is identified with the Lord of glory can afford to look at life as though it is driven by happenstance, and difficulties are resolved by impersonal laws and cycles of nature.

THE DISCIPLES RESPONSE. The disciples had been with Jesus for nearly two years, but they still had not grown accustomed to Him in their flesh. This whole experience left them “*amazed in themselves beyond measure*,” or “*completely amazed*.” NIV Matthew says they “*came and worshipped Him saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God*” (Mat 14:33).

Surely, this will be a satisfactory conclusion to this whole episode. It appears as though everything is back in synch now. The disciples are worshiping the Lord. They are not afraid any longer. They have even confessed that they now perceive that Jesus is “*the Son of God*.”

What more can possibly be said about the whole matter? The Holy Spirit will now remind us that there is much more to this whole incident than meets the eye. **This occasion was a test, and the disciples did not pass it.** They had witnessed the mighty working of Jesus on the previous day, and their failure to consider what they saw will be noted by the Lord.

“ 52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.”

FOR. What follows is the explanation for “*they were sore amazed beyond measure, and wondered*.” Men may consider this to be a “natural response,” or something that “we all do.” But this is not the Divine assessment!

THEY CONSIDERED NOT. Other versions read, “*they had not understood*,” NKJV “*they had not gained any insight*,” NASB “*they did not understand*,” NRSV “*it was not clear to them*,” BBE “*they had not seen what . . . meant*,” NJB “*they still didn’t understand the significance*,” NLT “*they had not learned the lesson taught*,” WEYMOUTH and “*For they failed to consider or understand [the teaching and meaning of]*.” AMPLIFIED

The matter that was not understood, in which no insight had been gained, and the lesson which had not been learned was “*the miracle of the loaves*.” That miracle was not merely providing food for the hungry. It was more than an exhibition of Divine mercy and compassion. It involved more than meeting human need and caring about the condition of the people. Something was in that miracle that the disciples should have been able to associate with the experience through which they had just past.

Somehow, the disciples had not connected the feeding of the 5,000 with the extraordinary – at least not in the same sense as Jesus walking on the water, bidding Peter come to Him, and the storm ceasing as soon as He got into the boat. They had witnessed Jesus breaking the bread and fish, and feeding the vast throng with it. They had themselves gathered up the fragments, with each disciple gathering more than the original source of the food. Why had they not marveled and concluded that Jesus was “*the Son of God*” from that occasion?

Perhaps it was because the sight of hungry people and five loaves and two fishes really served to neutralize the marvelous work that Jesus did in the feeding of the 5,000. Although the supply of food was relatively meager, it had somehow served to make it more difficult to see the Son of God. An abundance of leftover fragments had somehow neutralized the greatness of the work that had been done.

There is a certain diminishment of understanding that can come when we think we have something to start with – a kind of beginning with which the Lord can work. Too, when we are left with more than we started, we can be deceived into thinking our situation was really not as bad as it seemed at first. That is the delusive power of the visible, when we look more at what can be seen than at what cannot be seen (2 Cor 4:18).

The failure of men to “*consider*” what the Lord has done is not a minor dereliction. The Lord does nothing without a cause – without having a certain purpose in the matter. Speaking through Ezekiel, the Lord spoke of this Divine quality: “*And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it , saith the Lord GOD*” (Ezek 14:23).

When men fail to see the cause, there has been no lasting advantage served by the work. What is more, all of God’s causes are interrelated, and their meaning transports over to any other area where the Lord is working. There was a connection between Jesus walking on the water and calming the storm, and the feeding of the 5,000. Both proved that He was the Son of God, for both were really impossible with men. Howbeit, at the time, the disciples were only able to associate the dramatic and glaringly obvious with their own personal circumstances.

THEIR HEART WAS HARDENED. The observation is certainly arresting: “*their heart was hardened,*” or “*their minds were closed,*” NJB or “*their hearts were blinded,*” TNT or “*their minds were dull,*” WEYMOUTH or “[*in fact*] *their hearts had grown callous [had become dull and had lost the power of understanding].” AMPLIFIED They were not hard against Christ, like the Pharisees, but were spiritually dull and stupid. They did not learn quickly, but rather quickly lapsed into dullness, even though they were exposed to the mighty power of God. Such qualities as being “*slow of heart*” (Lk 24:25) having “*little faith*” (Matt 8:26) possessing “*doubt*” (Matt 14:31), and being “*dull of hearing*” (Heb 5:11) are not excused by the Lord as though they were unavoidable human traits. They will keep us from “*considering*” the works of the Lord, and failing to “*consider*” what the Lord has done will only serve to harden our hearts.*

It is no wonder that we are solemnly warned, “*To day if ye will hear His voice, **harden not your hearts** ” (Heb 4:7). And again, “*But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; **lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**” (Heb 3:13). And again, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief** , in departing from the living God*” (Heb 3:12). And how do such things happen? How do hardening and unbelief rise in the hearts of those who have been exposed to the works of the Lord? It comes because what is seen is not duly considered, pondered, probed, and weighed. There is more to the works of the Lord than what is seen on the surface, and if we do not see beneath the surface, we will not do well in the storms of life, nor will we respond properly when we are delivered.**

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 73

“Mark 6:53 *And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him, 55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. 56 And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole.*” (Mark 6:53-56; Matthew 14: 34-36; John 6:22-26)

INTRODUCTION

Commenting on the ministry of Savior while He walked among men, Peter said “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him*” (Acts 10:38). The Gospels are the detailed accounts of Jesus “*doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.*” They are a testimony to the reality of God being “*with Him.*” They are also a confirmation of the manner in which Jesus ministers among men – how He responds to people, and how they are drawn to Him. In our day, “Christianity” has largely become a marketing campaign in which individuals and institutions are being promoted. The time has also come when men are heaping “*to themselves teachers*” in accordance with their own desires (2 Tim 4:13). This differs radically from the ministry of Jesus, for the people flocked to Him from every quarter. His Person and ministry drew the people. The word of the prophet was being fulfilled: “*and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*” (Gen 49:10). Thus, in the ministry of Jesus, people were being exposed to the nature of the heavenly kingdom, as well as the nature of salvation. The Lord of glory really has no peers or successful opponents, and He is truly compelling when properly seen by men in this world.

“Mk 6:53 *And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him.*”

WHEN THEY HAD PASSED OVER. If we are able to perceive it, these Gospel accounts provide us with a proper view of circumstance. Men are prone to magnify human circumstances and minimize Divine workings. That is a natural tendency because “*the flesh*” is primarily impressed with “*the things that are seen.*” Consider what had happened before the disciples arrived on the other side of the lake with the Master. They were in the midst of a sea, tossed with waves, with a storm upon them (Matt 14:24). They had witnessed what they thought was a “*spirit,*” walking toward them on the stormy waters (Mk 6:49). At the word of Jesus, Peter had climbed out of the boat, walked on the water, began sinking, and was lifted up out of the murky deep by Jesus (Matt 14:28-31). Now, the Spirit sums up the trip with these words: “*and when they had passed over.*”

This is the manner of life in the Spirit, and in this text it is being lived out in the crucible

of the lives of the disciples. Much later, after the apostles were beaten and commanded not to speak, they departed *“rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”* and were found daily in the Temple and *“in every house”* teaching and preaching Jesus Christ (Acts 5:40-42). When an angel delivered Peter from prison, he reported to the brethren what had happened *“and went into another place”* (Acts 12:5-17). After Paul was stoned in Lystra and the disciples gathered around him, it is written: *“he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe”* (Acts 14:20).

The point is that, in Christ, what follows trials and testing diminishes their impact, so that they are more easily forgotten. Jesus likened this to a woman giving birth to a child. *“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”* (John 16:21-22).

There are those who cannot forget the storm that was on the sea, or sinking in stormy waters, or having to be rebuked because of doubting instead of believing. But for those who will remain by faith with Jesus, the blessings that follow trials make them appear quite small.

THE LAND OF GENNESARET. This was a plain on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, which is sometimes called *“the lake of Gennesaret”* (Lk 5:1 *“Gennesaret”* ; Matt 4:18 *“Galilee”*). Historically, this was a piece of land noted for its fertility and beauty. It was about four miles long and three miles wide. The following are recorded to have been found there: all kinds of grain and vegetables, rice, walnut trees, palms, melons, cucumbers – all in abundance. McClintok

This was a figure of the spiritually fertile places that would be found in Christ Jesus; domains where more diverse and abundant fruit is found. Ultimately, this portrayed the *“heavenly places,”* where *“all spiritual blessings”* are found. It also portrayed certain places and fellowships where greater degrees of edification and encouragement can be found. David alluded to this when he wrote, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! . . . for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore”* (Psa 133:1-3). Capernaum was, in fact, in the land of Gennesaret, as John’s account confirms (John 6:24). This was the city where Jesus relocated after leaving Nazareth (Matt 4:13-14). That region physically reflected the rich nature of Christ’s ministry like the land of Canaan reflected the vast and nourishing riches that are hidden in Christ Jesus: brooks, fountains depths that spring forth, wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, honey, iron, brass (Deut 8:7-9).

THEY KNEW HIM. As soon as Jesus and His disciples exited from the ship, the people on the shore recognized Him. John tells us that the people who were fed by the five loaves and two fishes returned, and found that Jesus was no longer there. *“When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus”* (John 6:24).

From one point of view, Jesus looked ordinary – like any other Jew. That is why the woman at the well marveled saying, *“How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?”* (John 4:9). However, from, another point of view, those who had heard His words and witnessed His works could not think of Him as an ordinary Jew. He stood out among the other Jews, for it was HIM, not His disciples, that they *“knew,”* or recognized.

One of the indispensable ministries of the Prophets in general, and the Gospel in

particular, is that they set before our hearts and minds the real Jesus. **It should be known by all of us that only when the witness of our lives matches the record God has given of His Son can He be seen in us to any degree.** Those who have some genuine acquaintance with the Christ of the Gospel will recognize Him in those in whom He and His word dwell richly (Col 1:17; 3:16).

“55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was.”

There is something about the real Christ that, when He is perceived, elicits a genuine interest in the welfare of others. Whereas institutionalism, moves its zealots to “*compass sea and land to make one proselyte,*” or convert to the system (Matt 23:15), acquaintance with Jesus awakens more noble motives. It ought to be apparent that Jesus will not devote His wisdom and power to promote purely human agendas. When He is properly seen, therefore, there will be no conscious connection of Him with such selfish motives and institutional agendas.

THEY RAN THROUGH THAT WHOLE REGION. The region would have been about twelve square miles. Notwithstanding its size, the people quickly spread throughout the whole region with the sole objective of getting people to Jesus. Matthew says “*they sent into all that country round about*” (Matt 14:35). This is not the first time this kind of response to the presence of Jesus took place: “*. . . they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy . . . they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils . . . they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils . . . they brought young children to Him , that He should touch them . . .*” (Mat 4:24; 8:16; Mk 1:32; 10:13).

Keep in mind, no one commanded them to do this. The Lord did not send His disciples ahead, directing them to tell the people to gather the multitudes to Him. However, people who had been knowingly exposed to Jesus did this without having to be commanded to do so.

If you enhance the response of these people many times, you will get a small picture of what happened in the early church. “*Therefore they that were scattered abroad [by persecution, 8:1-3] went every where preaching the word*” (Acts 8:4). There is a vast difference between Sinai and Zion, law and grace, and fear versus joy!

THEY BEGAN TO CARRY. Unaware of any attending inconvenience, the people began to “*carry about in beds those that were sick.*” We get an idea about how many men it took to carry a single pallet in the healing of the palsied man – “*who was carried by four men*” (Mk 2:3). Matthew says, “*they brought unto Him all that were diseased*” (Matt 14:35). From one point of view, it is evident that the presence of Jesus alters men’s perception of what is important, as well as what is possible. **Where thinking remains spiritually sterile and fundamentally self-centered, Jesus has not been perceived.** It is also quite possible that He is not even in the area in which such sterility and insensitivity exist.

WHERE THEY HEARD HE WAS. The people brought “*those that were sick*” to the place “*where they heard Jesus was.*” One version reads, “*wherever they heard He was.*” NIV The idea is that Jesus was on the move, journeying throughout the region. Wherever He was, the word went out, for He was absolutely unique, compelling the people to gather unto Him. There is a sense in which Jesus came to the people. There is another sense in which the people came to Him. The perspective is this: **Jesus came within reach of the people, and then the people made their way to Him.**

There are a few exceptions to this rule, such as the impotent man on one of the porches of the pool of Bethesda (John 5:5-6). Most of the time, however the people had to make some

effort to get where Jesus was. Aside from the times when **multitudes** did this, coming to Jesus is also seen in individuals like Bartimaeus calling after Jesus (Mk 10:46-48), the Syrophenician woman pursuing Him (Matt 15:22-28), and the woman with an issue of blood pushing through the press (Matt 9:20-22).

There is something else to be seen in this. **The Person of Jesus Christ is the dominant consideration – the heart and core of all valid spiritual quests. The people did not rally to the disciples, but to Jesus. When they began carrying people open their beds, it was to get them where Jesus was – not where healing was, but where Jesus was!**

THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST. The centrality of Christ is strongly affirmed by the Spirit. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us **by his Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb 1:1-2). And again it is written, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**” (John 14:6).

This is not a mere creedal centrality – something that is intellectually acknowledged, yet not spiritually embraced. If the individual does not live with Jesus at the center, there really is no point to confessing that He is central. If men do not depend upon Him, His power becomes inaccessible to them. If they do not see Him as God has presented Him in “*the record*,” they simply will not come to Him or bring anyone else to Him.

“ 56 And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole.”

WITHERSOEVER HE ENTERED. Men must not **take for granted** that Jesus will seek them out, or that a magical hour will come when they will consciously be granted access to Him. In this text, Jesus is on the move, journeying through “*villages*,” “*cities*,” and the “*country*,” or farm land. Yet, when Jesus “*entered*” one of these areas, it was immediately known, and the people began gathering there, bringing their sick with them.

Men are responsible to obtain what God puts within their reach. They are here to aggressively seek Him (Acts 17:26-27). It is wrong for those who neglect being where Jesus is to suddenly call upon Him in the time of trouble as though they had a genuine interest in Him. Our world cannot revolve our own persons, and yet leave us free to pursue Jesus.

In this text the truth of Scripture is lived out in flesh and blood: “**Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near**” (Isa 55:6). When God says, “*I bring My righteousness near*” (Isa 46:13), men are obligated to avail themselves of it. When it is declared that God is “*in the midst of thee*” (Isa 12:6), it is profoundly sinful to ignore it. If one wonders how it can be known that the Lord is present, consider that His works testify to His presence. As David well said, “*for that Thy name is near Thy wondrous works declare*” (Psa 75:1).

THEY LAID THEM IN THE STREETS. Here the people did with multitudes what the four men did with the palsied man (Mk 2:3-4) – put them before the face of the Lord. They did not place them in the streets, in a convenient location, and then seek Jesus to come there. They rather determined where Jesus was, and brought the sick there – in the streets through which Jesus was traveling.

It is still true that men must find out where the Lord is going, and get into that path, otherwise a blessing cannot be obtained. If He is leading sons to glory (Heb 2:10), then men must get into that path to glory if they expect to be receive a blessing from Him. For us, that is the “highway” that has been raised up for “wayfaring men” – “the way of holiness” (Isa 35:8)

THEY BESOUGHT HIM. Other versions read, “begged,” NKJV “entreating,” NASB “requesting,” BBE “implored,” ESV “prayed,” GENEVA “calling upon,” YLT and “beseech.” MONTGOMERY These people did not take for granted that Jesus was eager to resolve their difficulties, or that He did not mind them taking matters into their own hands, assuming that a “touch” would be sufficient. Jesus did say, “**ASK** and it shall be given unto you” (Matt 7:8). James once said, “ye have not because ye **ask** not” (James 4:2).

ONLY A TOUCH OF THE HEM. Notice the humility of the request. They only sought to touch “the border of His garment,” or its “hem” (Matt 14:35). It appears they had heard of the woman who touched the hem of His garment and was made whole (Matt 9:20).

AS MANY AS TOUCHED HIM. Mark is careful to state the case so as to glorify Christ: “as many as touched **HIM** were made whole.” Matthew says, “as many as touched were made perfectly whole” (Matt 14:36). In this case, Jesus did not apparently draw the attention of the people to each case, as He did with the woman healed of an issue of blood (Lk 8:45-46). Too, **only** those who “touched” Jesus were made whole. It was not enough to simply be in the crowd.

JOHN’S ACCOUNT. John provides some further insight into the occasion. Mark and Matthew accent the people who were from that region. John tells us particularly of the people Jesus fed on the previous day. Having taken “shipping,” they finally found Jesus on the other side. They asked Him, “*Rabbi, when did you get here?*” NASB (John 6:25). They had not stayed with Jesus, and thus did not see Him leave. The question certainly sounded innocent – but it was not. That is why Jesus answered them, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled*” (John 6:26). They saw in Jesus a convenient way to fill their bellies at no cost to themselves. For them, the time to seek Jesus was when they were hungry. Until that time, they appeared to be completely oblivious of the Lord’s whereabouts, or what He was doing.

Jesus did not bother to answer them, nor did He share with them how many people had been healed when they touched the border of His garment. There actually had been a lot of activity by the time they came. Jesus had been going throughout the villages, cities, and country, and masses of people had been following Him. Citizens of the area had been gathering the sick and bringing them to Jesus, and as many as touched Him were made whole. But all these people could ask was, “*When did you come here?*” NKJV

How many times I have confronted such questions. Even though the Lord has been working, people are being edified, and men, woman, and children are increasing in faith and spiritual understanding, I hear things like, “How long have you had a house church?” Such people are no more interested in the working of the Lord than the interrogators of this text.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 74

“ Mark 7:1 Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2 And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.” (Mark 7:1-4; Matthew 15: 1-2)

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of the Lord Jesus, when He “dwelt among us” (John 1:14), and “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38), introduced men more thoroughly to the Divine nature. It exposed fallen man to Divine manners and responses. Although men were not aware of what was happening, they were being confronted with God’s response to inquiring multitudes, earnest seekers, casual followers, the curious, and the undiscerning. They were visibly and audibly faced with the Living God within the framework of daily life. Prior to Jesus, men were only exposed to the Lord of all at “sundry times and in divers manners.” Actual public exposure to the Divine nature was rare – such as at Mount Sinai, and even then, it was in extremely limited measures. However, in the life of Jesus Christ, the “only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), the glory of the Lord, though veiled, was seen in the Temple, in the synagogue, in the streets, and in the houses. They saw Divine reactions, initiatives, and observations at wedding feasts, special dinners, and the ordained feasts of the Jews, as well as the normalities of life. It is possible to look at the Gospel records simply as events, forgetting that in those events the nature of the Living God was being revealed. Christ’s ministry among men placed before them what it meant for Him to be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). It was also a commentary on what was involved in pleasing and displeasing the God of heaven.

“ Mk 7:1 Then came together unto Him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.”

The real Jesus draws the interest of all kinds of people – even religious leaders who have remained undisturbed at the helm of religion. The Pharisees and scribes were religious authorities, purposed experts in the Law of Moses. They could define proper conduct and good manners – at least that is how they presented themselves.

The scribes and Pharisees were noted for their righteousness. Jesus referred to it as “the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” declaring that if men’s righteousness did not exceed it, they would “in no case enter into kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). Jesus acknowledged their expertise in the letter of the Law saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All

therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matt 23:2-3).

Yet, these men were spiritual hindrances, blocking up the entrance to the kingdom of God, Jesus said to them, “*ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in*” (Matt 23:13). Although the people had apparently not seen it, Jesus said to them, “*ye devour widows houses,*” and have “*omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith*” (Matt 23:14,23).

From one point of view, you would think that Jesus would repel such men – men He described as being “*full of hypocrisy and iniquity*” within (Matt 23:28). He hurled these words at them: “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*” (Matt 23:33). Why would men like this come to Jesus at all? Why would they listen to Him, or travel from a distance to be exposed to Him and His teaching? Yet, the Scriptures say they “*came to Jesus*” (Matt 15:1), and “*came together unto Him*” (Mk 7:1). They “*watched*” Him (Lk 6:7), “*asked*” Him questions (Mk 7:5), and once brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to Him (John 8:3). Why did they not simply ignore Jesus?

There is a compelling quality in the Divine nature, even when it is veiled with a body of flesh and blood. Men cannot easily ignore the Lord – even when they are not perceptive of who He really is. And why is this so? It is because there is a vast chasm between the human nature and the Divine nature – between sinful men and the righteous Lord. An unspeakably large moral gulf exists between fallen men and He who “*came down from heaven*” (John 6:51). **In Jesus men were confronted with the sharp contrast between God and men.**

Isaiah spoke of the remarkable difference between the God of heaven and man, who was originally in His image and likeness . “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isa 55:8-9). In fact, God upbraided men when they began to think He was like them. “*But unto the wicked God saith . . . These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; **thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself :***” (Psa 50:16-21). The more common professed teachers make the Lord to appear to men, the greater the practical distance that forms between them and the God of heaven. When men depict the Living God as fitting in comfortably with society, and willing to become involved in all of the ambitions of men, they are grossly misrepresenting Him and making Him inaccessible to the people.

When the Lord Jesus was among men, they did receive this impression of difference. His teaching was vastly different from that of other teachers (Matt 7:29). Men had never seen works like the ones He did (Mk 2:12). **It was this uniqueness that drew men to Him – even His enemies.** The Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus out of Jerusalem because of the abrasive difference in His teaching and works. It is true that they came as critics – but they came.

This is a penetrating aspect of the Lord having no respect of persons. As it is written of Him, “*which regardeth not persons*” (Deut 10:17), “*neither doth God respect any person*” (2 Sam 14:14), and “*God is no respecter of persons*” (Acts 10:34). While this is true of the Lord’s approach to men, in that He grants no special favors to people because of their natural status, or give advantages because of rewards men imagine themselves to be giving to Him (Deut 10:17b), **it also applies to His remarkable drawing power.** Of their own volition all kinds of people came to Jesus. Publicans and sinners (Matt 9:10), rich people (Lk 18:18-23; 19:2), mothers (Lk 18:15; Matt 15:22), rulers (Matt 9:18), lawyers (Matt 22:35), common people (Mk 12:37) Sadducees (Matt 22:23), chief rulers of the synagogues (John 12:42), immoral people (Lk 7:38-39), and

those who were looking for the Messiah (John 1:45).

The point is that the real Jesus shatters every religious and social barrier known to men. His presence disrupts the normality of life, and breaks down social and religious distinctions. In this text, even the *“Pharisees and the scribes”* were disrupted by the presence of Jesus. Even though driven by ignoble motives, they could not ignore Him. Any other kind of Jesus is wholly spurious, and is to be given no heed. Such is just *“another Jesus”* (2 Cor 11:4).

“ 2 And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.”

There are some foolish sayings promoted in the Christian community. Among them is an expression something like this: “Don’t look at me, look to the Lord.” It all sounds innocent enough, and perhaps even a little humble. But it does not reflect the manner of the Kingdom of God. Jesus observed that people would, in fact, arrive at a proper conclusion about His disciples by observing them: *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35). Paul urged his readers, *“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me”* (1 Cor 4:16). And again, *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”* (1 Cor 11:1). And again, *“be followers together of me”* (Phil 3:17). The Thessalonians were commended for becoming followers of Paul and his co-laborers (1 Thess 1:6).

The Divine mandate to *“Let your light so shine before men”* (Matt 5:16) postulates that men are watching us. Now, we see this being lived out as the Pharisees and scribes observe the disciples of Christ.

THEY SAW SOME OF HIS DISCIPLES. The disciples were not doing anything unusual – just eating bread, or consuming some food. How much more ordinary can anything be than eating food? Yet, the Pharisees and scribes beheld HOW they were eating their food. It is possible that a person may imagine that what they do is not the business of anyone else. But men will not honor such an imagination. When human conduct conflicts with what a person thinks is right, they will not only observe it, but form some tentative opinion about it. No person lives *“unto”* himself (Rom 14:7-8).

EATING WITH DEFILED HANDS. This is not speaking of sanitary defilement, but of ceremonial defilement – *“unwashen hands.”* It is of interest that they did not observe how **Jesus** ate, but how His disciples ate. Earlier, certain of the Pharisees had observed Jesus’ disciples plucking and the heads from grain, eating them on the Sabbath day. They said it was against the law of Moses to do such a thing (Matt 12:1-2). Now they will criticize the disciples from another perspective.

THEY FOUND FAULT. Other versions read, *“they complained.”* TNT That is, they were critical of what they did, persuaded that they were in error, making a mistake, or flawed in their conduct. We know from the objection they will site that they were watching the disciples with a mind to find something wrong – some point on they could register a complaint against Jesus Himself.

It is true that the ungodly watch the godly with a mind to finding something wrong with what they do. This is a trait that the devil develops and cultures in those who are subject to his devices. You may recall that Daniel’s opponents *“sought to find an occasion against”* him (Dan 6:4-5). Jeremiah said of his critics, *“All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him”* (Jer 20:10). They watched him, hoping to find some flaw in his conduct that would diminish the weight of his words, and cause them to feel more comfortable in their wicked

ways. During his trial Job lamented, “*Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me*” (Job 19:18-19). David confessed that “*false witnesses*” rose up against him (Psa 27:12), and laid wait for his soul (Psa 71:10). It is still true, “*The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him*” (Psa 37:32). Thus, even with the Lord Himself present among them, the Pharisees and scribes looked critically upon His disciples, seeking to find an occasion against them.

Paul admonished Titus to show himself a “*pattern of good works,*” also employing “*sound speech*” in order that those were contradicting him “*may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you*” (Tit 2:7-8). We are also exhorted to conduct our lives “*without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*” (Phil 2:14-15). All of this presumes that we are being observed by the world, even though they may not bother to tell us so. This observation is driven by an inward awareness that life in Christ does, in fact, work a change in men. Men look for flaws in the godly because it makes them feel more comfortable in their sin, offering them an occasion to say the godly are not really superior in their manners at all. Thus, they imagine, salvation is a mere delusion.

Self-centeredness and iniquity dulls a person to this circumstance, moving one to cause God and His word to be blasphemed. Thus we read of thoughtless conduct among the believers causing the Word of God to be “*blasphemed*” (Tit 2:5), and giving occasion to the adversary to “*speak reproachfully*” (1Tim 5:14). Our text, however, will confirm that all criticism from the adversaries is not justified, and that we are **not** to shape our conduct merely to remove the possibility of their unjust criticism.

“ 3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.”

HOLDING THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS. The objection raised against the disciples was that, by **not** washing their hands before they ate, they had “*transgressed the tradition of the elders*” (Matt 15:2). To them, “*unwashed hands*” equaled “*defiled hands.*” Now Mark makes this remarkable statement: “*The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders*” NIV (Mark 7:2-3).

“**The elders**” were among Israel from the very beginning. They were leaders among the people. Before Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, and in accordance with the word of the Lord, he “*called for the elders of Israel,*” outlining what was to be done (Ex 3:16; 12:21). When Moses went up to the mount from which the Law was given, he was directed to take representatives from “*the elders of Israel*” (Ex 17:5-6; 18:12). When Joshua gathered the tribes of Israel together, he had the “*elders of Israel*” present themselves before God (Josh 24:1). During the time of Samuel, “*the elders of Israel*” came together to him to request a king (1 Sam 8:4). Solomon also assembled “*the elders of Israel*” for holy work (1 Kgs 8:1). During the time of Ezekiel the prophet, “*the elders of Israel*” came to him, and God directed him to speak certain convicting words to them (Ezek 14:1). When Peter was being tried by the Jewish council, he addressed the “*rulers of the people, and the elders of Israel*” (Acts 4:8).

The point is that this was, in fact, a legitimate office from the very beginning of Israel. It was not so with the office of Pharisee or Sadducee. They came into being later, at the behest of men, not God. But it was not so with “*the elders of Israel.*” **That office had Divine legitimacy.**

And yet, those men were not free to create new rules for the people. That is what Peter referred to as being “*lords over God’s heritage*” (1 Pet 5:2).

The “*elders*” were ranking officers in the Sanhedrin, and were considered spiritual rulers among the people. They joined with the “*chief priests and scribes*” in persecuting Jesus and plotting His death (Matt 16:21). This body of people challenged the authority of Jesus, namely because He contradicted their own teaching (Matt 21:23). Jesus taught His disciples that He would be “*rejected by the elders*” (Mk 8:31).

THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS. The “*tradition*” of reference was the teaching, rituals, and ordinances of the elders. It was not the actual word of the Lord, but what they conceived the Word of the Lord to mean. More precisely, it was the implications of the Law according to their own interpretation. Mark provides us some details about this particular tradition. “*And when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots*” NASB (Mark 7:4). Thus, they were of the opinion that being in public places, where Gentiles and sinners congregated, brought a certain external defilement to the people. Therefore, they would not eat unless they first washed their hands.

According to historical authorities, the actual tradition reads, “**they wash hands for common food**, but for the tithe, and for the first offering, and for that which is holy, they dip them, and for the sin offering; for if the hands are defiled; the body is defiled.” JOHN GILL

Under the Law, the high priests and priests were required to wash their hands at the laver of washing before entering the tabernacle (Ex 30:19-21). A priest who had touched anything unclean had to wash his hands before eating “*of the holy things*,” provided exclusively to the priests (Lev 22:6). This was clear enough for all to understand.

The “*elders*,” however, took these texts and constructed an additional requirement for all of the people. Whenever any Jew went to the market, it was now required that they wash before they ate anything. Now, in our text, the Pharisees and scribes find “*fault*” with the disciples of Christ because they did not honor this tradition – this purely human application of Scripture.

There remains this dreadful tendency of thinking that a legitimate function in the body of Christ authorizes a person in that office to make and impose rules upon the saints – “*traditions*.” The office is thus thought to carry with it the authority to impose personal opinion upon men. Therefore from popes to elders, and preachers to professors, men are still imposing “*traditions*” upon the household of faith. Therefore we are warned, “*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*” (Col 2:8). It may take the form of “*forty days of purpose*,” or a methodology employed to recover from sin, or what you say when a person is baptized. Whatever it may be, a “*tradition*” of this sort cannot be supported with a specific word from God. Like the tradition of washing hands, it represents a purely human view of Scripture. Such views cannot be equated with the Scriptures themselves, and cannot be bound upon men.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 75

“Mark 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? 6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.” (Mark 7:5-8; Matthew 15:1-2,7-9)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus’ earthly ministry exposed the nature and total unacceptability of merely traditional religion. He did not speak extensively about the idolatrous practices of Rome, or the abusive slavery that was extant throughout that empire. Nor, indeed, did He deal with the vanity of Emperor worship and all things that surrounded it. He did launch into dissertations about the evils of a nation chosen by God being dominated in their own land by a foreign government. All of these things would have been subjects for books, pamphlets, and crusades – had Jesus thought like His professed followers do in our time. When it came to exposing adverse conditions, the Messiah shined the light upon the vanity of religion – the religion that was found among His own people. He blasted their leaders, giving them no honor, save for their role in making the Word of God known (Matt 23:2-3). Among other things, this reveals the extreme danger of corrupted religion and an erroneous religious emphasis. The presence of Jesus does not sanctify defiled religion – even if He attends the Temple and the synagogues where it is indulged and promoted. This by no means sanctifies a continual haranguing of what is wrong, to the exclusion of declaring what is true. However, it does confirm that **participating in the life of Christ requires the abandonment of sterile and spurious religion**. I know this is not a popular consideration. However, it is still true, no one can partake of the Lord’s table **and** the table of demons (1 Cor 10:21).

“Mk 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?”

FROM JERUSALEM. Mark says these Pharisees and scribes “*came from Jerusalem*” (7:1). Matthew says Jerusalem was where they were permanently located – “*which were from Jerusalem*” (Matt 15:1). If there was one city in all of earth which could have given men an advantage, it was Jerusalem. Solomon referred to it as “*the city of David, which is Zion*” (1 Kgs 8:1). Alamothe referred to it as “*the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High*” (Psa 46:4). David called it “*the city of the great King*” (Psa 48:2). Jeremiah lamented that it was once known as “*The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth*” (Lam 2:15). Jeremiah prophesied that this city would be called “*the throne of the Lord*” (Jer 3:17). Nehemiah referred to it as “*the holy city,*”

even when it lay in shambles (Neh 11:1,18). Matthew also called it “*the holy city*” (Matt 4:5). Zechariah said it would be called “*the city of truth*” (Zech 8:3). Jeremiah said that a time would come when Jerusalem would be called, “*The Lord our righteousness*” (Jer 33:16). Ezekiel said it would be called “*The Lord is there*” (Ezek 48:35). When Daniel was in captivity in Babylon, he prayed “*toward Jerusalem*” (Dan 6:10). God Himself said of Jerusalem, “*Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen Me to put My name there*” (1 Kgs 11:36). Jerusalem was, indeed, a city of great spiritual advantage.

It simply was not possible to be from a better city. This was the premier city in all of the world. If men can be sanctified by a place or an area, surely the city of Jerusalem will qualify to confer that sanctification – and that is where these “*Pharisees and scribes*” were from. If people’s heritage makes them acceptable, or confers the ultimate advantage, we should expect these men to rise above the masses in their comprehension, and be able to traffic in holy realms. But, alas, we will find that this is not at all the case. Rather, these men were among the worst of all people. Jesus spoke more harshly to them than to anyone else.

IT IS TRUTH THAT SANCTIFIES. When it comes to being sanctified, or set apart, it is “*the truth*” that accomplishes the work – the truth of God. Jesus prayed to the Father, “*Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth*” (John 17:17). Within the framework of the New Covenant, it is Christ Himself, together with the Holy Spirit, who sets us apart unto God, granting the ability to comprehend and handle the truth (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 5:26; Heb 2:11; 10:10; 13:12). Jesus referred to Himself as “*THE truth*” (John 14:6), and to the Holy Spirit as “*the Spirit of truth*” (John 14:17). Jude also reminds us that we are “*sanctified by God the Father,*” who is, in fact, “*the God of truth*” (Deut 32:4).

It is not enough to embrace a religion with an illustrious heritage, or to be found where the power of God was once realized. That is like coming “*from Jerusalem.*” The truth must be personally and willingly seen and embraced by each individual.

WHY??? These men from Jerusalem asked Jesus, “*Why don't Your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?*” Matthew says they asked, “*Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread*” (Matt 15:2). Here, the measure of acceptable conduct was **not** the Law, which was given by God. It was **not** the Psalms and the Prophets, which interpreted the Law of God and defined priorities. They made no reference to John the Baptist and the necessity of adhering to his message – and he was the one who prepared the way for the Lord. Their standard of conduct was not the Law, but “*the tradition of the elders.*” In their minds, “*the elders*” were the ones who could flawlessly adapt the laws of God to the behavior of men. To them the “*tradition of the elders*” was the touchstone of truth and the measure of acceptance. That tradition was exalted, extolled, and obeyed by them.

This type of appraisal is now found within the church. Men have embraced traditional views, and use them to measure the acceptance of those who wear the name of Jesus. They use such cherished phrases as “the great commission,” “the work of missions,” “youth ministry,” “the free will of man,” “premillennialism,” “the plan of salvation,” “the sinner’s prayer,” “the thousand year reign of Christ,” “pre-tribulation,” “post tribulation,” “the rapture of the church,” “the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues,” “slain in the Holy Spirit,” etc. None of these expressions are found in Scripture, and yet they are treated as though they were the word of God itself. Men are judged by their acceptance or rejection of this language. They insert it into their creeds and statements of faith, and divide the body of Christ with them. If men do not accept this language, they are often viewed as

possibly not being “Christians” at all.

The fact that this approach to religion remains prominent within the professed church confirms its source. These are nothing less than examples of “*doctrines of devils*” [demons], perpetrated by our adversary the devil (1 Tim 4:1). Do not be surprised if you are asked why you or your brethren do not honor these hoary traditions.

“ 6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

YOU HYPOCRITES! Those who are familiar with the Gospels know that Jesus was intolerant of religious pretension – when people simulated, or feigned, identity with God. This has become very popular in our day, but little is known of it because a new breed of teacher and theologian has been popularized. The emphasis of religion has shifted from preparation for glory to living in this world. Human relationships have been exalted above heavenly ones. The outer man has been accented above the inner man. These conditions have opened the door for all manner of false teachers and erroneous doctrines – just like they did in the time when Jesus “*dwelt among*” men.

Jesus does straight to the point, declaring that these men were the subjects of Isaiah’s gripping denunciation of wayward Israel. Matthew also records these words (Matt 15:7-8). They were from a generation that existed long before them, who mouthed their religion while remaining fundamentally corrupt within. Just as surely as there is “*a generation*” noted for serving the Lord (Psa 22:30), there is also “*a generation that set not their heart aright*” (Psa 78:8). These generations span the history of the world, and are found in all ages. Jesus referred to them as “*wheat*” and “*tares*” (Matt 13:25,29-30), “*children of the kingdom*” and “*children of the wicked one*” (Matt 13:38), “*good*” fish and “*bad*” fish (Matt 13:48), “*the wicked*” and “*the just*” (Matt 13:49), and five “*wise*” virgins, and five “*foolish*” virgins (Matt 25:1-2). Paul referred to them as “*vessels*” to “*honor*,” and “*vessels*” to “*dishonor*” (2 Tim 2:20). John referred to them as “*the children of God*” and “*the children of the devil*” (1 John 3:10).

In all of the above cases, the unacceptable people were depicted as being outwardly among believers, who are the only accepted people. They were, in other words, representing themselves as being part of the people of God. Here, Jesus refers to such people as “*hypocrites*.” The word “*hypocrite*” means “an actor,” or one who assumes the character of another. STRONG’S They are no more real than a person who puts on a gorilla costume and pretends as though that is what he is. In His scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus referred to them as “*hypocrites*” no less than seven times on a single occasion (Matt 23:13,14,15,23,25,27,29). When it came to the matter of religion, they were nothing more than stage-actors – pretenders.

WHEN THE LIPS AND HEART ARE OUT OF SYNCH. The prophecy to which Jesus refers is found in Isaiah 29:13. “*Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth , and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me.*” Elsewhere Isaiah referred to Israel as “*an hypocritical nation*” (Isa 10:6), just as Jesus referred to the Pharisees and scribes. His words are a Divine assessment of such a people.

This is an approach to religion that goes no deeper than the mouth, never getting into the heart. It is nothing more than talk – talk that is not supported by character. It is in the same

category as a man professing a profound love for God while he is inebriated, drunk with liquor and out of his mind. God not only rejects such talk, he rejects the talker as well. When a person's heart is "far from" God, "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa 10:4). Such a person has no actual appetite for God – he does "thirst" for God and "long" for Him (Psa 63:1). This is a person who has a preference for the things of this world, whether it is fame or fortune, honor or riches. Such can go a long time without any thought of the Lord, quest for His blessing, or involvement in His statutes and judgments. Yet, they insist on being considered devote, religious, and [in our day] a "Christian." In reality, they are nothing more than a hypocrite – an actor on a stage.

WHEN WORSHIP IS VAIN. Is it really possible to absolutely waste your time in, what is considered to be, "worship?" Indeed it is! Both Matthew and Mark record the same words: "They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." NIV This is a most arresting denunciation. Isaiah said, "their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men." Another version reads, "Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men." NIV Their concept of "worship" and the "fear of the Lord" had been strictly formed by men, with not so much as a word from God Himself being used to buttress what they did. It is much like the "praise and worship" emphasis that is permeating the whole of present-day Christendom.

Jesus says such "worship" is vain, pointless, futile, and fruitless. It never reaches heaven, but is nothing more than a stench in God's nostrils (Amos 5:21). **A fundamentally corrupt heart cannot give anything acceptable to God.** Even their religious activity is an abomination to Him. As it is written, "unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is **nothing pure** ; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15). Confirming he is speaking about religious people, Paul continues, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him" 16). The "worship" of such people is nothing more than an exercise in vanity. It never rises above the place in which it is pretentiously offered. This Divine perspective has some rather alarming implications.

" 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."

When it comes to the subjects of worshiping and serving the Lord, what is involved in embracing the traditions of men? What has really happened when any people approach God purely upon the basis of what men have surmised from Scripture, or have imagined that God requires from them? Those who have been caught in the vortex of religious tradition may very well provide palatable explanations for why they have done so. Perhaps they will excuse themselves from all wrong by saying that is what they were taught from their youth. Or, they might explain that this is what their church teaches, and they really have never heard anything else. There is a sense in which there is some validity to these excuses. There may very well have been those who "shut up" the kingdom of God to them (Matt 23:13), took away "the key of knowledge" (Lk 11:52), and led them to "fall into the ditch" (Matt 15:14). And, indeed, such teachers will give account for their despicable leadership before they are thrust out from the presence of the Lord.

However, this by no means frees the followers of such pretenders from their own responsibility to God. The Creator has strategically and purposefully placed every person both in time and place in order that they might "seek the Lord," to "feel after Him, and find Him" (Acts 17:26-27). There is also the consistent testimony of nature (Psa 19:1-3), the work of the law written in their heart, the testimony of the conscience (Rom 2:15), and the sound of the Gospel (Rom 10:14-15). Those who embrace "the tradition of men" are not altogether innocent.

LAYING ASIDE THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD. Mark says the people laid "aside the

commandment of God.” Matthew says they “*transgressed the commandment of God*” (Matt 15:3). What does it mean to “*lay aside*” God’s commandment? Other versions read, “*neglecting,*” NASB “*let go of,*” NIV “*abandon,*” NRSV “*leave,*” RSV “*turning away from,*” BBE “*disregard,*” NAB “*put aside,*” NJB “*ignore,*” NLT “*forgotten about,*” IE “*give up,*” WILLIAMS and “*regard and give up and ask to depart from you.*” AMPLIFIED

All of this presumes some exposure to “*the commandment of God.*” For the Pharisees and scribes, it may have been hearing John the Baptist, or Jesus Himself. It may have been hearing the Scriptures read in the synagogue (Acts 13:27). For those in our time, it may have been exposure to the Ten Commandments, Scriptures read at a wedding or a funeral, some great hymn of the faith, or some preaching or reading via communication media. Remember, the Word of God in any amount is “*quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb 4:12). It probes the heart, enters the conscience, and distinguishes between the soul and the spirit of a man. It calls out for the attention of men, testifying of their Creator, and introducing them to His will – however small the measure of that word may be.

The smallest segment of God’s word, or any of its commandments, is sufficient to lead one into the acute awareness of the Lord, and the fact that He is to be sought. Men cannot excuse themselves from the influences wrought upon their hearts when they are exposed to “*the commandment of God.*”

Yet, when men choose to embrace religious tradition in the place of “*the knowledge of God*” and “*the truth,*” there is something that they must do – something for which they will be held strictly accountable. They must “*turn away their ears from the truth*” BEFORE they can embrace fables (2 Tim 4:4). They must thrust the Word of God from them (Acts 13:46) and choose instead to subject their hearts and minds to strictly fictitious views of the Word. I fear that we have all been exposed to such people, and have witnessed the miserable results of their preferences.

HOLDING THE TRADITION OF MEN. Other versions read “*hold to,*” NASB “*holding on to,*” NIV “*hold fast,*” RSV “*observe,*” GENEVA and “*cling to.*” NAB The idea is that “*the commandment of God*” specifically, and the Word of God generally, urges the heart to let loose of mere human tradition. It probes the heart, pointing out the vanity of tradition, and the power of truth. Yet, those who love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43) only tighten their grip on tradition, refusing to let it go. Be sure of this: you cannot hold truth in one hand and the “*traditions of men*” in the other. To hold tradition, you must let go of the truth, and to hold the truth, you must let go of tradition. Further, when it comes to religion, you must hold one or the other.

It does not seem from Scripture that the Pharisees and scribes appeared to be letting go of God’s commandment to maintain their grasp on tradition. They did “*outwardly appear righteous unto men*” (Matt 23:28) – but they were not. They had forgotten about the truth.

Jesus goes on to mention some of their cherished traditions. He does not leave it up to the people to figure out what they were: “*as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.*” Those “*washings*” were in a general category of external cleansings and procedures that did not require the involvement of the heart. They could be done perfunctorily, or by mere habit or routine – like the contemporary “*praise and worship*” service, the popular “*forty days of purpose*” (Evangelicals) or “*lent*” (Catholic), or other forms of codified conduct.

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By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 76

“ Mark 7:9 And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10 For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. 12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; 13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.” (Mark 7:9-13; Matthew 15:3-6)

INTRODUCTION

How serious is it when a person’s religion is bounded and driven by the “*traditions of men?*” – when religious customs and manners are treated as though they were given by God, and the approval of men is determined by them? Are there any consequences to such an approach to religion? Jesus will affirm that any religious conduct (application of Scripture or interpretation of God’s commands) that is determined by human wisdom or opinion, carries with it most serious consequences. This has all been occasioned by a question by the Pharisees and scribes: “*Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?*” (7:5). Some might have simply dismissed the question, saying that each person has a right to his own opinion, and that the disciples really saw things differently. However, that is not the approach of Christ. When any man attempts to bind on another religious conduct that reflects purely human opinion, a most serious offence has been committed. Our “application,” or interpretation of Scripture must not be in fundamental disagreement with the nature of God and the focus of His Word. Nor, indeed, are men allowed the luxury of attempting to make the Word of God support their carnal prejudice. Such an approach, Jesus affirms, removes all power from the commandment for that person.

“ Mk 7:9 And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”

FULL WELL. Other versions read, “*All too well,*” NKJV “*nicely set aside,*” NASB “*have a fine way,*” NIV “*How ingeniously.*” NJB The word translated “*Full well*” has an interesting lexical meaning: “distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be pleasing . . . affecting the mind agreeably, comforting and confirming.” THAYER The idea is that the elders, Pharisees and scribes had worked hard to develop their traditions. Their aim was to justify their own conduct, which contradicted the Divine commandment, and they appeared to have done a good job. At least they now felt good about their deviate conduct. Their religion now justified the way they thought and acted, even though it was totally unacceptable to God.

It is no wonder that believers are warned about human philosophy and tradition: “*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after*

the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col 2:8). From man's point of view, traditions are well thought out, and appear to fully justify the conduct or persuasion they promote.

YE REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD. Other versions read "*set aside*," NASB "*make void*," DOUAY "*get around*," NJB "*cast aside*," PNT and "*put away*." YLT Their religion required that they "*handle*" the commandments of God. Yet, their hearts were not in accord with those commands. They were now cast upon the horns of a dilemma. They insisted on being known as the chosen people – the people of God. Yet, they were a "*disobedient and gainsaying people*" (Rom 10:21). The God they professed to worship and serve required things with which they could not agree. They could not afford to come right out and deny the validity of the commandment. That would expose them for what they really were. Therefore, they, like the Gentiles, would "*change the truth of God into a lie*" (Rom 1:25). The Gentiles changed the truth by suggesting nature was calling attention to itself rather than to God. So they worshiped what was made instead of the Maker. It all allowed them to remain religious, salving their conscience and justifying how they lived and what they did. In order to do this, however, they had to "*reject*" the testimony of nature, which really declared the "*power and Godhead*" of its Creator Rom 1:20).

Likewise, the elders, Pharisees, and scribes, had "*rejected the commandment of God.*" They had willingly pushed it away from themselves, refusing to consider it, understand it, or shape their thinking and manner of life by it.

THAT YE MAY KEEP. Now the Jewish leaders had done the very thing with the Law that the Gentiles did with nature. They had to reject what it was saying, in order that they might adopt a more palatable and agreeable approach to religion. Therefore, rather than receiving the Law as a means of defining sin and unveiling the impotence of humanity (Rom 3:20; 7:7-9), they willingly perceived it as a mere code of conduct. They then set out to use that perceived "code" as a means of justifying their own moral and spiritual depravity.

The whole reason for their forthright rejection of the commandment was that they might "*observe*" their "*own tradition.*" NIV To them, their own ways were more cherished than the commandments of the Lord. Their attitude was precisely the opposite as that of David who said, "*O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day*" (Psa 119:97). Rather than changing the Law to agree with his ways, David changed his ways to agree with the Law: "*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies*" (Psa 119:59).

Allow me to be clear about the difference here. David loved God's word, the Jewish leaders did not. David kept the Word, the Jewish leaders rejected it. They did not agree with it, and therefore established their own spiritual boundaries with a disdain for the Word. Nothing about their conduct was either honest or sincere. It was driven by deep corruption.

TRANSGRESSING THE COMMANDMENT. Matthew's account has Jesus saying, "*Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*" (Matt 15:3). Other versions read, "*break the commandment*," NIV "*go against*," BBE and "*violate*." NLT It is possible for a person to think of transgression as simply doing what God forbids – like stealing, or committing murder or adultery. Here, however, Jesus states that God's commandment was "*transgressed*" by holding to religious tradition.

The "*sweet Psalmist of Israel*" (2 Sam 23:1) declared an aspect of "*transgression*" that is essential for us to grasp. "*The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes*" (Psa 36:1). One version reads, "*Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart ; There is no fear of God before his eyes.*" NASB **That is, transgression is the direct**

result of not fearing God. It moves sinners to conduct their lives just as though there was not a God at all. **Transgression results from thinking – thinking with God on the outside of the circle of thought.** Thus Jesus has charged the critics of His disciples with being nothing more than violators of God's Word, and they have done so in order to conveniently maintain their own traditions.

“10 For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. 12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother.”

HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER. Jesus extracts one of their cherished traditions, and it dealt with the first commandment that was attended with a promise (Eph 6:2): *“Honor thy father and thy mother”* (Ex 20:12). The Law also said, *“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father”* (Lev 19:3). New covenant writings say, *“Children, obey your parents”* (Eph 6:1; Col 3:20). That word is based upon the commandment Jesus mentions, but the commandment itself is not limited to the obedience of children. What did the commandment to **honor** one's father and mother mean?

“Honor” involves respect, love, concern for, and reverence. It means one does not speak against his parents, make life difficult for them, or ignore their needs. One man has observed, *“parents are to be honored, whether living or departed, known or unknown, good or evil.”* G.A. Goodheart One of the very first observations about the conduct of the young Jesus was that He *“was subject”* to His parents, Mary and Joseph (Lk 2:41,51). He was twelve years old at the time, and was *“subject unto them”* because He honored them. This was even though Mary had rebuked Him for remaining in the holy city, spending time in the Temple (Lk 2:48-49). Even when delivering a hard word to them about being about His *“Father's business,”* He did so with great respect, and followed it up by being subject to them.

I can well remember some sound thrashings I received when very young, because I spoke disrespectfully to one of my parents. I did not honor them properly, and thus they assisted me to keep the commandment.

DEATH TO THE CURSING ONE. The Law was particular on this point –and the Law was given by Almighty God Himself. *“And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death”* (Ex 21:17). And again, *“For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him”* (Lev 20:9). And again, *“Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt”* (Deut 27:16). To *“curse”* is to speak evil of, to revile, vilify, or degrade.

IT IS CORBAN. The word *“Corban”* means *“A gift offered to God.”* THAYER The play on words here is both piercing and convicting. The idea is that when the parents required some assistance from their mature children, religious tradition allowed them to say that the money that could have been given to them was given to God instead. One version reads, *“anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God).”* NASB Matthew's account reads this way, *“Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”* NKJV (Matt 15:5). Thus, in the name of religion, by simply saying *“Corban,”* the person was absolved from his responsibility to honor his parents by assisting them in the time of need.

WHAT THEIR RELIGION ALLOWED. This tradition, the text states, allowed the person to *“no longer do anything for his father or his mother.”* NKJV An example of honoring parents is found in the Lord Jesus Himself, who obviously cared for His mother following the

passing of Joseph. This is confirmed in His action on the cross, when He committed His mother into the care of John the beloved: “ *When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home* ” (John 19:27). He was honoring His mother. The “*tradition*” of the elders, however, would have allowed Him to refuse to thus honor her by saying His resources were being given to God.

THE PROMINENCE OF THIS KIND OF THINKING. There are some today who ignore the mandate to edify and build up the saints (1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:11), by saying the main purpose for the assembly is the conversion of sinners. Thus some require giving, what they call, “the plan of salvation” in every message. Others ignore the Divine instruction given to sinners (Acts 2:36; 8:37; 16:31), instead having “converts” repeat “the sinner’s prayer” to assure them of Divine acceptance.

An even more subtle corruption of the Word of God is the modern penchant for, what is called, “praise and worship.” This activity is said to open the gates of heaven, causing the Lord to draw close to us – even though “*faith*” is consistently held out as the exclusive means of drawing near to, accessing, and receiving from God (Rom 5:2; Eph 3:17; Heb 11:6).

Are such actions innocent? **Indeed not, for in order to embrace such notions, the word of God must be rejected.** One cannot hold to “*the traditions of men*” without doing this. If tradition moves people to engage the church in a misplaced emphasis, they can only do so by rejecting what God has said about the activities of His people. This kind of explanation is no more pleasing today than it was to the religious bigots Jesus confronted in His ministry.

“ 13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”

Jesus is not through with His scathing rebuke of the Pharisees and scribes. They had asked, what appeared to be, a rather uncomplicated question. However, that inquiry was driven by their corrupted desire to hang on to their tradition, even though it meant the rejection of the commandment of the very God they professed to serve.

MAKING THE WORD OF NONE EFFECT. Other versions read, “*invalidating the word of God,*” NASB “*nullify,*” NIV “*making void,*” NRSV “*making . . . of none authority.*” GENEVA Matthew reads, “*Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition*” (Matt 15:6). To make the word of “*none effect*” means “deprive it of its force and authority.” THAYER This equates to Isaiah’s statement about “*truth*” falling in the street and failing (Isa 59:14-15). **It means that although it is present, it has no power, and does not work for the enlightenment and good of the people.**

Where this condition exists, the Scriptures can be read in the synagogues, yet their message be totally missed, and tradition embraced in their place (Acts 15:21; 2 Cor 3:14). In the churches there can be formal readings of the Word, responsive readings of Scripture, the singing of songs with Scripture, teaching from quarterlies with Scripture, and the recitation of Scripture at the Lord’s Table and in prayers. Yet, the Scripture has **no** effect, regardless of how much of it is audibly spoken. Instead, the people steadfastly hold to their traditions – lifeless and powerless traditions that serve to make them think they are religious.

Some, in their simplicity, might say that it is not possible for as mortal to make the Word of God lose its effectiveness. It is true that, from one perspective, God’s word will

accomplish what it is sent to do. As it is written, “*So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*” (Isa 55:11). However, that does not always mean it will bless. The very word that brought blessing to Israel brought cursing to Pharaoh, his army, and the citizenry of Egypt.

God, we are told, “*having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities*” (Acts 3:26). However, He does **not** bless everyone! There are some whom He will ultimately destroy – who, in spite of Him being sent to bless, “*know not God,*” and “*obey not the gospel*” (2 Thess 1:8). Many of these people appear very devout, having “*a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*” (2 Tim 3:5). Their tradition, like that of the Pharisees and scribes, makes the word of God of “*none effect.*”

TRADITION THAT IS DELIVERED. Other versions read, “*have handed down,*” NKJV “*hand on,*” RSV “*given forth,*” DOUAY “*ordained,*” GENEVA and “*have ordered.*” TNT A tradition that is “*delivered*” is promoted, taught, and aggressively disseminated among the people. It may take the form of a special class on the history of the brotherhood, a doctrinal book, a special presentation, or a handy manual. The point is to get the people acquainted with the traditions, so that they may be kept to the honor of those who made them. In a denominational setting there are colleges, publications, book publishers, and other institutions designed to propagate the traditions of the day. Tradition is, indeed, still being “*delivered.*”

Just as surely as this methodology allowed the Pharisees and scribes to maintain their unique approach to Moses, so modern day traditionalists are allowed to justify their sectarianism and promote their own personal interests. However in all of this activity,. The Word of God is being nullified, rendered of none effect, and made void.

MANY SUCH LIKE THINGS. Delivering traditions to the people was a way, or mode, with them – a manner of approaching things that had to do with their religious identity. Instead of promoting the truth itself, they elevated their own corrupted views. **Of course, there is no other way to advance purely personal interests, a religious empire, or a “private interpretation”** (2 Pet 1:20). **The word of God cannot be employed for the furtherance of a merely human agenda and objective.** When men make an attempt to do such a thing, the Word of God is made “*of none effect.*” It simply cannot empower or facilitate human interests. **When men make an effort to bolster their traditions with Scripture, they are employing an empty text, for the power of God will not deliver a blessing in a realm that is cursed.**

If you want the blessing of the Lord, you must leave Egypt. If you want Divine provision, you must refuse the Egyptian diet. If you want “*spiritual blessings,*” you must renounce the world, and take up your abode in the “*heavenly places*” in which those blessings are found and made accessible to you (Eph 1:3; 2:6).

Spiritual life, or living by faith and walking in the Spirit, requires a certain distaste for empty and traditional religion. At some point, the soul that fellowships with Christ must see the futility of empty religious routine that does not require the heart. When that time comes, the individual will find that he is at variance with much of professed Christendom.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 77

“ Mark 7:14 And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

(Mark 7:14-16; Matthew 15:10-11)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has just confronted the Pharisees and scribes, who have questioned him about His disciples eating without washing their hands ceremonially, according to the tradition of the elders. With candor and heavenly expertise, He has demolished their traditional views, showing how they caused those who embraced them to “*transgress the commandment of God*” (Matt 15:3), “*Make the commandment of God of none effect*” (Matt 15:6), “*worship*” God “*in vain*” (Mk 7:7), “*lay aside*” the commandment of God (Mk 7:8), and “*reject the commandment of God*” (Mk 7:9). Therefore, the people who served God in such a manner found themselves honoring God “*with their lips,*” while their heart was “*far from*” Him (Mk 7:6). There is a principle to be seen here. When men attempt to merge the Word or commandment of God with the tradition of men, the Word of God no longer has influence with them. This is because men must lay aside the Word of God in order to accept the traditions of men. Neither God’s Word nor His commandment will sanctify the “*traditions of men.*” Ardent attempts may be made to buttress the tradition with Scripture, seemingly fortifying it. But it is all nothing more than a delusion. What comes from God is holy, and it cannot be merged with what comes from the natural man, who is fundamentally “*unholy,*” even when he is trained to be ultra-religious (2 Tim 3:2). It is not possible to develop a human perception of religious duty, and then confirm it with the Word of God and bind it upon men. Now, using the heavenly weaponry of holy thought and spiritual understanding, Jesus will tear down the stronghold of the “*tradition of the elders,*” casting it into the trash-heap of spiritual garbage.

“ Mk 7:14 And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand.”

Now, Jesus has finished speaking with “*the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes.*” He will not engage in a lengthy discussion with them, for that is like throwing the pearls of truth to a herd of swine, who have no care for their spiritual diet, but reject what is precious in order to keep what is profane. You will find this to be a consistent pattern in the ministry of Jesus. When confronted with a question from ungodly leaders, the Lord would often answer them with unquestionable poignance, or piercing and convicting words – then turn to the multitudes to teach them, or begin conversing with His disciples (Matt 12:10-16; Matt 22:41-23:1; Mk 10:2-101 12:18-35).

In the promotion of the truth, it is important not to be dragged aside into bantering about foolish questions and endless genealogies (2 Tim 3:9). This was lived out by the Lord Jesus, so that the meaning of such conduct becomes very clear. There is, for example, an especial danger in listening to those who emphasize “reaching the lost” above edifying the body of Christ – an imagined priority that is nowhere taught in Scripture.

HE CALLED ALL THE PEOPLE. The discussion Jesus had with the Pharisees and scribes was not a private one. It appears that the people were privy to what was being said. Now Jesus turns His attention to them. He does not want them to remain without the truth on this matter. Note – He “called *all the people*.” Matthew says, “*He called the multitude*” (Matt 15:10). He did not call the men alone, or just the women, or any other social grouping of the people. **Everyone** needed to know what Jesus was going to say, regardless of their social, domestic, or religious role. We know from other accounts that young people were in the crowds that heard Jesus. Once a “*a lad*,” or “*boy*,” NIV provided a small lunch from which a multitude was fed (John 6:9). “*Children*” were in that multitude (Matt 14:21). Mothers were often in the crowd with their “*infants*” (Lk 18:15). Jesus instructed His disciples to allow the “*children*” to come to Him, and not forbid them (Matt 19:14). Yet, in all of Christ’s discourses, He never targeted a word to **only** the men, or the women, or the children within the crowd. His words were for “*all the people*.”

HEARKEN UNTO ME. “*Hearken unto Me, every one of you!*” Other versions read, “*Hear Me, everyone*,” NKJV “*Listen to Me, all of you*,” NASB and “*Give ear to Me, all of you*.” BBE The word “*hearken*” means to “*listen*” or “*give ear to*.” It involves being keenly aware of what is being said, and to fasten one’s attention upon it, not being distracted by other things.

Just as the eye can be focused on a single object or person in the middle of a host of other things, so the ear can focus on a particular sound – in this case, the words of the Lord Jesus. Luke expressed HOW the people once listened to Jesus. It is a vivid portrayal of what it means to “*hearken*.” “*. . . all the people were very attentive to hear Him*” (Luke 19:48). Their attentiveness is what moved some of His listeners to say, “*Never man spake like this Man*” (Lk 19:48). After over half a century in the ministry, I can testify that I have known but a few people who have ever listened to Jesus attentively enough to perceive the distinctiveness and power of His words. The masses of professing Christians have never mastered hearkening!

UNDERSTAND ME. Other versions read, “*and understand this*,” NIV “*let my words be clear to you*.” BBE The word “*understand*” means to “bring together” (like assembling a puzzle), “to perceive, joining together in the mind,” THAYER “comprehend, understand thoroughly, perceive clearly, gain insight.” FRIBERG It means that the words of Christ **make sense**, and are able to be employed in the practical matters of life. **In such a case, the necessity of empty routines is removed.** The words of Christ, when understood, are no longer mysterious, beyond reach, or imagined to be irrelevant. They are seen as essential and pertinent to life – eternal life.

Jesus taught that a failure to “*understand*” what He said prohibited one from being “*converted*” (Matt 13:15). In such a case, the devil comes and snatches His word out of the heart, so that it cannot possibly profit the person (Matt 13:19). In fact, one of the marks of being in a lost and alienated state is **not understanding** (Rom 1:31; 3:11), or “*having the understanding darkened*” (Eph 4:18). Solemnly believers are admonished, “*but in understanding, be men*” (1 Cor 14:20). They are exhorted, “*be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*” (Eph 5:17).

This is an area in which the modern church has not done well. The level of “*understanding*” – “*spiritual understanding*” (Col 1:9) – that exists in the average church, and even

among professing ministers, is deplorable. The whole condition has given rise to a plethora of new traditions that are being perpetrated in the church. This time, however, they are coming from the psychologists, sociologists, statisticians, and procedural experts. **In such an environment a clarion call must be issued to the people to hearken, listening with intent and focusing their attention, upon the words of the Lord Jesus. He MUST be heard!**

“ 15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. ”

Jesus takes the axe of spiritual reasoning, and cuts through the defiling root of religious tradition. John the Baptist foretold that Jesus would engage in such an activity. *“And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire”* (Matt 3:10). The “*root*” is the source that gave life to the corrupt tree – that caused its feigned growth. In this case, the “*root*” was the “*tradition of the elders.*” That is what gave imagined life to the tree, making it what it was. Observe with that marvelous effectiveness Jesus topples the tree of vain religion, attacking and destroying its root.

NOTHING WITHOUT A MAN. This may appear to contradict the Levitical Law, which taught that men could become unclean by what they ate: i.e. “ . . . ye shall not eat . . . Ye shall not **make yourselves abominable** with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye **make yourselves unclean** with them, that ye should **be defiled thereby** ” (Lev 11:42-47). The defilement of which the Law spoke, however, was a ceremonial defilement, not a spiritual one – which is the kind of defilement Jesus now addresses. The elders taught that the condition of your hands made the food clean or unclean. That bore no resemblance to the distinctions given in the Law.

The phrase “*nothing without a man*” means something external to him, and apart from his person. In this case, it is something that is put into the mouth. That is, man is not essentially a body, and, in the matter of diet, the body is not to be considered his primary part.

THAT ENTERING CAN DEFILE. Matthew reads, “*Not that which goeth into **the mouth** defileth a man*” (Matt 15:11). Food cannot cause a person to be accepted or rejected by God. Paul said it this way, “*But meat commendeth us **not** to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse*” (1 Cor 8:8). Again he wrote, “*For the kingdom of God is **not** meat and drink*” (Rom 14:17). He also said that ordinances such as “*Touch not; taste not; handle not,*” have nothing whatsoever to do with those who are “*dead with Christ*” (Col 2:20-22). The soul of a man cannot be soiled by food for the body.

One might object that the first sin involved defilement by means of what was eaten (Gen 2:17). However, that whole matter is illuminated by the apostolic doctrine. It was not what entered through the mouth that defiled Adam and Eve, but the disobedience that issued from their hearts – “*Adam’s **transgression**,*” “*the **offence**,*” and “*one man’s **disobedience**”* (Rom 5:12-19).

On an earthly level, certain foods may affect ones bodily health, but they cannot contaminate the soul, corrupt the heart, or blight the mind. And even in that case, the “*elders*” had no intention of assisting health of body, but were seeking to make men more acceptable to God by means of outward and meaningless religious routines and customs.

Among other things, this confirms the fundamental deficiency of an approach to “the Christian life” that is only outward. The Old Covenant was such a covenant. It is said of it, “*Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and **carnal ordinances**,* [“external

regulations” NIV] *imposed on them until the time of reformation*” (Heb 9:10). Whether it is our view of holiness, praise, obedience, or doing good – if it is only external, it is a wrong view!

THINGS THAT COME OUT. Mark reads, “*things which come out of him.*” Matthew reads, “*that which cometh out of the mouth*” (Matt 15:11). **Evil and error that are expressed defile and contaminate the individual.** This is an important distinction to perceive in a society that has exalted freedom of speech and the expression of human opinion. Men may boast that they have a right to say whatever they please – but such a saying did not apply to the elders, Pharisees, and scribes, and it does not apply to us either.

Note that Jesus does **not** say “what men say others should do” is a contaminant, but what comes out of the mouth. The Jewish leaders did bind their tradition upon others, but it was the tradition itself, not the binding of it, that brought the defilement.

The fact that a person is a professed believer, or leader (like the elders, Pharisees, and scribes), does not sanctify wrong thoughts, or in any way make them acceptable. The fact that a person supposedly believes something “with all of their heart” does not make it right.

THEY DEFILE THE MAN. Other versions read, “*make him unclean,*” NIV “*polluteth,*” MRD “*harmed,*” LIVING “*make a person unholy,*” IE “*make him foul,*” WILLIAMS and “*make him unhallowed and unclean.*” AMPLIFIED These very words startle the lethargic soul. The word “defile” means to “deem or pronounce profane,” LIDDELL-SCOTT “rendered unhallow,” or unsuitable to be presented to God, THAYER Just as surely as a profaned sacrifice could not be offered to God (Lev 22:15), so a person who is “*defiled*” is not acceptable to God. That, of course, is the whole reason for the Divine provision for cleansing (1 John 1:7,9).

This thought will be developed in the succeeding verses. At this time, however, it is imperative that we grasp the seriousness of defilement – spiritual defilement. It is a very real condition, and is to be avoided with deliberation and consistency among all believers.

“ 16 *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*”

IF. Here is a small word that determines whether the specified condition or requirement **can** be met or not. The word “unconditional,” though popularized by pretended theologians, is not found in any standard English translation of Bible. I cannot find it in the most liberal and vulgar of all translations. The word “*IF,*” speaks of unalterable conditions. It is found no less than 1,595 times in the Scriptures. It is used 53 times in Genesis, 386 times in Exodus through Deuteronomy, and 554 times in Joshua through Malachi. It is used 247 times in the Gospels, 26 times in Acts, and 320 times in the Epistles. Let us give no heed to those who take it upon themselves to add to the Divine vocabulary. The word “unconditional” is a philosophical word, not an inspired one! It speaks of human wisdom, not Divine wisdom.

IF ANY MAN HAS EARS TO HEAR. Here is the condition that is in question: Does “*any man*” have “*ears to hear?*” Does the individual possess the capacity to hear, or comprehend, what the Lord is saying? Among other things, this confirms that the human intellect, common to all normal people, is not sufficient to meet this requirement.

This phrase – “*ears to hear*” – is used ten times in Scripture, all occurring **after** sin entered into the world. Moses told Israel that God had “*NOT given*” them “*ears to hear*” (Deut 29:4), which accounted for their spiritual obtuseness. Eight times the Lord Jesus challenged those with “*ears to hear*” to hear what He was saying (Matt 11:15; 13:9,43; Mk 4:9,23; 7:16; 8:8; 14:35). Eight times

the book of the Revelation exhorts those who have “*an ear,*” to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9). Isaiah spoke of God awakening the prophet’s ear to “*hear as the learned*” (Isa 50:4).

Jesus spoke of those who could **NOT** hear what He was saying: “*Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word*” (John 8:43). It is as though they could not tune into the spiritual frequency on which He spoke. Isaiah referred of a similar situation when he said, “*Hear ye, indeed, but understand not*” (Isa 6:9). Jeremiah accounted for the inability of the Israelites to hear the word of the Lord by saying “*their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken*” (Jer 6:10). Stephen said the same when he spoke to the Jewish council (Acts 7:51).

Any person who has labored in the vineyard of the Lord has confronted people who could not take hold of the Word of God – regardless of the frequency of hearing it or the extensiveness of its exposition. Why does such a condition exist? It may very well be because they have not been given “*ears to hear.*” After all, this capacity does come from God, and God alone. As it is written, “*The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them*” (Prov 20:12). The Lord also told Moses, “*Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?*” (Ex 4:11). In the case before us, the “*deaf*” are those who have not been given “*ears to hear.*”

Not being given ears to hear does not excuse the condition of the spiritually deaf. **There are reasons why God has withheld this gift from them, and they are not found in any caprice or arbitrary rejection on God’s part.** Jesus said it was because the hearts of the people “*waxed gross,*” or “*became calloused*” NIV (Matt 13:15). That is, they became diverted to other things, and had no desire to hear from God. Therefore, He did not give them “*ears to hear.*” It seems to me that this is a remarkably common condition in the American and European church.

LET HIM HEAR. Now Jesus calls out to the person who HAS been given “*ears to hear.*” This is the person who can pick up on what the Lord is saying – who can detect the direction of His words and correlate them with both Scripture and conscience. He understands something of what the Lord has said, and can perceive the nature and importance of His words. Jesus words make sense to the person who has “*ears to hear.*”

Now comes the responsibility to use what God has given. Once the Lord chided Israel, “*Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not*” (Jer 5:21). The “*ears*” that they had been given were inferior to those that are dispensed in Christ Jesus – but they were adequate for the measured discernment of Moses and the Prophets. They refused to hear what they were able to hear.

When people have been given “*ears to hear,*” and can make some sense out of the truth, they are obligated to extend themselves to hear. It is their duty to get to the place where the words **can** be heard. It is their obligation to dwell on what is said, meditating and musing upon it until it sinks “*down into*” their ears (Lk 9:44).

What happens when a person hears with his “*ears to hear?*” Isaiah said, “*hear, and your soul shall live*” (Isa 55:3). Jesus said, “*they that hear shall live*” (John 5:25). Paul said, “*faith cometh by hearing*” (Rom 10:17). Do you have “*ears to hear?*” Then use them, and you will experience spiritual life in increasing measure! Use them, and your faith will grow and increase! Be a good steward of your “*ears*” – your capacity to hear, understand, profit from, and delight in the truth of God.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 78

“ Mark 7:17 *And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18 And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? ”*

(Mark 7:17-19; Matthew 15:16-17; Col 2:21-22)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is turning His attention away from the questioning and critical Pharisees and scribes, to his disciples, who have a heart for the truth. He will not spend long in fruitless discussions, for that is detrimental to the hearers. Paul warned that there were teachings and discourses that raised questions rather than resulting in edification. *“Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do”* (1 Tim 1:4). There were others, he wrote, who were known for *“doting about questions and strifes of words”* (1 Tim 6:4). There were also *“foolish and unlearned questions”* that caused *“strife”* (2 Tim 2:23). Jesus lived out the proper response to such things. He not only told people the stultifying effects of fruitless discussions and the imposed traditions of men, He conducted His ministry within an acute awareness of those facts. It is one thing to talk about what men should or should not do, it is quite another to conduct your life in strict accord with such things. That is precisely what Jesus did. He lived on a spiritual plain – by faith and with the purpose of God clear in His mind. He refused to be diverted to distracting and pointless issues. When faced with them, He would shine the light of truth upon them, thereby exposing their folly. He did not allow the unfavorable impact of His teaching upon His critics to trouble Him. His concern was for the understanding of His disciples, and that is where He directed the bulk of His teaching.

“ Mk 7:17 *And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable.”*

Matthew tells us that after Christ’s words to the Pharisees, Scribes, and multitudes, His disciples came to Him and said, *“Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?”* (Matt 15:12). After all, these were the clergy, theologians, and religious experts of the day. Jesus reveals to them that He is not at all concerned about whether or not they are offended by what He says. They are nothing more than *“blind”* leaders who are marked for removal. *“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”* There are teachers and preachers whom God has not sent (Rom 10:15). There are *“ministers”* whom God has not *“given”* to the people (1 Cor 3:5). All of them – trained and untrained – will be removed from God’s field: plucked up by the roots! They are imposters, regardless of their disposition and seeming scholarship. Jesus therefore tells His disciples, *“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead*

the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt 15:13-14).

Other versions read, "Leave them," NIV "ignore them," NLT and "Let them alone and disregard them." AMPLIFIED The phrase "Let them alone" is literally translated "send off, abandon, leave behind, reject, set aside, neglect." THAYER In today's jargon, this would mean, "Don't listen to their teaching, don't read their books, don't think about what they say, don't expose yourself to their influence!" And why take such drastic measures? Because those permitting themselves to be led by such men will fall into the ditch of Divine rejection with them! In calling them "blind guides," Jesus is saying these men did not know what they were talking about. They were nothing more than scholarly babblers! Paul said of such, "Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Tim 1:7). Legion is the name of such teachers in our day. Our response to them all must be "Leave them alone!"

FROM THE PEOPLE. Mark says Jesus left the multitudes and entered "into the house." The house is not specified, but is obviously the one in which He was staying. If this was in Capernaum, it may have been the house of Peter and Andrew (Lk 4:31,38), or perhaps even His own house (Matt 4:13). At any rate, He was sequestered "from the people." It is as though the Savior could only go so long without speaking clearly about things of spiritual substance. **If anyone really wanted to be taught by Jesus, they generally had to follow Him away from the multitudes.** It is still this way.

HIS DISCIPLES ASKED HIM. Mark says the disciples "asked" Jesus. Matthew tells us, "Peter said unto Him." That is, he spoke for the rest of the disciples, all of them having the same question. Peter often spoke for all or some of the disciples (Lk 9:33; 12:41; 18:28; John 13:36).

The point to be seen here is that **there are some things we will never know unless we ask, or press closer to the Lord in order to obtain an understanding.** Some knowledge and understanding are only appropriated by earnestly asking, "give me understanding" (Psa 119:34,73,125,144,169). Even enlightenment concerning the "common salvation" requires that we "take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet 1:19). If we expect to profit from the words of the Lord Jesus we must "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb 2:1). Casual disciples will inevitably be ignorant ones, and will only believe "for a while." They will not be able to endure the tests and stresses that are brought upon **all** disciples, – both rooted and not rooted (Lk 8:13).

You see from this text that the disciples were not content to remain in the dark concerning what Jesus said. They pressed to know the truth of which He spoke, and therefore they will be rewarded with an answer to their question. It ought to be noted that all of this is forfeited when professing "Christians" demand brevity, infrequent and shallow exposure to the truth, and activities that do not require both heart and mind.

CONCERNING THE PARABLE. When they were away from the multitude, the disciples "questioned Him concerning the parable." NASB Matthew says, "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable," or "Explain the parable to us" NIV (Mat 15:15). This refers to the saying He delivered to the people: "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man" (Mark 7:15).

Notice that the disciples did not speculate about the meaning of this parable – this likeness of spiritual realities to life in this world. The meaning was not obvious to them, and

they made no effort to discover it by discussion among themselves. Some would not refer to this saying as a “*parable*.” **However, as is the case with all truth, when we throw the mantle of the seen over the truth of God, it becomes obscure.** The temporal order cannot expound truth, it can only point to it. The closer a person is to the earth, however, the more truth will be garbed with the temporal, and thus become obscure. Jesus said He spoke to the multitudes in parables because it was **not** “*given*” to them to “*know the mysteries of the kingdom*” (Matt 13:10). The multitudes did not really want to know the truth. The disciples, however, did, and thus they asked for understanding.

“ 18 And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him. ”

Just how tolerant is Jesus of a lack of understanding and insight among His disciples? How does the Divine nature react to continued ignorance among those who have been exposed to the truth of God? Men may develop all kinds of views of this matter. Here, however, the Lord leaves no doubt about it. We do well to take heed to His words.

ARE YOU SO WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING? Other versions read, “*without understanding also*,” NKJV “*lacking in understanding also*,” NASB “*Are you so dull*,” NIV “*do you also fail to understand*?” NRSV “*Are you, like them, without wisdom?*” BBE “*Are you still so dull?*” NIB and “*are you also unintelligent and dull and without understanding?*” AMPLIFIED Matthew reads, “*Are ye also yet without understanding?*” (Matt 15:16).

It is as though Jesus asked them, “After being with Me so long, do you have no more understanding than the multitudes? Have you made no more progress than those who are only briefly exposed to My teaching? After I have favored you with all manners of explanation, exposition, and insight, do you have no more understanding than others?”

This was not the first or last time Jesus spoke in such a manner to His disciples. “*Know ye not this parable?*” (Mk 4:13). “*How is it that ye do not understand?*” (Matt 16:11). “*O fools, and slow of heart to believe*” (Lk 24:25). “*Where is your faith?*” (Lk 8:25). “*How is it that ye have no faith?*” (Mk 4:40). “*How is it that ye do not understand?*” (Mk 8:21).

It ought to be noted that those who are exposed to the love, consideration, and teaching of Jesus are **expected** to advance in their understanding. If this was true **before** Jesus took away the sins of the world, **before** the remission of sins, **before** the new birth, and **before** the gift of the Holy Spirit, how much more is it true now that all of these things are being experienced? Paul was alarmed at the lack of understanding among Jewish believers. “*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers . . .*” (Heb 5:12). Their situation was so serious, that he warned them of surely falling away if they did not “*go on to perfection*,” or spiritual maturity (Heb 5:12-6:1). I do not believe the requirement of spiritual understanding is being communicated to the modern church. If it is, it is not an effective communication.

DO YE NOT PERCEIVE? Other versions read, “*Don’t you see?*” NIV “*Do you not realize?*” NAB “*Can’t you see?*” NJB and “*Do you not discern and see?*” AMPLIFIED The disciples saw what Jesus said like the blind man saw men as “*trees walking*” (Mk 8:24). Christ’s saying was not clear to them, and Jesus did not excuse that lack of clarity with some casual saying.

I have frequently been in the presence of people who have heard a lot of things concerning Scripture, yet fumble with the truth like an infant does with a large and complex toy. I have rarely spoken to any “minister” who was concerned about this situation. Such an attitude does not reflect “*the mind of Christ*” (1 Cor 2:16).

We are now being exposed to the Divine view of ignorance, a lack of understanding, and the absence of spiritual perception. There is no acceptable reason for remaining obtuse and slow of heart when the truth has been heard, and understanding is available from heaven. The Lord is very tender and gracious dealing with such souls – particularly when they seek understanding. However, He does not fail to convict them of their condition.

DEFILEMENT DOES NOT COME FROM WITHOUT. “. . . *whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him.*” NKJV Matthew reads, “*whatsoever entereth in at the mouth*” (Mat 15:17). Those who attempt to associate matters of bodily diet with spiritual life have seriously erred. A religion of “*Touch not; taste not; handle not*” is false to the core. It makes no difference how sound the reasons presented may appear, they are not right!

There were teachers who attempted to corrupt the brethren at Colossae with such a doctrine. Paul challenged the thinking of the brethren by writing, “*Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not)*” (Col 2:21). Paul told Timothy that such an emphasis was a characteristic of a departure from the faith. “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy . . . commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth*” (1 Tim 4:1-3). The only possible justification for such a commandment is that, in some way, “*meat*” that was eaten defiled the individual. Jesus affirms that such a thing is not possible. “*whatever goes into a man from the outside cannot make him unhallowed or unclean*” AMPLIFIED That condition is also buttressed by the declaration that “*the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*” (Rom 14:17).

Whatever may be said about bodily health, or however men may choose to associate the consumption of food with one’s spiritual condition, it is still true that it is not possible for something that enters the mouth to defile the soul, character, or personhood of the individual. Spirituality is found in another dimension, and Jesus will no allow men to change that fact.

“ 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?”

IT DOES NOT ENTER INTO HIS HEART. Here is why something that goes into the mouth cannot defile, contaminate, or render unholy, the individual. It is because it does not enter into the heart – the central part of our person. The truth of the matter is that if the heart is not defiled, no other part can be, for as a man “*thinks in his heart, so is he*” NKJV (Prov 23:8). This is the part of man upon which the Lord looks. As it is written, “*the Lord looketh on the heart*” (1 Sam 16:7).

It may be objected that there are, in fact, things that, entering in through the mouth, defile and contaminate the person. For example, meat offered to idols, the flesh of things “*strangled,*” blood, and strong drink (Acts 15:20,29; 21:25; Lev 10:9; Prov 20:1). None of these enter into the heart. What, therefore, can possibly be wrong in taking them in through the mouth?

In the case of things offered to idols, blood, and things strangled, it is wrong to take them into the mouth for the same reason the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil could not be eaten: **God forbids it.** The defilement, in those instances, does not come because of the thing that was eaten, but because of a disobedient heart. The person was corrupted by disobedience and rebellion, not by the substance taken into the mouth. In the case of “*strong drink,*” it is the enslaving nature of it, and the way that it can distort the thinking of the individual, that makes it dangerous. It is because relief, escape, and enjoyment are

sought by this means, rather than at the hand of the Lord. Even if “*wine*” (which is **not** synonymous with “*strong drink*,” Lev 10:9; Num 6:3; Prov 31:4) is taken, it is to be in “*little*,” or small measures (1 Tim 5:23). This is because it tends to produce circumstances in which sin is the more easily committed (Gen 9:21-25).

The things mentioned above, therefore, correlate directly with the heart, where defilement is realized. The sin does not, in that case, come because of what went into the mouth, but because of the condition of the heart that either precipitated or followed their entrance into the mouth.

IT ENTERS INTO THE BELLY. Food and drink do not go into the heart or the mind, but into the “*belly*,” or “*stomach*.” NKJV There is where the food and drink are processed, the appropriate nutrients extracted, and disseminated throughout the body by means of the blood. If a person makes his stomach the primary focus of life, he becomes defiled – not because of what went into it, but because their “*God is their belly*” (Phil 3:19).

Jesus is not giving a biological lesson. Rather, he is showing that both purity and defilement originate and are dispensed from the inward man – “*the heart*.” It is true that the body is not inconsequential, for our “*bodies are the members of Christ*” (1 Cor 6:15). The improper use of them is not found in eating and drinking, but in employing them for self-gratification rather than “*instruments of righteousness unto God*” (Rom 6:13).

IT GOETH OUT UPON THE DRAUGHT. Other versions read, “*and is eliminated*,” NKJV “*and then out of his body*,” NIV “*goes out into the sewer*,” NRSV and “*goes out with the waste*.” BBE The word “*draught*” means “a place where human discharges are dumped.” THAYER Without being too crude, the Lord is saying that our bodies are made to naturally discharge unuseable and contaminating residues. Thus when bad food is eaten, the body naturally causes it to be discharged. In the case of good foods, the body removes what is required for bodily maintenance, and passes the residue out of the body. We will find that moral contamination is not on this manner. The defilement of the inward man is not naturally expelled.

JESUS PURGED ALL MEATS. This was an epochal, or momentous, saying. By it the Lord was “*purifying all foods*,” NKJV or declaring “*all foods clean*.” NIV Those who teach that the “*clean*” and “*unclean*” distinctions of the Law were required because of the unacceptable nature of foods designated “*unclean*” could not possibly be more wrong. The fact that the Law forbade the eating of “*pork*,” for example, does not infer it is an inferior meat that conflicts with good health. If that was really the case, Jesus would have contradicted Divine reasoning by purifying all foods, making them suitable for consumption. When it comes to eating, “*everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude*” NASB (1 Tim 4:4), for “*there is nothing unclean of itself*” (Rom 14:14).

It is written, “*Meats for the belly and the belly for meats*,” or “*Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food*” NASB (1 Cor 6:13) – and the King Himself has lifted the prohibition on “*all foods*.” As already pointed out, the Lord has provided exceptions, just as He did in Eden – but they do not have to do with the nature of the food itself. The only stipulation is that whatever we eat be “*received with thanksgiving*” (1 Tim 4:14). It is interesting to note that Jesus did not say all meats were now “*clean*.” **Instead, He stated the matter so that only understanding could take hold of it.** If, therefore, something that is done does not defile the inward man, it cannot be sin. If, on the other hand, it does bring inner defilement, it cannot be right.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 79

“ Mark 7:20 And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. ”

(Mark 7:20-23; Matthew 15:18-20)

INTRODUCTION

With their traditions, the elders redefined “defilement,” pushing aside, rejecting, and voiding the commandment of God to do so. Although God had said much about being “unclean,” all of that was put aside in favor of “*the elders*” traditional view of becoming defiled, or unclean. The “*elders*” had, in fact, added to the Law, ignoring the solemn word delivered by Moses: “*Ye shall not add to the word which I command you*” (Deut 4:2; 12:32). The tendency to arrogate to himself Divine attributes is integral to “*the natural man*.” Thus, without the slightest compunctions of conscience he can impose his own ideas upon his peers, ascribing to them Divine traits, and binding them upon men just as though God Himself had given them. Under the cloak of seemingly devout religion, all of this may appear to be quite innocent – but it is not. Turning the judgment of the elders – together with their disciples, the Pharisees and scribes – upon their own heads, Jesus shows them that their own traditions had defiled them. **Rather than assisting them to avoid becoming unclean, their religion had contaminated them, excluding them from Divine approval.** It is particularly important that we note our Lord’s teaching on this matter. We are living in a day when self-acclaimed Christian leaders are redefining such things as worship, praise, doing good, the church, preaching, and the “needs” of people. Human traditions are being bound upon men just as though they have been issued from the Lord. Actually, however, rather than coming from the Head of the church, they have proceeded from corrupt and alienated hearts.

“ Mk 7:20 And He said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.”

THAT WHICH COMETH OUT OF THE MAN. Jesus directly contradicts the tradition of the elders. First He declared that anything entering a man from without “*cannot defile him*” (7:18). Now He states that defilement is caused by what “*proceeds out of the man*.” NASB Matthew reads, “*But those things which proceed out of the mouth . . .*” (Matt 15:18). This has particular regard to the traditions of reference, which were uttered by the mouth and bound upon men. We will find in the remainder of the text that what defiles a man is not limited to what proceeds out of the mouth. Matthew is emphasizing the defiling effects of tradition itself, which proceeds out of the mouth. In other words, the critics of Christ’s disciples were actually defiled by what they said concerning them: “*Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?*” (7:5).

What “*cometh out of the man*” includes any overt expression, whether word or deed. It can also include expressive thoughts (as compared with unwanted temptations). This has particular regard to the eruption of iniquity. James referred to it as “*the superfluity of naughtiness*” or “*overflow of wickedness*” NKJV (James 1:21). Paul refers to this as yielding our “*members,*” or the components of our natural makeup, “*to iniquity unto iniquity,*” or “*lawlessness leading to more lawlessness*” NKJV (Rom 6:19). Another way of looking at it is yielding ourselves to obey sin, which leads to death. As it is written, “*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*” (Rom 6:16).

In a day when freedom of speech and human rights are being emphasized, it is especially important to give heed to the words of our Lord. **Human expression, however cherished it may be, can be a means of becoming defiled.** As approached in this text, this has respect to religious expressions. On the surface, it seems innocent enough to require the ceremonial washing of one’s hands before eating – particularly after a person had been in the marketplace. What possible harm could come from that? That is something like a “This is what our church believes” approach to duty.

In the matter of imposing personal views on another individual who is seeking to serve God, it is good to remember a word Paul delivered to those who were prone to judge others through the filter of personal opinion. “*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand*” (Rom 14:4). In the case before us, the Pharisees and certain of the scribes were judging Christ’s servants – whom they recognized as being His disciples.

DEFILETH THE MAN. A man who is “*defiled*” is desecrated, unclean, unhallow, and profane. Theologically, that means polluted and offensive in God’s sight. There is an approach to spiritual life that does not take into account the possibility of being “*defiled.*” Some feel as though nothing can change the attitude of the Lord toward an individual. However, the very concept of defilement throws that imagination to the ground.

Is defilement possible? The Spirit testifies of the defiling of the church, the dwelling place of God: “*If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*” (1 Cor 3:17). A believer’s conscience can be defiled (1 Cor 8:7). Immoral actions cause people to “*defile themselves*” (1 Tim 1:10). Personal defilement voids any religious expression: “*unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled*” (Titus 1:15). A “*root of bitterness*” can cause many to “*be defiled*” (Heb 12:15). The tongue can “*defile the whole body*” (James 3:6). Those who remain faithful to the Lord are described as those “*which have not defiled their garments*” (Rev 3:4). One of the traits of glory is nothing can gain entrance “*that defileth*” (Rev 21:27).

“*Uncleanness*” is something to which we are not to “*yield*” our capacities of expression (Rom 6:19). Solemnly we are admonished “*touch not the unclean thing*” (2 Cor 6:17). “*Uncleanness*” is a work of the flesh which excludes one from the Kingdom of God (Gal 5:19-21). “*Uncleanness*” is not to be named among believers a single time – not “*once*” (Eph 5:3). **No** “*unclean person . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*” (Eph 5:5). All “*uncleanness*” is to be “*mortified,*” or put to death, in our “*members*” (Col 3:5). God has not called us “*to uncleanness, but unto holiness*” (1 Thess 4:7).

There is, then, a condition that makes a person unacceptable to God, and unfit to enter His kingdom. There is such a thing as defilement, contamination, and being caused to be “*unclean.*” This is not something concerning which men are to philosophize or speculate!

To be “defiled” is equivalent to being “an abomination unto the Lord” (Deut 18:12; 25:16). The defilement of which He speaks is not ceremonial. It is not an observable or external situation. This is a condition that exists primarily between the individual and God, and secondarily between the individual and the people of God. As confirmed in the following verses, it is most serious.

“21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.”

Jesus had already said that something entering into a person from without cannot defile him “because it entereth not into his heart” (Mk 7:19). Now the Lord will affirm that defilement originates within – “out of the heart.”

Jeremiah said of the heart of unregenerate men, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer 17:9). Following the fall of man, and before the flood, God said of humanity as a whole, “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). After the flood He said, “the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 8:21). David said man was “shapen in iniquity,” or was “sinful at birth,” NIV (Psa 51:5). This is what requires that men receive a “new heart” (Ezek 36:26). However, even when a “new heart” is received, the people of God are warned, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12).

Jesus lists certain things that issue forth from the heart – things that involve desire and will, determination and preference. By saying they come from the heart, He is saying they are not inadvertent or accidental, but are expressions of the real person.

For those who are in Christ Jesus, the Spirit will lead them in mortifying these things, so that they are not given a way to express themselves (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5). However, if they are granted the right to express themselves, they must be acknowledged for that they are – confessed to be sin. The person must also be purged of the defilement that they have caused by confessing them to the Lord (1 John 1:9). These are very real transgressions, and the defilement that they cause is also a reality.

EVIL THOUGHTS. “Evil” speaks of corrupt, flawed, harmful, and worthless. “Thoughts” include considerations, purposes, imaginations, reasoning, deliberating, diagnosing, and judging. These all contaminate, defile, and render the individual offensive to God and unfit for to Him. Only the “fiery darts” of the devil are excluded (Eph 6:16).

ADULTERIES. This is the intimate involvement of married persons with someone other than their spouses. Such activity defiles individuals, excluding them from the Lord.

FORNICATIONS. This includes intimacy between the unmarried, harlotry, incest, bestiality, sodomy, and other forms of fleshly gratification. They make a person abominable.

MURDERS. This is willfully taking the life of another. It includes the normal concept of murder, abortion, euthanasia, and even the hatred of the brethren.

THEFTS. This includes stealing, extortion, robbery, and taking to oneself something that does not belong to the individual. This too defiles the individual, making him unclean before God.

COVETOUSNESS. This expression includes greed, avarice, a desire to have more than is

suitable, wanting what belongs to someone else, a love for and service of money, and giving grudgingly. This sin also excludes one from the kingdom of God.

WICKEDNESS. This sin includes malice, evil purposes and desires, self-centeredness, and intentionally practiced ill-will and evil. It too is contaminating and defiling.

DECEIT. This sin includes guile, craft, pretension, subtility, trickery, deception, treachery, and fraud. It defiles all who express it.

LASCIVIOUSNESS. This is unbridled lust, wantonness, shameless indulgence, sensuality, indecency, debauchery, and flagrant immorality. It always defiles.

AN EVIL EYE. This refers to *“the lust of the eye”* – seeking unlawful gratification by means of the eye. It includes looking at a woman to lust after her, seeking for an opportunity to do evil to someone, and watching for someone to make a mistake. Such an “eye” defiles, soils, and contaminates the individual who has it.

BLASPHEMY. This is derisive speech and includes slander, injurious speech, speaking reproachfully, reviling, defaming, and insulting. It makes the person unclean.

PRIDE. This refers to the lifting up of oneself, and includes haughtiness, arrogance, looking down on others, contempt for others, and a conscious effort to appear above others. This is a sin that causes a person to be hated by God (Prov 6:16-17).

FOOLISHNESS. This includes folly, thoughtlessness, recklessness lack of good sense, and not using one’s ability to understand. Such expressions are never innocent, and always cause the person to become defiled.

Matthew adds **FALSE WITNESS** (Matt 15:19). This sin includes a false testimony, perjury, lying, deliberately misrepresenting something, distorting the facts in order to make oneself appear better, and encouraging a false judgment. Such a person is unclean before God.

All of these, coming from within, make the one who commits them unclean, unsuitable, and an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. That is a most serious situation!

“ 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

EVIL THINGS. Other versions read *“evils,”* NIV *“wicked things,”* DARBY *“vile things,”* NLT and *“evil [purposes and desires.]”* AMPLIFIED

Jesus classifies all of these expressions as *“these evil things.”* That is, they are **expressions** of *“evil.”* These are the eruptions of a poisoned well, and the springing forth of a contaminated fountain. If men are going to be successful in dealing with sin, they must first learn to call it what it is – *“evil.”*

The expression *“evil things”* comes from, a single word that means, “disadvantageous, bad, harmful, painful, unprofitable and unserviceable” THAYER That means it is intrinsically “bad” – like a rotten fruit. It means it is “harmful” – like poison. It is “unprofitable” – like a cancer. It is “unserviceable” – like a book that has been burned to ashes. Something that is *“evil”* cannot be made good. There is no good use for it. Nothing good can come from it.

This is why the devil is called *“the evil one”* NKJV (Matt 6:13; John 17:15; 2 Thess 3:3). He is the incarnation of *“evil,”* and is the promoter and sustainer of it. When a person does these *“evil things,”* he has been motivated and enslaved by the devil, for *“Whosoever committeth sin*

is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). These are “*things*” that serve Satan’s purpose and promote his cause. They provide an arena in which he can work without obstruction or hindrance.

Men may refer to the mistakes they have made. Jesus refers to “*these evil things.*” Those with no understanding may search their past to see how they have inherited such dreadful tendencies. Jesus will remind them they are “*evil things.*” The imagined expert in human behavior may speak of chemical imbalance, overactive hormones, and congenital defects. Jesus will say we are dealing with “*evil things.*” The sociologist may testify to us of the impact of culture, and the unavoidable affect of it upon those caught in it. The Lord Jesus will testify that such expressions are “*evil things.*”

COME FROM WITHIN. Matthew says, “*Those things . . . come forth from the heart*” (Matt 15:18). They are not involuntary expressions, but deliberate and voluntary ones. Those who commit these “*evil things*” are not victims, but transgressors. The manifestations of them are not mistakes but wickedness. Such people have not been disadvantaged by their parents, their physiological makeup, or their environment. Their flaw is in their character, their heart, and within their essential being. The issue here is not really what they do, but what they **are**, because it is what they **ARE** that makes them do what they do. They have not been forced to commit “*evil things,*” but have done so willingly. They thought about these “*evil things,*” and then did them. They wanted to do them, and so they did.

When we are addressing the matter of professing “*Christians*” doing these things, they are still “*evil things.*” Being a “*Christian*” does not make them any less evil, or any more tolerable to the Lord. They have come “*from within*” these people just as surely as they did with the scribes and Pharisees, Judas, Herod, and Pilate.

Doctrinally, the Spirit provides some explanations for the eruption of “*evil things*” within those who profess to have faith. Their minds have been “*corrupted*” by the devil (2 Cor 11:3). Satan had taken them “*captive,*” to do his will (2 Tim 2:26). An “*evil heart of unbelief*” has been found in them (Heb 3:12). They have “*drawn back*” from the Lord rather than living “*by faith*” (Heb 10:38-39). They have been “*overtaken in a fault*” (Gal 6:1). They have not used the “*way of escape*” that is provided with every temptation (1 Cor 10:13). They have been “*unbelieving*” (Tit 1:15). They have made a place for the devil (Eph 4:27). They have “*hardness*” and an “*impenitent heart*” (Rom 2:5). They have not only been “*drawn away*” by their “*own lust,*” but that lust has conceived and brought “*forth sin*” (James 1:14-15).

Sin – “*these evil things*” – is always a most serious matter! When it is committed, it is because a major flaw exists within, and that flaw must be addressed.

DEFILE THE MAN. Matthew reads, “*These are **the things** which defile a man*” (Matt 15:20). Other versions read, “*they “make a man unclean.”* NIV “*make you unacceptable to God,*” NLT “*make you unfit for God,*” LIVING “*make a person unholy,*” IE “*make him foul,*” WILLIAMS and “*make the man unclean and render him unhallowed.*” AMPLIFIED

Who cannot see the seriousness of the condition? Here are transgressions that some have attempted to dignify, while others have labored to provide convenient explanations for their presence. However, for those with an “*honest and good heart*” (Lk 8:15), these things call for an instant and earnest confession to the Lord, and the appropriation of the promised cleansing (1 John 1:9). The unfit condition that they induce will not eventually wear off. It must be cleansed, and the defiled conscience purged, by the blood of Christ. If men fail to acquire the required remedy, they will remain in a “*defiled*” condition, excluded from heaven, into which it is not possible for anything

that defileth to enter (Rev 21:27). It is no wonder that believers are exhorted, *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Cor 7:1).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 80

“Mark 7:24 And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. 25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: 26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.”

(Mark 7:24-26; Matthew 15:21-28)

INTRODUCTION

As Aquila and Priscilla did with Apollos, Jesus had just “*expounded*” to His disciples “*the way of the Lord more perfectly*” (Acts 18:26). Now, because He operated in strict accord with the Father’s agenda, He goes to another place to do another work. His teaching and His works combined to make known the will of the Lord and the nature of the coming day of salvation. It is becoming increasingly apparent that Jesus did not allow any individual or group of individuals to monopolize His attention. While He came to “*minister*” to the people (Matt 20:28), He did not allow them to set the agenda for that ministry. There were occasions when He would send the multitudes away while He departed to a mountain to pray: “*And when He had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray*” (Mk 6:46). There were other times when He sent them away in order that He might go to another place: “. . .and He sent them away. And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha” (Mk 8:9-10). We have made considerable progress when we perceive and receive the fact that Jesus does not bend His activities around our circumstances. For that reason, we are at our best when we have an understanding of the “*good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*” (Rom 12:2). We must have faith to see that we are more greatly blessed when we are consciously and willingly in the center of that will.

“ Mk 7:24 And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid.”

FROM THENCE HE AROSE. Jesus had been in “*the land of Gennesaret*” (Mk 6:53). This was a small region, or district, on the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was distinguished for its beauty and fertility, being about four miles long and three miles wide. However, its external beauty and fertility were not enough to keep Jesus there. Just as surely as Jesus was “*led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil*” (Matt 4:1), so Divine prompting and His perception of the purpose of God dictated where He went. He perfectly lived out what He taught men to pray: “*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*” (Matt 6:10). His “*meat,*” or nourishment, was to do “*do the will of Him that sent*” Him (John 4:34). He confessed, “*For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me*” (John 6:38). When it comes to His works – what He did and where He went – He clearly affirmed, “*The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise*” (John 5:19).

In this, Jesus set the tone for all of life. Life is not to be lived for self, but unto, or toward, the One who has redeemed us. *“And that He died for all, that they which live **should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again**”* (2 Cor 5:15). This runs counter to all worldly perspective. Further, sin renders a person incapable of seeing this, for there is no sin that can be committed, whether great or small, that is not driven by the conclusion that the most important person in all of the world is “me.” Jesus refused to think in this way, and He can empower us to also avoid being misdirected into our own fleshly desires, ambitions, and purposes – even though some of them appear to be rather dignified.

THE BORDERS OF TYRE AND SIDON. Matthew says He came *“into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon”* (Matt 15:21) – not necessarily “coasts” as in sea-coats, but as in borders or outward boundaries. Early in Mark, we were told that some people from Tyre and Sidon came to Jesus when He had withdrawn *“with His disciples to the sea”* (Mk 3:8). Luke declares that these were *“sea coast”* towns (Lk 6:17). The book of Acts tells us that wicked king Herod was *“highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon”* (Acts 12:20).

This was a Gentile area – Syro-Phoenicia, or the northern portion of Phoenicia, a country on the coast of Syria. Jesus did not enter into these cities, but came to their *“borders.”* Originally, “Tyre” and “Sidon” (Zidon) were given to the tribe of Asher. Tyre was described as a *“strong city”* (Josh 19:24-29). In ancient times Sidon served the gods Baalim and Ashtaroth (Judges 10:6). Because of their wickedness, Jeremiah spoke of God cutting off *“every helper”* from Tyre and Sidon. God brought Nebuchadnezzar against Tyre who devastated their city slaughtering their daughters and clearing it off like the *“top of a rock”* (Ezek 26:7-14). Jesus once upbraided Chorazin and Bethsaida saying, *“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes”* (Matt 11:21).

Now Jesus comes into the borders of these cities. **He does not come to preach to the cities themselves, but to bring grace to one of their inhabitants.** Here is a marvelous example of the works of the Father and of the precision with which they are carried out.

HE ENTERED INTO AN HOUSE. The identity of this house is not given. However, it is clear that someone from that area was amiable, receiving the Lord into their house. I gather that in the ultimate sense, what Jesus had instructed the disciples to do when He sent them out, was also done here. *“And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you”* (Matt 10:11-13). This, then, must have been a *“worthy”* house that realized the peace of Christ because of the hospitality of the owner.

WOULD HAVE NO MAN KNOW IT. *“ . . . and wanted no one to know it.”* NKJV There are times when the general knowledge of Jesus is not desired. Such times, when He withdrew Himself, were not frequent. However, there were times when the Lord’s work was focused, and was not intended for those with only nominal interest.

HE COULD NOT BE HID. It was not possible for Jesus to keep His presence secret – and He still cannot do so. There is such greatness and uniqueness in the Lord that He demands attention. If the light of His disciples cannot be hidden (Matt 5:14), you may be sure that the *“Light of the world”* Himself cannot be concealed. This is owing to the contrast of Divine influence with that of the flesh. The light of Jesus shined so brightly that all other lights paled in comparison, thus drawing the attention to Him. From yet another vantage point, this is the drawing power of the Son (John 12:32). The failure of the professed church to declare and expound the Christ of God is a significant

reason for men's failure to seek Him.

“ 25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet. ”

A CERTAIN WOMAN. This woman is the reason Jesus came into this area, and as soon as He has blessed her, He will depart from that place (Mk 7:31). How often specific individuals are singled out in the record God has given of His Son. A “*certain scribe*” said he would follow Jesus anywhere He went (Matt 8:19). A “*certain ruler*,” Jairus by name, petitioned Jesus concerning his daughter (Matt 9:18). A “*certain man*” pled with Jesus concerning his son (Matt 17:14). A “*certain woman*” with an issue of blood came in faith to Him (Mk 5:25). A “*certain poor widow*” cast “*two mites*” into the Temple treasury (Mk 12:42). A “*certain centurion*” besought Jesus in behalf of his servant (Lk 7:2). A “*certain ruler*” asked Jesus about eternal life (Lk 18:18). A “*certain blind man*,” Bartimaeus by name, called out for Jesus to have mercy upon him (Lk 18:35). A “*certain nobleman*” besought Jesus to come down and heal his son (John 4:46).

There is one thing all of these people had in common: **they came to Jesus** . Whether a scribe, a ruler, a father, a widow, a blind man, a nobleman, or, as in this text, a mother, they became “*certain*” persons when they approached Jesus. They at once rose above their peers, the eyes of the Lord were upon them, and His ears open to their cry.

The true identity of a person is determined by their spiritual posture. Their quest for the Lord is what truly distinguishes them. When, for example, Paul affirmed his determination to “*know*” Christ, “*win*” Christ, be “*found in Him*” with a righteousness from God, and experience the “*power of His resurrection*” and the “*fellowship of His sufferings*,” he became “*a certain man.*” Those who are honored by God are not signaled by their gender, nationality, education, or natural gifts and abilities. Such people are not written in God's “*book of remembrance*” (Mal 3:16). In a day that is marked by religious superfluosity, this is an especially important observation. Precious few are known in the average church for their insatiable appetite for Christ and the things of God. Those who lack this distinction are, in a very real sense, nobodies – lost in the troubled sea of humanity.

WHOSE DAUGHTER HAD AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT. Mark says the girl was a “*young daughter.*” Another version read “*little daughter.*” NIV The same word is used of Jairus' daughter, whom, we are told, was twelve years of age (Mk 5:23,42).

Unclean spirits contaminated the individual, rendering them unfit to be in public, whether by disease, deformity, or some other means. Grown men have been known to be dominated by such spirits (Mk 1:23). The wild man who lived among the tombs also had such an unclean spirit (Mk 5:2,8). One man's son had an “*unclean spirit*” who caused the boy to jump in fire and water, and even fall on the ground foaming at the mouth (Matt 17:15; Lk 9:39,42).

HEARD OF HIM. This is the reason Jesus could not be hid: “ . . . *but He could not be hid. For a certain woman . . .* ” (Mark 7:24-25). Jesus had come within the proximity of this woman. He will not come directly to her, as He did to the Gadarene demoniac (Matt 8:28). Instead He will come to her area like the sun rises to illuminate a certain domain.

Two factors will become prominent. **First** , the reputation of Jesus will be connected to His Person. **Second** , a certain drawing power will be exerted by this accurate report. Enough cannot be said about the church presenting a proper picture of the Lord Jesus. There is no effective drawing power in the chronicling of “*another Jesus*” (2 Cor 11:4). I am persuaded that professed “*Christian*” people continually seek help from unlawful sources because, all too often, they have not heard of the real Jesus.

Now, in this day of salvation, the proper presentation of Jesus is found in the “*Gospel of Christ*” (Rom 1:16), or the “*record God has given of His Son*” (1 John 5:10-11). That record is to men today what the outward visitations of Jesus of Nazareth were to the people while He walked among men in the “*likeness of sinful flesh*” (John 1:14; Rom 8:3). Where that Gospel is preached, those with honest and good hearts will be drawn to Christ. Where that Gospel is not preached, that drawing will not occur, but men will remain in darkness.

FELL AT HIS FEET. The pretentious culture of our day, with all of its equal rights and freedom of speech, has robbed men of a sense of awe in the presence of the Lord. Falling at Jesus feet reveals a recognition of who He is, and a humble submission to Him. Jairus “*fell at His feet*” (Mk 5:22). The one leper among ten who were healed returned and “*fell down on his face at His feet*” (Lk 17:16). Following the death of Lazarus, when Mary went out to meet Jesus, she “*fell down at His feet*” (John 11:32). When Jesus was transfigured, and a voice from heaven told them “*Hear Him!*” the disciples “*fell on their face*” (Matt 17:6). The woman healed of the issue of blood “*fell down before Him*” (Mk 5:33). When Simon Peter realized the Person of Christ He “*fell down at Jesus’ knees*” (Lk 5:8). Paul said a person who entered an assembly where the presence of the Lord was obvious (through prophecy), would “*fall down on his face*” (1 Cor 14:25). The absence of this kind of spirit betrays an inexcusable level of spiritual ignorance.

“ 26 *The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.*”

THE WOMAN. The woman was “*a Greek.*” This word was used as a synonym for Gentile. In Christ, there is said to be “*neither Jew nor Greek*” (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). The Gospel is God’s “*power unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (Rom 1:16). So far as heaven is concerned, “*there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek*” (Rom 10:12). This views the woman **from the standpoint of language**, for under the leadership of Alexander the Great, the whole world had been brought to speak Greek. The Hebrews, on the other hand, had their own language – one of the means by which they were separated from the rest of the world. Their speech is referred to as “*the Jews’ language*” (2 Kgs 18:26,28; Neh 13:24; Isa 36:11,13).

She was also “*a Syrophenician by nation*” – i.e., of the Syrian nation. This refers to her birth, or family lineage – “*of the Syrophenician race.*” NIV This views the woman from the standpoint of ethnicity, when the customs, language, and social views of a group of people are maintained. She was not from the promised land, and did not maintain its customs.

Matthew says she was “*a woman of Canaan*” (Matt 15:22). This was a “*Canaanite woman*” NASB She was of the offspring of “*Canaan,*” son of Ham who was cursed by Noah (Gen 9:25). Nations springing from Canaan include Jebusite, Amorite, Girgasite, Hivite – all of which were among the nations expelled from the land of Canaan (Deut 7:1).

Therefore, from the standpoint of language, ethnicity, and lineage, this woman was under a curse, and excluded from the promises of God. Yet, when she heard of Jesus, all of this was swallowed up by hope, and she pressed in to the Master.

SHE BESOUGHT HIM. Other versions read she “*kept asking,*” NKJV “*begged,*” NASB “*made a request,*” BBE and “*kept begging Him.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew says she “*cried unto Him,*” or “*started shouting*” NRSV (Matt 15:22).

There are several things to be seen here. First there was a strong request, entreaty, or

begging – “*besought*.” Second, there was perseverance, or not fainting – “*kept asking*,” “*kept begging*.” Third there was fervency – “*started shouting*.” She marshaled all of her natural powers, both of mind and body, in her quest. She sought the Lord with all of her “*strength*.”

Matthew tells us more of what she actually said. “*O Lord, Thou Son of David*” (Matt 15:22). This was not a Jew, but a Canaanite. Yet, because of the proclamation of the Jews, particularly those who had been exposed to Jesus, she had obtained a proper view of Him. She referred to Him as “*Lord*” – Supreme in authority, Controller, Master. When a person calls Jesus “*Lord*,” there is an inference that the person himself belongs to Jesus, and that He can do with the person whatever He wills. This Gentile woman saw Jesus of Nazareth as the Possessor and Distributor of all things – the Sovereign Owner of all.

In the Gospels alone, Jesus is referred to as “*Lord*” over 240 times. Approaching the Savior as “*Lord*” is quite different from coming to Him with words like, “If you are real, show Yourself to me.” In my judgment, one of the sure evidences of spiritual retrogression is common and demeaning views of the Lord Jesus – when He is made more earthy than Divine, and is set forth as more from earth than from heaven.

The woman, though a Gentile, referred to Jesus as “*Thou Son of David*” (Matt 15:22). This was a purely Jewish view of the Messiah, and yet they had so declared this truth that those familiar with them knew certain things about the Messiah – namely that He was of the kingly lineage of David – a Jewish king. **It ought to be noted that proper views of Jesus add great weight to our supplications.**

THAT HE WOULD CAST FORTH THE DEVIL. The woman “*kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter*.” NKJV Matthew points out that she identified her daughter’s difficulty: “*My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil*,” or *suffering terribly from demon-possession*,” NASB or “*tormented by a demon*” (Matt 15:22). How did the woman know it was a demon? In all of the Old Covenant Scriptures, for example, there are four references to “*devils*,” or “*demons*” (Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; 2 Chron 11:15; Psa 106:37). Yet, during the ministry of Jesus people had apparently become acutely aware of this world of wicked spirits – a domain of evil spirits that has no regard for humanity, but seeks to wreak havoc among and upon both young and old.

Here is an example of intercession. Apparently the daughter could not speak for herself, so her mother spoke for her. Note that the demon could not stop the mother from coming to Jesus or pleading her case. She was an effective intercessor because she had an awareness of the real problem. She also had an understanding of the identity of the real Lord. She was also convinced that He could be favorably touched concerning the need of her daughter.

This account should encourage us to be faithful in making “*intercessions*” (1 Tim 2:1), asking for life for the fallen (1 John 5:16), and converting sinners from the error of their way (James 5:20). We should also be encouraged to stand in the gap for the fallen (Ezek 22:30).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 81

“ Mark 7:27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. 28 And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. 29 And e said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed. ”

(Mark 7:27-30; Matthew 15:23-28)

INTRODUCTION

From “*the land of Gennesaret,*” Jesus “*went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon.*” He will go there to do the Father’s will. It will not be to reach a country, or a city, but to reward the faith of one poor woman. She was not qualified by race, for she was “*a Canaanite woman.*” NASB She was not qualified by nation, for she was a “*Greek, a Syrophenician by nation.*” Yet, as we will find, faith rises above all disqualifications, marking out the individual for Divine blessing. No person with faith can be circumscribed, or delimited, by the flesh. Further, faith and flesh cannot mix, for where faith is found, flesh loses all of its power. It can only dominate where unbelief sits upon the throne of the heart. This account will also confirm to our hearts that faith is persistent, and not easily discouraged. It does not reason upon the basis of personal inabilities or disqualifications, as confirmed in Abraham, who, when promised a son in his old age, was “*not weak in faith,*” and “*considered not his own body now dead . . . neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb*” (Rom 4:19). In the case before us, however, we have an instance that differs from that of Abraham. Abraham had a word from God – this woman did not. Abraham reasoned upon a promise from God. This woman reasoned upon the kingly nature of the Lord (“*Son of David*”), and what she perceived to be His propensity to show mercy. We will also find in this text that Jesus will speak so as to discover the faith of the individual. That is what the Lord is looking for now, just as surely as when He returns (Lk 18:8). The presence of faith justifies the bestowment of grace upon the individual.

“ Mk 7:27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.”

HE ANSWERED HER NOT A WORD. Matthew says that Jesus did not answer the repeated petitions of the woman: “*But He answered her not a word.*” On the surface it appeared as though He was ignoring her, apparently not even acknowledging that He was aware of her. However, we know from the sequence of events that followed that this was not the case. This is an aspect of the Divine nature with which we do well to acquaint ourselves. We are living in a society that moves people to demand attention, and disdain those who do not run to its beck and call. Jesus, however, will not structure His activities around any individual. He is driven by a higher agenda.

Matthew also records, “*And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us*” (Matt 15:23). The woman proved to be an aggravation to the disciples. Yet, they did not take it upon themselves to tell the woman to leave. Even in their undeveloped spiritual condition, they knew Jesus was the Master, not themselves.

Our Lord’s reply to the disciples is interesting: “*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt 15:24). Note, not the “*sheep of Israel,*” but the “**LOST** *sheep of the house of Israel.*” This emphasizes that Jesus did not come to satisfy Israel’s desire, but to meet their Divinely stated need. In this saying He reveals that “*Send her away*” actually meant, “answer her petition so we can get on our way.” Jesus replies that this would violate the general direction of His ministry. When He entered the world, He was coming to “*His own*” – the Jews (John 1:11). In keeping with His commission, Jesus had told His disciples, “*But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt 10:6). He was a “*Child*” born to them, and a “*Son*” given to them (Isa 9:6). Even after God raised Jesus from the dead, He was first declared to Israel, to bless them (Acts 3:25-26).

Strictly speaking, this did not reflect a thorough view of Christ’s ministry, but rather its initial focus. Later in His ministry He will acknowledge, “*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd*” (John 10:16). In a sense, this woman’s plea was untimely, yet it was in keeping with the Divine nature. She, like David, was ahead of her time.

BUT JESUS SAID UNTO HER. Now, for the first time, Jesus addresses the woman. Matthew tells us of an additional action of the woman that preceded this reply. “*Then came she and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me*” (Matt 15:25). It is this circumstance that prompted our Lord’s response, and a gentle one it was!

LET THE CHILDREN FIRST BE FILLED. It is as though the table of mercy had been spread, but it was for “*the Jew first.*” (Rom 1:16). Let them eat and be filled first – then she could share in what was left. It is not that there was not enough mercy to go around. The Lord is “*abundant in mercy*” (Num 14:18; Psa 86:5,15). Jesus is speaking of the technical priority of the house of Israel. They are the ones to whom the promises were given (Rom 9:4), and they are the ones to whom Jesus was first ministering.

IT IS NOT MEET. Other versions read “*it is not good,*” NKJV “*it is not right,*” NASB “*it is not fair,*” NRSV “*it is not becoming,*” MRD and “*not becoming, proper, or right.*” AMPLIFIED Now Jesus speaks from the legal and strictly righteous point of view. If the woman approaches Him upon the basis of what is right and fair, then her petition is not reasonable. Her need, as great as it may be, cannot vault her into a more prominent position than the Jews. Either there must be a higher principle to which she must appeal, or her petition will not be granted.

“THE DOGS.” The word translated “*dogs*” means “*little house dogs,*” AMPLIFIED not the ravenous dogs of Jeremiah that “*tear*” and jeopardized the people (Jer 15:3). These are not the “*dogs*” of the wicked who compassed David, threatening his life (Psa 22:16). Jesus was saying, “You do not take food that was prepared for the people of the house, and give it to the “house pets.” These were “*dogs*” that were in the house, but they were not of the house. They lived in proximity of the household, but were not themselves integral members of it.

There is an approach to religion that looks for what technically can or cannot be done. Thus people will say, “I do not see anything wrong with that,” or “The Bible doesn’t say we cannot do this, or absolutely must do that.” This is not, however, a good way of thinking –

particularly in this “*day of salvation,*” when the “*Sun of righteousness*” has risen with “*healing in His wings*” (Mal 4:2). That would be like asking Jesus if “*seven times*” was the appointed limit placed on the times a “*brother*” could be forgiven. Jesus replied that if a person wanted to think in such terms “490” would be the proper number – “*seventy times seven*” Matt 18:22-23).

On such grounds, by the Savior’s own words, it was not appropriate to extend unusual mercy to this Gentile woman. In saying this, Jesus is testing the faith of this Canaanite. How much does she really see of Him, and how persuaded is she that He is a Rewarder?

“ 28 And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.”

SHE ANSWERED. Faith brings great boldness and confidence to the one having it. It is one thing for the Lord to say, “*Come now, and let us reason together*” (Isa 1:18). **It is quite another thing to actually engage in reasoning with the Lord.**

Job once said of such reasoning, “*How much less shall I answer Him, and choose out my words to reason with Him?*” (Job 9:14). Later he said that he desired “*to reason with God*” (Job 13:3). Yet, when actually given a chance to do so he said to the Lord, “*Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth*” (Job 40:4). **The presence of the Lord is, indeed, intimidating to anyone and anything but a robust faith!**

When Abraham began to reason with God concerning sparing any righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, he humbly said, “*Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes*” (Gen 18:27). When addressing a petition to the Lord Ezra said, “*O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God*” (Ezra 9:6). When Isaiah stood before the Lord he said, “*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*” (Isa 6:5).

When the Lord admonishes His people “*Take with you words, and turn to the Lord*” (Hos 14:2), **the manner in which the Lord is addressed** is intended as well as petitions that are set before Him. Some indication ought to be given of one’s persuasion that what God has said – particularly about people – is true. **No person can afford to come before the living God with a major misconception of His being and will.** You may remember that one servant was cut off because he has wrongly perceived the nature of the Master (Lk 19:21-22). The Psalmist reminds us that God will reprove the person who imagines that God is like himself (Psa 50:21). Such perceptions are lost when people are swept up in a departure from the faith.

Now, how will this Gentile woman respond to the Lord? How will she address Him, and what will she say? Her words will declare the kind of person she is and what she has seen.

YES LORD! Other versions read “*Truth, Lord,*” GENEVA “*Yes, my Lord,*” MRD “*That’s true, Lord,*” NLT “*even so, Lord,*” PNT and “*even so, Master.*” TNT Matthew reads, “*And she said, Truth, Lord!*” (Matt 15:27a). That is equivalent to Eli’s response when he heard of the impending judgment against his wayward sons, “*It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good*” (1 Sam 3:18). It has the spirit of Hezekiah’s response to the Lord’s word about coming tumult: “*Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken*” (Isa 39:8).

This woman does not reply with “*Why?*” She finds no fault with the Divine arrangement. Nor, indeed, does she shrink back in unbelief as though the Lord’s words shut her up to a state of hopelessness. In her we see that **faith will find a way of blending what the**

Lord says with who the Lord is – for that blessed harmony surely exists. Those who insist upon thinking on the surface or within the parameters of rules, are not able to think in this manner.

EATING THE CHILDREN’S CRUMBS. The woman recognizes that **every aspect** of the bread belongs to the children – even the crumbs, or small morsels of leftovers – “*the children’s crumbs.*” She does not claim that any of the benefits actually belong to her. Yet, she also knows that “*children*” allow their little house dogs to be “*under the table.*” Matthew reads, “*yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table*” (Matt 15:27). That is, it is not that the householder handed the “*dogs*” some morsels. Rather, they were crumbs that fell from the table. The Amplified Version suggests that they actually fell from the table of the younger ones: “*the crumbs that fall from their [young] master’s table.*”

This woman does not approach Jesus as a “*daughter of Abraham*” (Lk 13:16). She claims no right to the richness of the Master’s table, but classes herself with the “*dogs,*” who subsisted on things that were not actually prepared especially for them.

This woman also perceived the smallness of what she asked in comparison to what the Lord **could** do. Her request did not require an epochal work, but only some “*crumbs*” of mercy. She asked for nothing more than a relatively small benefit while Jesus was ministering to others. For her, the work was great. For Jesus it was small – only some “*crumbs*” from the main meal. She does not ask for a special meal, but just a portion of what Jesus was already serving to the children – the “*house of Israel.*” She had no doubt heard of His great works in Galilee, the land of Genessaret, the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jerusalem, Capernaum, and Bethsaida. Multitudes were healed. Multitudes were fed. But she is willing to settle for what is left over, without in any way distracting the Lord from His primary mission.

Little did this woman know that Jesus had, in fact, come into the border of Tyre and Sidon especially for her sake. She had no idea that He had left another area to seek and find her . But, that is the way faith is. It does not view the Lord has bending His purpose and work around the individual. Divine workings are rather perceived as tokens of mercy and grace.

“ 29 And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.”

FOR THIS SAYING. When we reason with the Lord, how important are our words? Are we just to depend upon God deciphering our clumsy expressions, glibly passing off our petition by saying, “Lord, you know what I mean?” Indeed, this is not the case at all. Our words are to be considered and measured when we come before the God of heaven. Solomon said, “*Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God : for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few*” (Eccl 5:2).

In the case before us, the woman from Canaan has spoken in strict harmony with the mind and purpose of the Lord. She saw things as they really were, and precisely uttered them. Now Jesus says to her, “*For this SAYING, go thy way!*” Other versions read, “*such a reply,*” NASB “*this answer,*” NIV “*this word,*” DARBY “*this statement,*” ESV “*this speech,*” MRD and “*Because you have answered so well.*” NLT That is, because of her response to Jesus’ statement about it not being appropriate to give the children’s bread to dogs.

Normally, it was the word of Christ Himself that constrained demons to leave those whom they possessed (Matt 8:16; 17:18; Mk 9:25). Here, however, the departure of the demon

is credited to the woman: *“For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.”* Among other things, this confirms that the *“powers of darkness”* yield to the truth of God.

In recent years it has become popular for certain national evangelists to distort a Solomonic proverb: *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue”* (Prov 18:21). It is taught that certain words cause certain things to happen because of an inexorable law. No matter who says the words, they have power. Our text confirms this is not the case. Words without faith have not one speck of power, and there is no purported law that can impart power to faithless words.

GREAT IS THY FAITH. Matthew’s record of this event emphasizes that faith is what moved the woman to **say** the words, and her faith **made them effective**, not the mere words themselves. Jesus gave her the desires of her heart (*“even as thou wilt”*). This was in strict accord with the promise, *“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart”* (Psa 37:4). **It is a great day when your faith matches your desires.** This is a wonderful benefit, particularly of the New Covenant, that few seem to realize.

The greatness of this woman’s faith revealed her perception of Christ’s person and power. She was not mimicking what others had said, but had seen the truth herself. She had also seen that even a morsel of truth has liberating power. That power, though derived from what appeared to be but a remnant of a fuller word, had satisfying and effectual power.

Her faith was also able to associate the power of Christ with her own need – a daughter that was afflicted by a harassing demon. Before a person can receive great blessing from Christ, religion must be removed from the philosophical domain. Men must cease to speculate about what can or cannot be done, and become *“strong in faith, giving glory to God”* (Rom 4:20).

THE DEMON HAS LEFT. Jesus said, *“the devil IS gone out of thy daughter.”* The daughter was not there, so her mother must receive this word by faith. However, the faith that can perceive Divine potential can also take hold of it in the present. If ever faith can *“come”* to the individual (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:25), it brings a very thorough blessing. It can see what **HAS** been done, as well as what **CAN** be done. Matthew reads, *“And her daughter was made whole from that very hour”* (Matt 15:28b).

SHE FOUND THE DEMON GONE. *“And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed”* (Mark 7:30). Faith kept this woman on the way back to her house, for faith does not vacillate. One version suggests that the demon threw the child down on his way out of her: *“And she went home and found the child **thrown** on the couch, and the demon departed.”* **AMPLIFIED** The word translated *“lying”* does mean *“to cast down or throw down.”* It should not surprise us that a demon would do this. Once, when Jesus cast a demon out of a young boy, the demon *“convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, ‘He is dead’”* NKJV (Mark 9:26). Another time, when Jesus cast a demon out of a man in the local synagogue, it is written, *“And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him **and did not hurt him”*** (Luke 4:35). This was not always the case. However, there were times when the demons made a final effort to destroy their victims, yet were powerless to do so. It was no different with the daughter of this woman.

Just as surely as Lazarus was raised from the dead, retaining his grave clothes (John 11:44), and a young boy was dispossessed of a demon yet appeared dead (Mk 9:26), so this young girl had been delivered from demon possession, but remained lying on her bed. However, none of those cases remained that way. They were fully liberated. Satan does not

always easily release his victims.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 82

“ Mark 7:31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32 And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him. 33 And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; 34 And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.” (Mark 7:31-34; Matthew 15:29-31)

INTRODUCTION

After going into the “*borders of Tyre and Sidon,*” Jesus has just finished healing the demon-oppressed daughter of a Canaanite woman. According to the record, He immediately leaves that area, having completed what He came there to do. Jesus once said that He came “*to seek and to save the lost*” (Lk 19:10). That mission did not involve extensive time being spent in “*borders of Tyre and Sidon,*” although there were no doubt multitudes of people in that area who could properly be classified as “*lost.*” Jesus had also further defined His mission to the lost, saying these very words after arriving in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon – “*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt 15:24). Yet, although His focus was Israel, He did not limit His work to them. There were some Gentile souls whose faith justified Jesus turning aside from Israel to be merciful to them. The Canaanite woman was such a person, as well as a Gentile centurion (Matt 8:10). Jesus said that both of these individuals had “*great*” faith (Matt 15:28; Lk 7:9). He never said that of any Israelite. Here we can see several things. First, the Divine agenda is not driven by human circumstance. Second, where unusual faith is found, an unusual blessing will be experienced. Third, Divine priorities do not mean any seeking soul will be denied. No person who is earnestly seeking the Lord, or who has a strong faith in Him, is to imagine he will be denied, or that the purpose and works of God are intended to exclude him. Faith is an indication of involvement in the purpose of God, not of exclusion from it.

“ Mk 7:31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.”

AGAIN DEPARTING. Other versions read, “*Then Jesus left,*” NASB “*And again He went,*” NIV “*Then He returned,*” NRSV and “*Then Jesus left the vicinity.*” NIB That is, Jesus had finished what He came to do, and so He left the area. Here is how wonderfully minute the purpose of God is – it includes leaving a primary place to go to a cursed place, and bless one poor soul. The word “*again*” means Jesus returned to the place from whence He had come. This also removes any boast that the Lord’s work centers in a certain person, or that He becomes absorbed in the affairs of one individual. **People – all people – are the recipients of grace that includes things larger than themselves.** Properly seen, grace brings us into accord with the Lord –

a place where we can willingly adopt the will and purpose of Another who is greater than ourselves.

CAME UNTO THE SEA OF GALILEE. Matthew says He “*came nigh unto the sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain, and sat there*” (Matt 15:29). While there, “*great multitudes came unto Him having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them*” (Matt 15:30). This larger scene might appear to be more impressive, with multitudes of people and numerous healings. However, there is more mercy in this incident than there is faith. In this greater gathering “*the multitude wondered,*” and though they “*glorified the God of Israel,*” yet there was no commendation of their faith as there was with the Syrophenician woman. Which incident do you suppose brought more joy to the heart of the Lord Jesus?

To be sure, the Lord “*delighteth in mercy*” (Micah 7:18). Yet, beholding faith brings even greater delight to the Lord, opening the door for greater benefits. While in a mountain near to the sea of Galilee, the people came to Him, and He healed their sick. But when He was in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, a woman pled for mercy for her daughter, and Jesus healed the girl without her being present, doing so because of the faith of her mother. Which incident is more impressive? Which one opens the door of possibility wider? This by no means disparages the great works Jesus did on this mountain. It does, however, encourage us to think more personally of the work of the Savior, showing the superiority of faith.

THROUGH THE MIDST. Jesus went to the sea of Galilee “*through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.*” Other versions read, “*through the midst of the region of Decapolis,*” NKJV “*into the region of the Decapolis,*” NASB and “*within the region of Decapolis.*” NIV This indicates that he traveled northward through Phoenicia, with the sea of Galilee on His right.

“*Decapolis*” was a district consisting of a cluster of ten cities. The cities have been identified as Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Dion, Pella, Gelasa, and Canatha. McCLINTOK This was a very wide area, and was largely inhabited by Greeks. Two of these cities are familiar to Bible students. “*Damascus,*” which was the city in which Saul of Tarsus was confronted and converted through the ministry of Ananias, who was from that city (Acts 9:2-10), and “*Gadara,*” associated with the former demonic who lived among the tombs (Mk 5:1; Lk 26). The city of “*Philadelphia*” is not the same city mentioned in the Revelation, which was in Asia Minor (Rev 1:11). Damascus is an ancient city, mentioned as the home town of Abraham’s steward Eliezer (Gen 15:2). In king Asa’s time, the king of Syria “*dwelt at Damascus*” (1 Kgs 15:18). When Naaman was instructed to dip in the river Jordan seven times to be healed of his leprosy, he mentioned “*the rivers of Damascus*” being “*better than all the waters of Israel*” (2 Kgs 5:12). Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Zechariah prophesied concerning Damascus. This was the city where Paul, immediately following his conversion, first preached, declaring “*Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God*” Acts 9:20).

However, the special significance of this area is associated with the healing of the Gadarene demoniac. It was precisely in this area that Mark affirms that very man declared what Jesus had done for him. Following his deliverance, the unnamed man wanted to follow Jesus. The Lord did not allow him to do so, but rather told him, “*Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*” (Mark 5:19). It is written that this is precisely what he did. “*And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel*” (Mark 5:20).

Now, over one year later, Jesus returns to that area – an area where the people had pled with Him to “*depart out of their coasts*” (Mk 5:17). At that time, Jesus did leave without any hesitation, entering into a ship, and passing over the sea of Galilee to come to “*His own city,*”

Capernaum (Matt 8:34). However, now that He is in the area again, a significantly different spiritual climate exists. The people do not meet Him, asking Him to leave the area. Rather, “*great multitudes came unto Him,*” bringing their sick, and casting them “*down at Jesus’ feet.*” There is no doubt about the cause for this change in attitude. It was the testimony of the man who formerly lived in the tombs, frightening all who passed by. Let no one doubt the power of a personal testimony!

“ 32 And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him.”

THEY BRING UNTO HIM. Matthew speaks of the multitudes coming, and of the sick being brought to Jesus. Mark focuses on a single individual. The multitudes accent the **scope** of Jesus’ ministry. The individual shows something of its **focus** .

We must be careful not to miss the marvel of people bringing others to Jesus. When His fame spread throughout all Syria, they “ *brought unto Him all sick people*” (Matt 4:24). Once in Capernaum the people “ *brought unto Him many that were possessed of devils*” (Matt 8:16). Another time they **brought** a demon possessed man who as “*blind and dumb*” (Matt 12:22). In the land of Gennesaret they “ *brought unto Him all that were diseased*” (Matt 14:35). In the coasts of Judea they “ *brought unto Him little children, that He would put His hands on them and pray*” (Matt 19:13). In His own city four men “ *brought to Him a man sick of the palsy*” (Matt 9:2). Another time when His fame was spread abroad throughout the country, “*they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil*” (Matt 9:32).

The people associated Jesus with mercy and with transcendent works. The fame of Jesus was spread abroad because of what people heard Him say, and what they saw Him do. They did not connect Jesus with the scribes or the Pharisees, to whom there is not so much as one account of the people bringing the infirm and possessed. Jesus was far above all others, and His reputation proclaimed that to be the case. People expected more from Jesus than they did of the religious leaders of the day. That is one reason why they got more.

Why is it that the people of our time are so prone to take the people to others – to counselors, specialists, professionals, and the likes? Why are people not generally making their way to Jesus, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need? In my opinion, it is because they have not heard of such a Jesus. They have been introduced to a sectarian law-making Jesus who does not bring blessing, satisfaction, and liberty.

ONE THAT WAS DEAF. Here was a person who could not hear. He could not hear the report of Jesus, or the Gospel of the kingdom that He preached. This man had been deprived of a blessing, for Jesus once said, “*But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear*” (Mat 13:16). Even under the Law, such a poor soul was to be considered. “*Thou shalt not curse the deaf*” (Lev 19:14).

In this case, the Lord Jesus will associate Himself with the prophecy of Isaiah. “*And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book*” (Isa 29:18), and “*Then . . . the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped*” (Isa 35:5). This man sets before us a certain spiritual condition in which men do not have the capacity to hear, for their ears are not circumcised (Jer 6:10; Acts 7:51). This is a trait of those who are not Christ’s sheep. Therefore Jesus said to certain, “*Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word*” (John 8:43). There is a certain spiritual frequency to the word of Jesus. That is why many people cannot pick up on what Jesus says. They have an ear for law, but not for Jesus. They have an ear for rules, but not for Jesus. They can hear human traditions, but they cannot hear Him who is speaking from heaven (Heb 12:25). They are deaf, and must be

brought to Jesus for their ears to be opened.

AN IMPEDIMENT IN HIS SPEECH. This man also had an “*impediment in his speech,*” and thus “*could hardly talk,*” NASB or “*spoke with difficulty.*” NIV Other versions say he “*could not speak right,*” DARBY or “*stammered in his speech,*” GENEVA or was “*a stuttering man.*” YLT The word “*impediment*” means “tongue-tied” or “stammerer.” He could not form his words right, and his tongue did not serve him, nor could he control it.

Here is a picture of people who cannot speak correctly about the things of God. They are like stammerers or stutterers when it comes to speaking about spiritual matters. Their spiritual speech is garbled so that it makes no sense. They cannot put into proper words that they think.

Jesus will now identify Himself with other prophecies of the Messiah, and the glorious day He would initiate. “*The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly*” (Isa 32:4). The “*day of salvation*” is an era in which men are enabled to speak plainly and properly. It is not a time for stammering, lumbering about in the things of God like one who cannot communicate profitably. There is a great need in our time for the correction of spiritual impediments of speech.

THEY BESEECH HIM. Notice the faith of those who brought this man to Jesus. Remember, they are from the area that once asked Jesus to leave their coasts. “. . . *and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him*” (Mark 7:32). Just a touch would do! Jesus “*touched*” a leper, and He was made whole (Matt 8:3). He “*touched*” the hand of Peter’s mother-in-law, and her fever left her (Matt 8:15). He “*touched*” the eyes of two blind men, and they were opened (Matt 9:29). Who knows what holy and profitable influences can be produced in men if only they come in contact with the Son of God! His “*touch*” is much to be coveted.

“ 33 *And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched His tongue; 34 And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.*”

HE TOOK HIM ASIDE. Although there was a marked interest in Jesus in the area of the Decapolis, the vestiges of unbelief still remained. It was necessary for Jesus to take the man “*aside from the multitude*” – like when He led the blind man “*out of the town*” (Mk 8:33), or when He put the people out of the room in which Jarius’ daughter was lying (Mk 5:40). There are some works that Jesus does not do in public – things that are better done in private, where a more keen awareness of His person can be enjoyed by the suffering one. In the case of this man who could not hear, Jesus would have his fuller attention isolated from the multitude.

HE PUT HIS FINGERS IN HIS EARS. If you have a penchant for routines, you are not apt to experience much from Jesus. There are those who seek blessing by regimen, and benefit by procedure. Who would ever have calculated that Jesus would do something like this – put His fingers in the man’s ears. One thing you must come to see is this: Jesus does things His way, not our way! This is the only time on record that the Son of God did such a thing, which would no doubt prove to be an especially treasured memory in this man. It also ought to be noted that Jesus had to be close to, and facing, the man to do this. Thus He would have the man’s full attention.

HE SPIT AND TOUCHED HIS TONGUE. Other versions read, “*and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva,*” NIV “*and touched his tongue with spittle,*” NJB and “*moistened his tongue with saliva.*” MONTGOMERY Jesus could not have touched the man’s tongue with His fingers, for they were in the man’s ears. The Lord’s manner in this case was certainly not

conventional. So far as we know, this is the only time in history that an impediment of speech was healed in such a way. It was not that there were medicinal properties in Jesus' spittle, although I do not doubt that there is more power in His saliva than in all of the wisdom and ability of men.

If you want a conventional religion that meets all of the tests of the flesh, you as well not come to Jesus. He may ask you to go fishing to pay your taxes (Matt 17:27), wash clay from your eyes to gain your sight (John 9:7), or open a dead and stinking tomb (John 11:39). One of the strong marks of spiritual Babylon is its dependence upon conventionality and standards. They might ask you to repeat a prayer, engage in a 40-day regimen, or follow twelve steps.

HE LOOKED UP TO HEAVEN. How often this is said of the Lord Jesus. When He fed the five thousand, He "*looked up to heaven*" and blessed the bread and fish (Matt 14:19). At Lazarus' tomb He "*lifted up His eyes, and said Father*" (John 11:41). When He prayed His great intercessory prayer in Gethsemane, He "*lifted up His eyes to heaven*" (John 17:1).

The Lord was God-conscious, and acutely aware of heavenly realities and purposes. Here is a living example of someone whose affection was set on things above (Col 3:1-2). He did not associate the work of God with routine, but with the heavenly environs.

HE SIGHED. Other versions read, "*with a deep sigh*," NASB and "*He groaned*." DARBY The word "*sighed*" means "to groan or sigh as the result of deep concern or stress." Another time, when confronting the Pharisees, Jesus "*sighed deeply in His spirit*" (Mk 8:12). When He saw all of the weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, it is written that He "*groaned in His spirit, and was troubled*" (John 11:33). Why are such things said of the Lord Jesus?

You must remember that Jesus "*came down from heaven*" (John 3:13; 6:38,42,51), where there is no infirmity, restriction, or difficulty. There is no deficiency of hearing or speech in the realms from which He came. Now He is in a region dominated by the powers of darkness. A man is before him who has been living under the mastery of infirmity. He is now in a world that is laboring under a curse, and is in the throes of death. The whole creation is groaning all about Him under the weight or mortality. It all chafes against the Divine nature, for He is "*the Life*" and cannot easily acclimate Himself to the domain or the circumstances that are under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). No doubt He also "*sighed*" being touched with the feeling of this poor man's infirmities (Heb 4:15).

Here you have the Son of God in this world, and He is sighing! It is not because He does not have power over the circumstance. It is not because there are any influences here that will not yield to Him at His command. He groans because of the conflict of the passing order with the eternal one, death with life, and infirmity with wholeness. Even if everything was seemingly ideal in this world, the Lord would still "*sigh*" within it, because it is so far removed from purity and eternity. He cannot love the world or the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15), because He knows what happened when man fell, and death was passed upon him. The measure of one's spirituality can be accurately measured by the effect the world has upon him.

HE SAID TO HIM EPHPHATHA! This is an Aramaic word, and is a commandment: "*Be opened!*" He said the word to the man himself: "*saith unto him*." Be unbarred, be freed, be liberated. It was a commandment for the infirmity to depart from the man.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 83

“ Mark 7:35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. 36 And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; 37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”
(Mark 7:35-37; Matthew 15:31)

INTRODUCTION

Accenting that sin has caused a fundamental deficiency in men hearing God and speaking the things of God, the Lord is facing a man who is deaf and has an stuttering impediment in his speech. While the man's condition was, of itself, a most pitiable one, it was only a faint reflection of the more serious condition of the human spirit and soul. With the induction of sin into this world a growth formed over the inner ear, making it impossible to decipher the voice of the Lord. Now a basic flaw was also found in the way people spoke. They became incapable of speaking clearly about man's condition, the real nature of the world, and the nature, purpose, and Word of the Lord. This inner condition was infinitely more serious and pervasive than the state of the man standing before Jesus. It was a circumstance found in all men, while only a small percentage of them possessed the outward infirmities of deafness and difficulties of speech. Notwithstanding that consideration, the cure administered by Jesus is as thoroughly effective in the inner man as it is in the outward man. Those who have been changed *“by the glory of the Lord”* (2 Cor 3:18) find themselves able to hear Him who is speaking from heaven (Heb 12:25). They are able to perceive His will and His direction, and the Scriptures are understood to be a personal message received from the Lord. Believers are also able to speak more intelligently about things pertaining to life and godliness, and are no longer *“stammerers”* in their speech. Now they can edify the saints.

“ Mk 7:35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”

Jesus had *“put His fingers into”* the *“ears”* of the deaf man – touching, as it were, the deficient part. He has also touched his tongue with His own spittle, again touching the incapable part. In addition the Lord has said, *“Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.”* Now comes the acid test. Will the word of Jesus have power? Will His touch be effective? We have all confronted powerless speakers and those whose touch was ineffective. What of the Lord Jesus Christ. Will He be a disappointment also? If He really *“came down from heaven”* (John 3:13; 6:51), then the authority of heaven will be found in His word, for *“the heavens do rule”* (Dan 4:26). This is especially important to note because of the times in which we are living. Religion is nearly dominated by powerless words – words that must be presented over and over in workshops, how-to seminars, and counseling sessions. Talk has been exalted above effectiveness, even though *“the kingdom of God is **not** a matter of talk but of power”* NIV (1 Cor 4:20). Here Jesus has said *“Be opened!”* Will that word be as effective as

when He said, “*Rise, take up thy bed and walk*” (John 5:4), or “*Peace, be still*” (Mk 4:39), or “*Lazarus, come forth*” (John 11:4), or “*be whole of thy plague*” (Mk 5:34). Will nature yield to Jesus? Will the powers of darkness obey Him? This is not something about which are to theorize, it is something that must be known and discerned. This is the same Jesus who says, “*thy sins be forgiven thee*” (Matt 9:2), “*your names are written I heaven*” (Lk 10:20), and “*my peace give I unto you*” (John 14:27). This is the one who teaches us (Eph 4:20-21), and we must know if His word is effective!

Holy men have always understood the advantages of the Lord speaking, and of the need to be alert to His voice, and ready to receive from Him. When Samuel was young, and did not yet “*know the Lord*” (1 Sam 3:7), Eli instructed him on how to respond to the voice of the Lord: “*if He call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD*” (1 Sam 3:9). When Saul of Tarsus heard Jesus speak, he instantly replied, “*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*” When Jesus told him what to do he “*arose from the earth*” and did precisely what he was told (Acts 9:6-9). One of the becoming traits of David is that he stood ready to respond immediately to the Lord, and he pled with the Lord that He would not be silent: “*keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me*” (Psa 35:22).

Every valid religious renewal or revival has been noted for sensitivity to the voice of the Lord, and a consequent instant obedience. As soon as the Lord’s will was known, those “*whose hearts God had touched*” (1 Sam 10:26) did what was said. Wherever there is a sluggardly response to the Lord – dullness of hearing (Heb 5:11), and slowness of heart to believe (Lk 24:25) – a kingdom abnormality exists. This is the trait of a people rejected, not a people accepted.

STRAIGHTWAY. Other versions read “*immediately,*” NKJV “*At this,*” NIV “*instantly,*” NLT and “*at once.*” ISV That is, as soon as the word was spoken, the man’s condition was altered. Thus the man would associate his healing with the word of Christ and the touch of Christ.

It is quite true that there are instances where the word of Christ appeared to be delayed. In the case of the healing of the ten lepers it is written, “*as they went they were cleansed*” (Lk 17:17). In the healing of the man born blind, he was healed after he left Jesus. It is said of him, “*He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing*” (John 9:7). However, in both of those cases, Jesus had NOT said they were healed. He said to the ten lepers, “*Go show yourselves to the priests*” (Lk 17:14). He said to the blind man, “*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*” (John 9:7). In these cases, the “*straightway*” occurred when they did what Jesus commanded them to do.

Without lingering long on this matter, many people have never made any progress in Christ Jesus because they have not believed, or yielded to, His word. They simply have not taken the word of the Lord seriously.

HIS EARS WERE OPENED. That is precisely what Jesus had commanded: “*Be opened!*” The word “*opened*” means “*opened thoroughly,*” or completely. STRONG’S The idea is that he could “*hear clearly.*” IE Since the word “*Ephphatha*” was addressed to the man himself, it is to be understood that he actually heard it. The man did not receive hearing in one ear, but both of them: “*ears!*” This is a picture of giving one’s hearing capacities to the Lord.

THE STRING OF HIS TONGUE WAS LOOSED. The impairment of speech was immediately rectified, yielding to the word of the Lord. Before, he could not move his tongue properly, but now he could.

HE SPAKE PLAIN. Renewed capacities must be employed, and therefore the man spoke plainly. I do not know what words he first spoke, but they must have been words of praise

and thanksgiving, like the lame man who was healed. He entered the Temple “*walking, and leaping, and praising God*” (Acts 3:8). Parts of our human constitution, both inward and outward, are to be given to the Lord as a thank offering (Rom 6:13,19).

“ 36 And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.”

There is something in this text that we do well to understand. The cause for Jesus’ entrance into the world is revealed several times. Jesus told Pilate that He came into the world “*to bear witness of the truth*” (John 18:37). He told the multitudes that He came “*to do the will of Him that sent*” Him (John 6:38). Other revealed causes include, “*to give His life a ransom for many*” (Matt 20:28), “*destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8), to “*lay down*” His life and “*take it up*” again (John 10:17-18), and “*to put away sin*” (Heb 9:26). Jesus healed people, **but that is not why He came!** He miraculously fed people, **but that is not why He came** . He calmed storms, withered fig trees, and made a fish deliver a coin for taxes – **but that is not why He came**. There was no human sickness He could not cure – **but that is not why He came**.

If you want to be **guaranteed** of benefit from the Lord Jesus, you must come to grips with WHY He came, why He died, and why He rose again! Jesus does not guarantee that when you come to Him you will from that day forward be in good health, have an abundance, and be successful in all that you do. That **can** happen, and it may very well take place – but it is **not** guaranteed! No honest person can doubt this, for Jesus did not heal all of the sick when He was here. He did not relieve all of the poor when He was here. That is **not** why He came! That is **not** what REQUIRED that He come into the world and die.

If a person comes to Jesus, and “*receives Him,*” believing on His name (John 1:12), and obeying Him (Heb 5:9), there **are** things that we can **guarantee** they will receive – and they all have to do with WHY He came. They will receive the “*remission of sins*” and “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38), “*peace with God*” (Rom 5:1), “*access to the Father*” (Eph 2:18), a purged conscience (Heb 9:14), an inheritance (Eph 1:11), and “*the Spirit of adoption*” (Rom 8:15). That is **guaranteed** , and there is not the slightest chance that any person can come to Jesus, believe on Him, receive Him, and obey Him without these things taking place. Now, we are ready to deal with this verse.

HE CHARGED THEM. He “*charged THEM*” – that is, the man and the people who had brought him to Jesus (v 32). They were to “*tell no man*” what Jesus had done for this infirmed person. This is the same thing He told a certain leper, toward whom, Jesus was moved with compassion (Mk 1:44). He gave a similar charge to unclean spirits who confessed Him (Mk 3:12). He said the same thing to Jairus and his wife when He had raised their daughter from the dead (Mk 5:43). After his discourse on Him building His church upon the Rock of the confession of Himself, He charged His disciples to “*tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ*” (Matt 16:20; Lk 9:20-21). After He had been transfigured before Peter, James, and John, He “*charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen*” (Mk 9:9).

And why not tell the people what He had done? There are several reasons. **First** , that is not why Jesus came. In fact, He was now entering into the period of time that would lead to His purpose for coming – laying down His life as a ransom. Nothing must be allowed that would detract from that singular event. **Second** , He did not come to become popular among the people – particularly for the temporal benefits He could give them. In fact, it was His popularity that, from the human point of view, finally led to His death. Those who carefully plotted His death particularly cited His “*miracles*” as the threatening factor (John 11:47-48). **Third** , as a lesson to His disciples that the

more prominent testimony was to be the Gospel itself, and not a personal testimony. Faith does not come from hearing testimonies, as valuable as they are, but through hearing the Gospel – what Jesus has done for every man (Rom, 1:16); 10:17). Jesus had called them to “*preach*” the Gospel (Mk 3:14; 16:15).

There remains to this day a view of Jesus that emphasizes His ability to solve one’s problems in this world. That He can, in fact, do this, cannot be denied. Notwithstanding, that does not always happen. James can be beheaded by Herod (Acts 12:1). The church can be severely persecuted (Acts 8:1-4). Paul can have a “*thorn in the flesh*” (2 Cor 12:7). Timothy can have “*often infirmities*” (1 Tim 5:23). There can be “*poor saints which are at Jerusalem*” (Rom 15:26). **However**, ALL who are in Christ Jesus are forgiven, justified, have peace with God, and are citizens of heaven. They all have the Holy Spirit, and their names are written in heaven. Those and similar, benefits **required** that Jesus come, die, be raised from the dead, and ascend into heaven. They are the **primary** things that are to be related with the Lord’s Christ.

THE MORE HE CHARGED. The more Jesus charged the people to keep this matter quiet, the more they told it. A leper whom Jesus cleansed and charged to keep it quiet did the same thing – so much so that Christ’s public ministry was inhibited (Mk 1:45).

The testimony of the man and those with him, though ignoring the word of Jesus, confirms the legitimacy of the miracle. It remains true that when the Lord truly works within a person they are more apt to speak about it.

“33 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”

It is good to make special note of the various responses of the people to the works of Jesus. They were not always the same. When seeing them, some “*believed on Him*” (John 2:23), multitudes “*followed Him*” (John 6:2), some were offended by them (John 9:16), others were intimidated by them (John 11:47), others, even though they saw many miracles, “*yet they believed not on Him*” (John 12:37). His disciples once observed, “*What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!*” (Matt 8:27). Again after witnessing Jesus walking on the water, entering their ship, and the wind ceasing, it is said of them, “*they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered*” (Mark 6:51). How will those in our text respond?

ASTONISHED BEYOND MEASURE. After bringing the man to Jesus, and pleading with Jesus to heal him (v 32), when He had healed the man as they requested, “*they were utterly astonished,*” NASB or “*overwhelmed with amazement.*” NIV What they had just witnessed contradicted all human experience. They had been exposed to a power that did not have its genesis in this world – that is what caused the amazement. Other versions read that they were “*overwhelmingly dumbfounded,*” WILLIAMS and “*overcome with utter amazement,*” LIVING MATTHEW says “*the multitude wondered,*” or “*were amazed*” NIV (Matt 15:31).

The idea is that their wisdom withered in the presence of such marvelous power. There was no earthly way to account for what they had seen. They were like the critics of the apostles who had seen the former lame man Peter healed at the entrance of the Temple. “*And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it . . . for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it*” (Acts 4:14-16). This could not have been done by any legitimate physician, or by any sorcerer like Simon, who made out as though he was “*some great one*” (Acts 8:9-10).

If there is one telling mark found in the modern church, it is the near-total lack of any works that cause astonishment. The works being performed are too ordinary – too much of this world. If things appear to be remarkable, they can be upstaged by those in the world who have more riches, more influence, and more impressive works. It appears as though modern Christianity is attempting to do too many things that **others** can do – things relating to the domestic scene, uncomely habits, etc. But when they have actually fulfilled their aims, there is no cause for astonishment or marvel in them. They can easily be explained by pointing to the activities and wisdom of men. **But when Jesus worked, this could not be done.**

The church ought to be noted for things than **cannot** be accomplished any other way. Included are an undefiled conscience (Heb 9:14), liberty than gives no license to the flesh (Gal 5:13), being taught by God (1 Thess 4:9), being filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col 1:9), and having one's affection set on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2). Make no mistake about this, the presence of such people are an astonishment to the beholders, for such things are not from this world.

HE HATH DONE ALL THINGS WELL. Other versions read, "*He does everything excellently,*" MRD "*everything He does is good,*" NJB and "*everything He does is wonderful.*" NLT When Jesus healed the deaf, they heard clearly. When He healed this man with an impediment of speech, he spoke plainly. When Jesus healed a blind man, He saw precisely. When He healed an impotent man, he picked up His bed and walked. You could not find fault with what Jesus did. It could be said of Him as was said of God the Father, "*His work is perfect*" (Deut 32:4).

Let no one set before the world a work purporting to be from God that is obviously flawed, inferior, and partial. Let no person attempt to cover their deficiencies by saying they are forgiven, and God loves them even though they have glaring imperfections. Let the people of our day also acknowledge that Jesus still is doing "*all things well!*" Such things as justification, peace with God, and purity of heart are effective, and observable as well.

HE MAKETH . . . The word "*make*" speaks of producing a condition, or causing something to come to pass. The man standing before them could never have become well with the passing of time. There was no human remedy that could have corrected his condition. Jesus MADE it happen, and CAUSED it to take place – and He did it "*well.*"

These Gospel records are designed to convince us that everything Jesus does is thorough and satisfactory for the believer – particularly those things relating to His "*eternal salvation.*" If you want what Jesus offers, He is the **only** One who can "**MAKE**" it happen. The power that accomplished His works is not a conglomeration of human power and Divine power. It is not an amalgamation of the ability of man and the ability of God. When it comes to this kind of work, we bring nothing to the table but our need. All of the power, every single bit of it, comes from Him. He is the One – the only One – who can MAKE it happen!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 84

“ Mark 8:1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, 2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat: 3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.”

(Mark 8:1-3; Matthew 15:32)

INTRODUCTION

The Gospels provide us with an index to the heart of Jesus, as well as His words and works. This is an aspect of the Divine nature that is often either overlooked or misrepresented. We learn considerable about Jesus in His responses to scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers, seeing that He is in no way tolerate of pretension. We also learn of His heart in His responses to the unbelief and slowness of heart that were found among His own disciples. Those who sought Him earnestly and relentlessly were always honored. Those who revealed they had other priorities – like riches, burying the dead, or, asking Him to help straiten out family contention – also brought out the nature of Jesus. There was nothing pretentious or artificial about Jesus, things that are often associated with religion. He had no interest in maintaining cherished religious views, choosing to oppose them when they clashed with the truth. His zeal to do the will of God often moved Him to leave multitudes to rescue one poor soul, or choose to have mercy upon a person who actually was condemned by the Law. If a person really wants to represent Jesus as He IS, it will require a thorough acquaintance with the Gospel – “*the record*” God has given of His Son. The Gospels are a kind of spiritual photograph of Jesus that reveal things that are not apparent to the disinterested. The more you peruse them, the more of Jesus you will see. His nature will be seen as anything but simplistic, challenging even the most prodigious thinker. All of these conditions are owing to the fact that “*all Scripture*” is given “*by the inspiration of God*” (2 Tim 3:16). It is not like a spiritual newspaper. Every word is deliberate, calculated to reveal the mind of God.

“ Mk 8:1 In those days the multitude being very great . . . ”

Jesus has been with the multitudes, healing their sick. Being near to the sea of Galilee, “*great multitudes came to Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet*” (Matt 15:30). The deaf man with an impediment of speech (Mk 7:32-37), was one of this vast multitude, being especially brought to Jesus by some of the people (7:32).

There is something important to be seen here. Jesus had been ministering for nearly two years, with the majority of His ministry being in Galilee (Mat 4:12-15,18,23; Mk 1:14,28,39;

Lk 4:14,44 Multitudes from Galilee had followed Him throughout His ministry, to this very point (Matt 4:25; Mk 3:7). In great compassion, Jesus had already healed great multitudes of people from this region (Matt 12:15; Lk 5:15). Yet, in this very area, where Jesus had done most of His mighty works (Matt 11:20), there still remained great multitudes of sick people. When, therefore, it is written that Jesus “*healed all that were sick*” (Matt 8:16), it does not mean that this was always His manner. In fact, it is also written that “*He healed many that were sick with divers diseases*” (Mk 1:34; Mk 3:10). Once, at the pool of Bethesda, it is written that there was “*a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt,*” and “*withered.*” Jesus went to that place and healed **one** of the people (John 5:2-9).

The point to be seen in all of this is that Jesus fulfilled His ministry in strict accord with the will of God, not the need of man. He was not driven by crisis, but by the purpose of God. Often, praise God, this involved great miracles. Yet, Jesus consistently sought His Father’s will. As He Himself said, “*I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me*” (John 5:30). This certainly does not rule out the experience of Jesus having compassion on us in our temporal circumstances, and none should even think in such a manner. This very text will discourage such thinking. Yet, in our quest for Divine intervention in our earthly situations, we must make our requests subject to the will of the Lord. One of the lepers Jesus healed knew this to be the case. He came to the Lord and said, “*If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean*” (Matt 8:2).

Many poor souls, not understanding this facet of Jesus, have fallen into despair because their prayers were not answered as they desired. They were pure in their motives, sought for the Lord to be honored in their condition, and prayed because they were convinced the Lord could help them. Yet, when He did not, they felt that some flaw was in them, and therefore became unduly discouraged. While it is not a pattern for addressing all infirmities, Jesus refused to remove Paul’s “*thorn in the flesh,*” reserving something better for him (2 Cor 12:7-9). For Paul, that was the will of the Lord, and he was able to receive it. It was not the will of the Lord for Epaphroditus to remain sick, and “*nigh unto death.*” God raised him up, and he continued serving the Lord free of his infirmity (Phil 2:25-28). In both cases, an awareness of the Lord was critical. No child of God must allow his own will to become preeminent.

THE MULTITUDE WAS VERY GREAT. These days, many people cannot think of Jesus in association with multitudes. We are familiar with vast throngs of people and various forms of religion – even with *Christianity*. In our text, however, we are speaking of Jesus Himself attracting the multitudes, not one of His representatives. He who is *the Truth* the One who spoke, and He, as *the Power of God*, is the One who was working. And, yet, with Him speaking only the truth, multitudes were drawn to Him. People following Him are described as “*great multitudes*” (Matt 4:25; 8:1,18 “the multitudes” (Matt 5:1; 9:33,36), “*the whole multitude*” (Matt 13:2), “*so great a multitude*” (Matt 15:33), and “*a very great multitude*” (Matt 21:8). Once, when Jesus was by the sea side, “*all the multitude resorted to Him*” (Mk 2:13). Another time a “*multitude sat about Him*” (Mk 3:32). On still another occasion a multitude was “*thronging*” Him (Mk 5:31). Yet, another time “*an innumerable multitude of people*” were “*gathered together*” to Him (Lk 12:1).

Let no one imagine for a moment that such a phenomenon could not happen again! When the Gospels speak repeatedly of multitudes of people following Jesus, they are confirming the truth of the words of Jacob: “*unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*” (Gen 49:10). A sudden and great revival is, indeed, possible, as confirmed by the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41-47, and the conversion of the city of Samaria (Acts 8:5-8). The

persuasion of this brings great encouragement to those who have given themselves to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. They know that if Jesus can ever be seen as He is, no matter how incomplete that view may be, Jesus will draw men to Himself (John 12:32). If the people among whom we are ministering are not coming to Jesus, then let it not be because we are not presenting Him as He is. Bethsaida was exposed to the real Jesus, and they did not receive Him (Matt 11:21). However, this was not owing to a misrepresentation of Jesus. It was their unbelief that caused the condition. Blessed is the person who can employ this knowledge profitably, proceeding with confidence in Gospel labors.

“ 1b . . .and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them. 2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat.”

HAVING NOTHING TO EAT. How long will people follow Jesus? What is the “attention span” of the common people – for that is who these people were (Mk 12:37). Some, who have no spiritual understanding, affirm that the normal attention span is 15-30 minutes. They say this even though there are one hour political speeches, two and three hour sporting events, and two hour movies. College classes are at least an hour, and who ever heard of a fifteen minute opera or other musical program. Those who affirm such nonsense are trying to carve out a career. They would no doubt expressed their foolish idea to the very Christ.

The multitude of our text are described as having “*nothing to eat.*” None of them were saying, “I’m starving, where can we get something to eat?” They are not in the city, or even a small town, but are in a mountain, close to the sea of Galilee (Matt 15:29). What kept them there past mealtime? Why was there not a massive exodus from the area in a quest for food? Even surface thinkers should be able to see that there are times when all of one’s attention can be focused on the Lord, and even an appetite for food becomes secondary. Before there was a Bible, or a record of the deeds of holy men, Job confessed, “*I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food*” (Job 23:12).

The reports of historical and contemporary revivals all have this common trait: the people lost all interest in time. Lengthy prayer vigils and gatherings were common as people became preoccupied with matters pertaining to life and godliness.

JESUS CALLED HIS DISCIPLES. Now, Jesus turns from the multitudes to His disciples. He calls them to Himself, in a sense separating them from the multitude, because in order to work for or with Jesus, there must be a point at which He becomes our most prominent consideration. Further, Jesus perceives that the Father is about to work. As He said elsewhere, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do*” (John 5:19). He will therefore now give His disciples an opportunity to respond to the occasion.

I HAVE COMPASSION. Other versions read, “*I feel compassion,*” NASB “*I have pity,*” BBE “*My heart is moved with pity,*” NAB and “*I have pity and sympathy.*” AMPLIFIED The fact that Jesus says this suggests that the disciples had not viewed this multitude in the same way.

The Psalmist reminds us that God is “*full of compassion*” (Psa 78:38; 86:15; 111:4). Five times the Gospels say Jesus was “*moved with compassion*” (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; Mk 1:41; 6:34). What is “*compassion,*” and how is it that such a feeling can move the Lord to action? The word “*compassion*” means “to be moved as to one’s bowels,” THAYER and “to have bowels of yearning.” ISBE i.e., to be touched with pity deep within. Compassion is, as Jeremiah put, when “*mine affecteth mine heart*”

(Lam 3:51). Words associated with compassion are mercy, pity, and sympathize. With Jesus, *compassion* was brought to its most profound depth. The “*fulness of the Godhead*” dwelt in Him “*bodily*” (Col 2:9,19), and God is noted for His “*compassions*” that “*fail not,*” and are “*new every morning*” (Lam 3:22). This Divine trait was embodied in, and expressed by, the Lord Jesus. There was never a person or group who touched the heart of God who did not also touch the heart of Jesus. It is equally important to note that such people are always in the proximity of the Lord. There is no record of the Lord having compassion on those who stood aloof from Him.

THEY HAVE BEEN WITH ME THREE DAYS. The reason for compassion being stirred up within Jesus is stated: “*they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat.*” The word used here (“now”) has an interesting meaning: “already,” THAYER and suggests that the time has been spent “with great pleasure.” STRONG’S Emphasizing the rapid and pleasurable passing of the time, the New International Version reads, “*they have already been with Me three days.*” Enamored of Christ’s unique and authoritative teaching (Matt 7:29), and marveling at His wondrous works (Mk 7:38), the time has passed swiftly. The people were enjoying the words and works of Jesus, and He was enjoying expressing them.

Here we have a Davidic expression being lived out: “*For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*” (Psa 84:10). If ever a place could qualify for the expression “*Thy courts,*” it is the place where Jesus is found teaching and working. The people did not want to leave this place of blessing.

I have often been disappointed with the lack of spiritual appetite among professed believers. It is a sure sign that they have no idea when they are in the presence of the Lord. In that respect, such poor souls fall far beneath the attainments of the multitude of our text.

And how long had these people been with Jesus? Three days! Matthew reads, “*they continue with Me now three days*” (Matt 15:32). The text does not say that they had not eaten in three days, although that may very well have been the case. In fact, the text suggests they had not eaten for a long time, else there would be little reason for having such compassion upon them. Their condition at the time is clear: they had “*nothing to eat*” – nothing at all.

“3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.”

The Lord Jesus elaborates on His compassion, for Divine reason supports His compassion. It is more than a mere emotion. A rational cause must support compassion for it to move the individual possessing it.

IF I SEND THEM AWAY FASTING. Other versions read “*send them away hungry,*” NKJV and “*send them away to their houses with no food.*” BBE Matthew reads, “***I will not send them away fasting***” (Matt 15:32).

There is something to be seen here that is of great value in assessing human need. The generation in which we live is not noted for either patience or perseverance. It cannot endure, but demands the instant gratification of its desires. This attitude has spilled over into the church, so that many professing Christians actually become intolerant with God if He does not run when they call, and leap into action at their demands. Here, Jesus waited three days before expressing His compassion for the people. He does not bound into action as soon as they began to be hungry, but waited until they absolutely had “*nothing to eat.*” **As long as there is a thread of hope in the flesh, it is not probable that God will spring into action on our behalf.**

That is not because He is capricious, but because He must receive **all** of the glory for what He does.

THEY WILL FAINT BY THE WAY. Jesus adduces another reason for His compassion upon the multitude. Not only have they continued with Him for three days, and now have no access to any food, they also will “*faint by the way*” if He sends them away without feeding them. Matthews says they will “*faint in the way*” (Matt 15:32), or “*collapse on the way.*” NIV The Amplified Bible reads, “*they will be feeble through exhaustion and faint along the road.*” This confirms they had not eaten in some time, while they listened to Jesus’ words and witnessed His mighty works.

How tragic that in our day many souls have never been subjected to any extensive working of the Lord. They have never inconvenienced themselves to be with Christ – never gone without food or sleep in order to obtain a blessing!

THEY CAME FROM AFAR. Our blessed Lord provides one other observation that may have eluded the disciples: “*for some of them have come a long distance,*” NIV or “*a long way.*” AMPLIFIED They had come a long way to be with Jesus, and had spent a long time there with Him. They had inconvenienced themselves, choosing the “*good part*” – and as Jesus did with Mary, He would not take it away from them (Lk 10:42).

Thus, Jesus has given the disciples enough facts to stimulate their thinking. (1) He had compassion on the multitudes. (2) They had been with Him three days. (3) There was nothing for them to eat. (4) He will not send them away hungry. (5) Many of them have come from a long distance. (6) If they are not fed, they will collapse from weakness on the way home. Armed with these facts, will the disciples be able to arrive at a sound spiritual conclusion.

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED. Here we have a very wonderful depiction of spiritual life. **Those who have followed Jesus, remaining with Him, must be fed.** Jesus delivered a great commission to Peter, uttering it three times on a single occasion: “*Feed My lambs,*” “*Feed My sheep,*” and “*Feed My sheep*” (John 21:15-17). Many years later, no doubt remembering these words, Peter wrote to scattered believers admonishing their leaders, “*Feed the flock of God which is among you*” (1 Pet 5:2). Prior to that, Paul exhorted the elders of the church in Ephesus, “*feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood*” (Acts 20:38). How important is this word? Ezekiel thundered against false shepherds: “*ye feed not the flock*” (Ezek 34:3). Through Jeremiah God promised the people, “*And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding*” (Jer 3:15).

One of the great phenomena of our day is *fainting* and *falling* Christians. The condition is of such proportions that a host of supposed *experts* are being raised up to assist in recovering these fallen ones. Special schools and courses have been developed to qualify these recovery experts. However, no one seems to be addressing the **reason** for the fall of so many souls. Could it be that they have “*fainted in the way*” because they have not been fed? Indeed, this is the case. Their “*pastors,*” like those of Jeremiah’s day, have “*become brutish,*” or “*dull-hearted*” NKJV (Jer 10:21). They have not seen the condition of the people, and thus have not fed them. Woe to them! Woe to them for providing such impoverished portions for those who have some interest in the things of God. Woe to them for sending the people away hungry, malnourished, and in a state of spiritual starvation.

It is not an innocent situation when professing believers remain in a state of perpetual spiritual ignorance and weakness. Life in Christ is too rigorous and demanding to live it without being fed. If Jesus is noted for bringing His sheep to a place where they can “*go in*

and out and find pasture” (John 10:9), to whom do the pastors belong who fail to do so?

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 85

“ Mark 8:4 And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? 5 And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. 6 And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. 7 And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.”

(Mark 8:4-8; Matthew 15:33-38)

INTRODUCTION

The multitude has been with Jesus for three days, and they have nothing to eat. Although Jesus did not come to the earth to satisfy the appetites of the flesh, or to be a Supplier of “*daily bread*,” He has compassion on the multitude **because they have been with Him**. It is their interest in Him that has given them the advantage in this case. Jesus did not search out the hungry, although there were no doubt many among the people. Nevertheless, those who remain in His presence gain advantage, even in the matter of their earthly lives. Everyone who came to Jesus did not enjoy a miraculous meal, but for those who chose to remain with Him, their earthly deprivation would be met with His great compassion. For those who stay with Him, Jesus will not send them away with a fundamental disadvantage. No person will be worse off for following Jesus. Even in the case before us, although they had no bread, “*they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel*” (Matt 15:31). What they had seen dwarfed their appetite for bread, as three days quickly passed. They sensed the uniqueness of Jesus, and did not consider remaining with Him an inconvenience. Now, they will see that the compassion of Jesus even reaches into the ordinary and practical needs of the people.

“ Mk 8:4 And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? 5 And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.”

HIS DISCIPLES ANSWERED HIM. Technically, Jesus has not asked His disciples anything. He has rather made some statements. **1-** “*I have compassion on the multitude.*” **2-** “*They have now been with Me three days.*” **3-** “*I will not send them away fasting.*” **4-** “*If I send them away fasting . . . they will faint by the way*” (Matt 15:32; Mk 8:2-3). Is that enough information to provide a basis for sound reasoning? Indeed, it is! Jesus has opened the door of opportunity to the disciples. He is, in fact, testing their faith – not so He will know their condition, but in order that they might see it. Not only has the multitude been with Jesus, the disciples have as well. They have seen Him heal the dumb, the maimed, the lame, and the blind (Matt 15:32).

They have just witnessed the healing of a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. Can they integrate all of these things into a sound conclusion? We will see.

FROM WHENCE? The disciples have viewed the mighty works of Jesus. Approximately three months earlier, they participated in the miraculous feeding of a crowd significantly larger than this one – 5,000 men beside woman and children (Mk 6:39-44). Surely they will be able to see the similarity of this occasion. They answer, “*From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness*” (8:4). Matthew reads, “*Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?*” (Matt 15:33). It is as though they had not been in the presence of Jesus at all. About one year earlier, these men had been sent out by Jesus, empowered to do mighty works, healing “*sicknesses,*” and casting out demons (Mk 3:15). Yet now, they answer as though they had never witnessed the working of the Christ, nor participated in His mighty works. They could not associate this need with the power, compassion, and will of Christ. They failed to perceive the compassion of Christ as adequate for the need they are now facing.

We must be able to comprehend why this condition existed. From one point of view, it makes no sense that people could have such extensive exposure to the works of Christ, and yet think in such a manner. Their response is almost identical to that of Moses, when God told him He was going to give the Israelites flesh for a whole month, and that they would eat it until they came to loath its taste. Moses responded, “*The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?*” (Num 11:21-22). The Lord responded, “*Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not*” (Num 11:23). Why were such responses found among those chosen by the Lord?

We dare not stand in harsh criticism of either Moses or the disciples. Here is a confirmation that “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh*” (John 3:6). These people had not been born again, because the sin of the world had not yet been taken away. That is why the Spirit says of such souls, “*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*” (Heb 11:39-40). By faith, a few noble souls rose above their peers (Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc.). However, even they did not have the benefits that have been realized since Jesus has been enthroned in glory.

We learn from this no matter how much the flesh is exposed to the working of the Lord, it cannot reason properly, or with spiritual understanding. It can be in the very presence of the Son of God for an extended period of time, and still fall miserably short of the “*new creation.*” It is alarming when those who profess to be in Christ reason, at their very best, like those who lived before the New Covenant. Such people are living and thinking in the flesh. That is why they cannot understand. However, such a posture is inexcusable in this day, when men are made “*partakers of Christ*” (Heb 3:14), and of the “*Divine nature*” as well (2 Pet 1:4). Jesus was not pleased with the flawed response of His disciples before He was glorified (Matt 16:23; 17:20; Lk 8:25; 9:41). How do you suppose He reacts now?

HOW MANY LOAVES? Both Matthew and Mark present Jesus as asking this question – as though He knew they had been thinking about this matter: “*How many loaves have ye?*” What do we have to work with? What is right here among us at this time? The disciples answer “*Seven.*” Matthew reads, “*Seven, and a few little fishes*” (Matt 15:34). That is **more** than they had when the five thousand were fed! However, the disciples say nothing more. They do not recall the

feeding of the five thousand, or the twelve baskets that they gathered after the multitude was fed. Did they simply forget? Indeed not! The flesh cannot think properly or spiritually. Whatever is *“born of the flesh is flesh,”* and nothing more. The flesh cannot be trained to think and respond in a manner that is pleasing to God (Rom 8:8).

“6 And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. 7 And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.”

The Gospel writers provided no further details concerning the response of Jesus to His disciples. I do not doubt that this was the end of the conversation, for what purpose could be served by further dialog? Jesus had given the disciples ample opportunity to perceive, and even address, the situation before them, but they could not take hold of it. When men cannot take hold of the truth, there is no further need to talk about it. They are in the flesh, and flesh cannot receive Divine explanations. Jesus will therefore commence with the feeding, having compassion on the multitude. The disciples will be provided with sufficient evidence to think again about this occasion.

HE COMMANDED THE PEOPLE. Other versions read, *“He directed the multitude,”* NASB *“He told the crowd,”* NIV *“He ordered the crowd,”* NRSV and *“He instructed the crowd.”* NJB Three months earlier, when Jesus had fed the five thousand, there was *“much grass in the place”* (John 6:10), and therefore He had told the multitude to *“sit down on the grass”* (Matt 14:19). Now, however, it is a later season, and the multitude is told to sit down *“on the ground”* – the bare ground, for that is the meaning of the word. As you can see, compassion does not necessarily include convenience.

There is something else to be seen here. In order to be advantaged by Jesus, there must be an appropriate response to His word. It is very difficult to conceive of the average American church member obeying the command, *“Sit down on the ground.”* Blessings are not always attended with great convenience. In order for Noah to save himself and his house, he had to build an enormous ark (Gen 6:14-16). Abraham had to leave his country, his father’s house, and his kindred in order to obtain the blessing (Gen 12:1-3). For Jacob, a blessing was experienced while using a stone for a pillow (Gen 28:18). Another time the blessing resulted in his thigh being thrown *“out of joint”* (Gen 32:25), causing him to *“limp”* thereafter (Gen 32:31). Joseph went through a pit, false charges, and prison en route to the throne (Gen 37:24; 39:17,20). Paul’s apostleship involved passing through all manners of peril and harm (2 Cor 11:23-28).

Believers must rid themselves of the notion that blessing means trouble free living, an abundance of earthly goods, and sweet convenience. Sometimes, like the multitude of our text, if we are going to be fed, we must, so to speak, *“sit on the ground.”*

HE TOOK THE SEVEN LOAVES. Even when resources are available, they must be put into Christ’s hand before they become useable and adequate. Resources without Jesus equal nothing. Resources with Jesus equal sufficiency. As was His manner, Jesus took the loaves and *“gave thanks.”* Matthew gives a summary of the account: *“He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks”* (Matt 15:36). Although He was the Creator, He *“gave thanks.”* Although it seemed as though the supplies were very sparse, He *“gave thanks.”*

Jesus then *“broke,”* NKJV the loaves, breaking off piece after piece, apparently without the loaves diminishing in their size. The Lord had done this very same thing when He fed the five thousand (Mk 6:41), yet the disciples failed to recall the occasion. Bread did not always multiply

when Jesus broke it. Such a thing did not occur at the Last Supper (Matt 26:26), or when He ate with Cleopas and his companion (Lk 24:30). Now, however, necessity had changed the circumstance, and compassion was at work.

This was the same kind of miracle experienced by the widow of Zarephath, who fed her, her son, and the prophet Elijah throughout a famine from a handful of flour and a portion of oil. It is written, “*And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah*” (1 Kgs 17:16) – even though supplies for daily meals were taken from them. A similar miracle took place when “*a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets*” found herself with a debt she could not pay. When she informed the prophet Elisha of her plight, he asked what kind of resources she had. When she said she had only “*a pot of oil,*” the prophet instructed her to fill her house with vessels obtained from her neighbors, shut the door, and begin pouring that “*pot of oil*” into the vessels. It is written, “*And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed [stopped flowing NIV]*” (2 Kgs 4:6). Resources used are resources maintained.

HE GAVE TO HIS DISCIPLES. As Jesus broke the bread, He “*kept on giving them to His disciples to put before the people,*” AMPLIFIED doing the same with “*the few small fishes.*” He was the Creator, they were the distributors. He supplied, they dispersed. That is still the manner of the Kingdom. Jesus provides nourishment for the soul, and the members of His body set it before the people. That is a detailed view of “*edifying*” (Eph 4:12).

“ 8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. 9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away.”

THEY DID EAT AND WERE FILLED. Whatever Jesus did was effective. He never experimented, or came short of what He intended to do. When He healed the blind, they saw. When He cured the deaf, they heard. When He restored the lame, they walked. When He raised the dead, they lived. That is an unquestionable mark of Deity – what is determined to be done, is done. As it is written, “*I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*” (Isa 46:11). It should not surprise us, therefore, that when He made the people sit down, and took the bread and fish, they **all** “*did eat and were filled.*” Everyone ate, and everyone was filled. No one remained hungry. The meal did not simply take away the edge of hunger. It brought satisfaction.

This is another miracle that introduced men to the nature of Divine working – particularly regarding God’s “great salvation.” When the Lord saves a person, they are “*satisfied*” with His goodness (Jer 31:14). When a person becomes a “*new creature,*” old things really do pass away, and all things really do become new (2 Cor 5:17). When Jesus strengthens a person, they are able to “*do all things*” through Him (Phil 4:13). When grace teaches individuals, they can deny “*ungodliness and worldly lusts,*” and live “*soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*” (Tit 2:12). The world has had its fill of powerless religion – “*a form of godliness*” that rejects its “*power*” (2 Tim 3:5). When sin continues in the church, it is like a multitude that has no food, and is not being fed by Jesus. He cannot be there, or they cannot be interested, for where such factors are found, Jesus has compassion and feeds the multitudes. If Jesus declares He will not send the people away fasting, and yet they leave the church knowing that they are starving spiritually, then Jesus has not been there. If this is not true, then the record of Jesus’ ministry has no relevance – a postulate no man can afford to accept. Jesus always fills the hungry, and sends those who think they have no need away empty. As it is written, “*He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away*” (Luke 1:53). Oh, that this were more fully known within the professing church!

SEVEN BASKETS. **After** everyone had eaten, and **after** everyone was filled, they gathered up what had not been eaten – pieces of bread that had been broken off, yet not required. The fragments were not gathered until the appetites of everyone had been satisfied. That is like the meal and the oil of the widow continuing to multiply as long as there was a famine, and the pot of oil of the widow in debt multiplying until the empty bottles were filled.

There were “*seven baskets full*” (Matt 15:37). When Jesus fed the five thousand He started with fewer loaves (five), and ended up with more fragments (twelve baskets). There is no standardization in the miraculous, for standards are one thing that makes things ordinary. Jesus does not work the same way in every case. **This is because HE is the point, and not what He does!**

Here is another picture of abundance, as well as Divine frugality. With men, an abundance justifies waste. With the Lord, this is not the case. As He said when He fed the five thousand, “*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost*” (John 6:12).

Anything and everything that comes from Christ is precious. When you have been exposed to the truth, and have not been able to take it all in, **gather up the fragments!** This is what Mary, the Lord’s mother, did. When hearing the report of the shepherds, she “*kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart*” (Luke 2:19). When the twelve year old Jesus told her He had to be about His “*Father’s business,*” she gathered up the fragments: “*but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart*” (Luke 2:51).

It seems to me that an ideal assembly disperses enough food so that some fragments can be gathered up **AFTER** the heart has been satiated with God’s “*goodness*” (Jer 31:14). Many of God’s people must confess that they have not in any sense been satisfied, much less found an abundance of fragments to be gathered up for future pondering and meditation.

ABOUT FOUR THOUSAND. Numbers are so important to men, but they are often incidental to the Lord. As in this incident, they serve to confirm the compassion and abundance of the Lord, but they are really secondary. Mark says, “*about four thousand.*” Matthew says there were “*four thousand men, beside women and children*” (Matt 15:38). That would probably have made the crowd well over 12,000, and possibly as high as 20,000.

Keep I mind that, with this record, the Spirit has documented the miraculous feeding of over 9,000 men, possibly around 40,000-50,000 people. Yet, the supernatural feeding did not change their nature, or cause them to be consistently drawn to Jesus. They did not hesitate to leave Him. This is intended to show us Divine compassion and provision, not human gratefulness.

HE SENT THEM AWAY. Jesus said He would not send the multitude away fasting (Matt 15:32). He did **not** say He would not send them away. True to His word, Jesus did not send His real disciples away – those who came unto Him (John 6:37). However, others He **did** send away, because their purposes were less noble. Earlier, when He had fed the five thousand, He asked His disciples if they were going to leave also. Peter replied, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). Jesus did **not** send them away, either then or now!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 86

“ Mark 8:10 And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. 11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. 12 And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. 13 And He left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.”

(Mark 8:10-13; Matthew 15:39-16:4)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has just fed four thousand men, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few small fishes. He had again faced an enormous amount of doubt and unbelief – even from His disciples. Although they had personally passed out a miraculous supply of bread only three months earlier, they had not been able to make the correlation between that occasion and the one they had just faced – another crowd of people with nothing to eat. There are two things that are evident in this. First, that “*the natural man*” (1 Cor 2:14), or the one who is not born again, cannot reason with any degree of spiritual consistency. Secondly, faith is not developed by repeated exposure to the miraculous working of the Lord. **Faith is not the result of training!** Men do not “*believe*” simply because they have been around the truth for a long time. They are not able to associate the Lord Jesus with need just because they have been in the presence of His working for a significant period of time. Men are “*given*” to believe – even when they have honest and good hearts (Phil 1:29). Although hearts are not particularly rebellious, the obtaining of faith still requires Divine activity. Further, there are also degrees of believing that require its maturity. Early in Christ’s ministry, “*His disciples believed on Him*” (John 2:11). That faith moved them to follow Jesus consistently, yet their thinking was often flawed – until Pentecost, when they were filled with the Spirit. There is such a thing as one who, in an initial sense, believes, yet cannot rationalize properly. Such souls must remain with Jesus, diligently keeping and thinking upon His word.

“ Mk 8:10 And straightway He entered into a ship with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. 11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him.”

DALMANUTHA. This was a small town on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, and this is the only place in Scripture that it is mentioned. Matthew says that Jesus came “*into the coasts of Magdala,*” which was the general region in which the city of Dalmanutha was situated. There is no contradiction here, for Mark refers to “*parts of Dalmanutha*” and Matthew to “*the coasts* [or region] *of Magdala.*” It would be similar to saying one went to “Crown Point Indiana, which is in the Chicago region,” or to “Joplin, which is in the four state area.” This is where Jesus went after He “*sent away the multitude, and took ship*” (Matt 15:39).

It is interesting to observe the remoteness of this area, as well as its isolation from any apparent significance. This is not something that a person seeking fame would do. Nor, indeed, does it appear to be related to the greater mission of Jesus to “*seek and save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10). It should become increasingly apparent that Jesus was not addressing his public ministry as men in the flesh would do.

THE PHARISEES CAME FORTH. Matthew tells us that the Sadducees came with the Pharisees (Matt 16:1). Both groups were “sects” within Judaism, like there are denominations in Christendom. The Sadducees said “*that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both*” (Acts 23:8). Yet, in their approach to Jesus, they had no difficulty working together, as did Pilate and Herod, who also were natural foes (Lk 23:12). Here, in this somewhat remote area, Jesus faces these hypocrites again. It is as though He could not get away from them. They pursued Him, but not for noble reasons.

QUESTIONING . Being Christ’s critics, they “*began to question Him.*” Their questions, however, were not honest ones. Later in Christ’s ministry, not being able to resist His wisdom, men such as these will stop asking Jesus questions like this (Mk 12:34; Lk 20:40). But for now, they still think themselves equal to the challenge of talking with Jesus as though He was one of their peers. We also note that there is a form of questioning that is not proper, and that ought not to be found among the disciples of Jesus – or anyone else.

The saints are admonished to avoid teaching that leaves people asking questions. “*Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do*” (1 Tim 1:4). There are “*unlearned questions,*” or “*ignorant disputes*” NKJV and “*stupid arguments*” NIV that are to be avoided. “*But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes*” (2 Tim 2:23). There is also an approach to religion that moves one to have “*an unhealthy interest in controversies.*” NIV “*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but **doting about questions and strifes of words**, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings*” (1 Tim 6:3-4). The men now questioning Jesus are in that forbidden religious category.

SEEKING A SIGN. Both Matthew and Mark affirm these men were “*tempting*” Jesus. They were challenging Him to do something that was not proper. Mark says they were “*seeking of Him a sign from heaven.*” Matthew says they “*desired Him that He would show them a sign from heaven*” (Matt 16:1). Earlier, some scribes and Pharisees had asked Him to do the same thing: “*Master, we would see a sign from thee*” (Matt 12:38).

There is a subtle insinuation in this. By requesting a sign “*from heaven*” they were suggesting the feeding of the four thousand was not a legitimate work. We know there were other occasions in which they had charged Jesus with working under the auspices of the “*Beelzebub, the ruler of demons*” NKJV (Matt 12:24; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15). They had, therefore discounted all of the public miracles wrought by Jesus prior to this time. Later, they will gather together and plot to kill, Jesus, confessing that “*this man doeth many miracles*” (John 11:47).

Now they seek some sign in the heavens, rather than Christ’s marvelous works upon the earth. Through Moses, God had sent manna from heaven (Ex 16:4). Through the power of God, Samuel caused it to thunder (1 Sam 12:16-18). Elijah had called down fire from heaven (2 Kgs). Joshua had made the sun stand still (Josh 10:12-13). Isaiah had caused the shadow of the sun dial to go backward by ten degrees (Isaiah 38:8). Now these men ask Jesus

to perform something from the heavens, with no other purpose than to appease their curiosity.

TEMPTING HIM. These men were not inquiring to learn, but “*tempting*” Jesus,”

just like their father the devil did when He tempted the Savior (Matt 4:1-11). The temptation was to do something that was not in the purpose of God – to step outside of the Divine agenda – to obey someone other than God. All temptation is **not** a lure to immorality or obvious sin. Sometimes temptation is an attempt to draw one away from godly priorities and a total commitment to the Lord. Sometimes it is a lure to seemingly innocent novelties.

“ **12** *And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.*”

HE SIGHED. What a poignant phrase: “*He sighed deeply in His spirit.*” Other versions read “*groaning in His spirit,*” DARBY “*with a profound sigh,*” NJB and “*sighed from the depth of His spirit.*” NAB The request of these men agitated Jesus within. It was like a rough stone that chaffed against His spirit. Jesus resented their words, and thus could not treat them with indifference. The power of holiness cannot endure the impact of dishonesty and spiritual stupidity. The words “*sighed deeply*” come from a single word that means “to draw sighs from the bottom of the breast,” THAYER “to groan inwardly,” FRIBERG “sigh deeply or intensely.” LOUW-NIDA Jesus was adversely stirred to the very depths of His spirit. This request not only came from wicked men, it contradicted everything He came to do, and was thus contrary to His mission. He lived so close to the Father that such things were intolerable to Him. He would therefore quickly dispense with this irritant because of its contaminating and irritating effects.

Certain professed Christian teachers are fond of telling the people that God can handle their anger and stupidity – that it has no effect upon Him. However, this is not the truth, but is rather a lie. In this text we are confronted with “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16). Christ’s reactions are those of the Father in heaven, whose fulness dwelt in Him “*bodily*” (Col 2:9). Let no man imagine for a moment that a holy Lord can easily tolerate unholiness, misdirected desires, thoughtless words, and foolish questions. All of these contradict purity, holiness, and spiritual understanding. The necessity of ongoing cleansing (1 John 1:7) and continual intercession (Heb 7:25) confirm that God cannot be indifferent to human imperfections. For them to be expressed, however, is a matter of irritation to the living God, as confirmed in the deep sighs of Jesus upon hearing a request to provide a sign from heaven.

WHY? What a probing question! “*Why does **this** generation seek a sign?*” NKJV Matthew reads, “*A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign*” (Matt 16:4). A “*wicked*” generation is one that is willingly immersed in iniquity. An “*adulterous generation*” is one that has prostituted their devotion, giving their heart over to things other than the God who made them. Why does such a generation request a sign from heaven – the heaven they ignore, and for which they have no appetite? What possible reason can justify such a request? Is it not the kind of request the “*old serpent*” (Rev 12:9; 20:2) would ask? – “*command that these stones be made bread . . . cast Thyself down . . . fall down and worship me*” (Matt 4:3-9). Like the devil’s own challenges, the demand of the Pharisees and Sadducees is pretentious, dishonest, and filled with iniquity. There really is no justification for their demand.

But let us bring this kind of response into our own day and time. There is still a generation that has no right to ask God anything, and they are never honest and forthright when they seem to do so. It is what David called “*a stubborn and rebellious generation*” (Psa 78:8). They live only for themselves, and seek only their own depraved will – yet that dare to stand before the Lord. The requests of such people are an irritant to the Lord. If that seems to

be too strong, then consider what the Lord Himself said to wayward Israel. “*When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts ? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with* [I cannot endure NKJV] ; *it is iniquity* , even the solemn meeting. *Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth : they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them* ” (Isa 1:12-14). I do not doubt that, were men able to discern it, God often says to professing Christians, “Why are you trying to praise Me?” “Why do you make any requests of Me, when you choose to remain aloof from Me?” “Why do you ask Me to gratify your personal desires?”

In speaking to Israel concerning their hardness of heart, the Lord said, “*And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron*” (Deu 28:23). That is, it was a generation that would receive none of the ordinary benefits of the natural heavens – no rain and no dew. Thus their land would become hard and parched, even like iron, yielding no produce to them. This was a picture of what happens when a people professing to love God live at a distance from Him. The windows of heaven are closed to them, and they are consigned to a spiritually barren condition – like lifeless iron.

NO SIGN WILL BE GIVEN. Jesus does not hesitate to deny their request: “*no sign shall be given to **this** generation!*” NKJV Matthew adds, “*but the sign of the prophet Jonas*” (Matt 16:4). Jesus will not satisfy their curiosity. He will not feed their depraved desires. He will not honor their request. Already they had seen Jesus heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, and feed multitudes miraculously. Yet they ask for a sign “*from heaven,*” as though His works did not testify of Him. He once challenged them, “*believe the works!*” (John 10:38). When people ignore what God has already brought to them, they are wasting their time when they demand more – additional proofs of their own choosing. They will not be granted.

“ 13 *And He left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.*”

NO DISCERNMENT. Matthew provides some additional information concerning Christ’s answer to these men. He uncovered their utter corruption and spiritual stupidity. “*He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering [overcast] . O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but **can ye not discern the signs of the times?** ” (Matt 16:2-3) .*

These were not people who were incapable of processing information. They could profitably diagnose signs of the weather, being able to accurately predict when the weather would be fair or foul. Luke presents Jesus saying something similar on another occasion. “*And He said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but **how is it that ye do not discern this time?** ” (Luke 12:54-56).*

Is Jesus indifferent to people who can figure out things pertaining to this world, but cannot discern that this is “*the day of salvation?*” How does He react to people who know the ages of rocks, but do not know the Rock of ages? What of those who know the abilities of earthly physicians, but do not have the faintest conception of the Great Physician? What of experts in language who cannot understand the Word of God? What of those who are acutely conscious of their diet, yet know not that man lives “*by every word of God?*” What of those who have a high IQ, but a low SQ (spiritual quotient). Is Jesus indifferent to such conditions?

Indeed, He is not! He chides these men for their spiritual dulness. They are facing the ultimate “*sign from heaven*” and are treating Him as one of the local citizens – one of their peers.

He has been preceded by a mighty prophet who prepared the way for Him, but these men see nothing more than a local teacher standing before them. He has wrought all manners of mighty works “*throughout all Jewry*” (Lk 23:5), but they have only seen Him as a threatening competitor.

Jesus says they are “*hypocrites.*” They have professed themselves to be wise, but are really nothing but “*fools*” (Rom 1:22), for anyone who has heard the Gospel, yet not seen Jesus for who He is, is nothing more than a fool. The times were in a state of change, and these men did not know it. The area all around them had seen a “*great light*” (Matt 4:16), yet they remained in darkness. The Creator was in the world, and “*they knew it not*” (John 1:10). They could not “*discern the times.*”

Today is “*the day of salvation*” and “*the accepted time*” (2 Cor 6:2). It is a time when men can gain access to God (Rom 5:2; Eph 3:12), draw near to Him (Heb 10:22), and call upon Him with the expectance of *being “saved”* (Acts 2:21). This is the time when needed “*change*” can be accomplished (2 Cor 3:18). It is a time when men can learn to deny “*ungodliness and worldly lusts,*” and live “*soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*” (Tit 2:12). It is a time when men can “*receive mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need*” (Heb 4:16). This is a time referred to as “*high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*” (Rom 13:11). It is the “*time to seek the Lord,*” “*sow to yourselves in righteousness,*” “*reap mercy,*” and “*break up your fallow ground*” (Hos 10:12).

In spite of these conditions, multitudes of religious people continue to indulge only in worldly pursuits. They are consumed with matters pertaining to this world, and conduct their lives as though they and this world were going to continue forever. Is Jesus indifferent to this situation? Does He stand ready and willing to help such people, as He is often represented? Our text will clarify the Divine response to indifference, disinterest, and selfish demands.

HE LEFT THEM. “*And He left them!*” The request was denied, and the discussion was abruptly concluded. Jesus will not remain in the presence of hypocrites, who really have no heart for Him. They may appear deeply devoted to religion – like the Pharisees – but Jesus will leave them. They may have seemingly studied questions from the Bible – like the Sadducees (Mk 12:18-23) – but Jesus will leave them. The pure in heart will see God, the others will not!

TO THE OTHER SIDE. “*And He left them, and . . . again departed to the other side.*” Matthew reads, “*and He left them, and departed*” (Matt 16:4). Jesus returned to the other side, from whence He had come (Matt 14:22). Mark presents Jesus as going back and forth across the sea of Galilee – “*to the other side*” (Mk 5:21; 6:45; 8:13), returning again and again to Galilee. This fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, “*. . . beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined*” (Matt 4:15-16 (Isa 9:1-2)).

Here is one of the few times that Jesus did no mighty work. Having come into the coast of Dalmanutha, He confronted the Pharisees and Sadducees, heard their request, rebuked them, and left the area. It is good to learn that although men often waste their time, Jesus does not. An environment in which Jesus is not honored, and where His works are not discerned, will not long enjoy the Divine presence. He will leave such a place without any compunction.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 87

“Mark 8:14 *Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. 15 And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. 17 And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?.”*

(Mark 8:14-17; Matthew 16:5-8)

INTRODUCTION

Having fed a great multitude, and departed to the other wise of the sea, Jesus had confronted the Pharisees and some Sadducees. Appearing to be earnest inquirers, they had asked Him to show them a sign from heaven, only to be soundly rebuffed by Him. He would not give them a sign, for they were a *“wicked and adulterous generation”* (Matt 16:4). There is a generation that is willing to be around Jesus, and even ask Him questions. Yet, they have no real heart for Him, but have given themselves over to a wicked world. Such a generation will not be given the sweet morsels of truth. He who reminded men not to give what is holy to dogs, or cast their pearls before swine will surely not do so Himself (Matt 7:6). Remember, this is the real Jesus to whom we are being exposed. He is wholly intolerant of professional and heartless religion. He will not become involved in their manners or desires. Thus Jesus left them, entered a boat, and departed from that area. It was a contaminated area – contaminated with men and their manners. It is not that He Himself stood in danger of defilement, but that such an environment was repulsive to Him. He had been sent on a mission from heaven, and it did not include spending lengthy periods of time with those who had no heart for God. In a response that clashes with modern religion, Jesus left the company of the religious professionals and the disinterested to be with His disciples. If we are ever inquisitive about how Jesus will respond to cold hearts and a casual approach to the truth, let us take up the Gospels and behold there the Word made flesh, moving in and out among men.

“Mk 8:14 *Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.”*

THE DISCIPLES HAD FORGOTTEN TO TAKE BREAD. Mark says the disciples themselves *“forgot to bring bread.”* Matthew records: *“they had forgotten to take bread.”* Here, what appears to be a very practical matter is mentioned. The disciples had forgotten to take with them bread sufficient for the journey. It appears that their usual manner was to gather supplies for their journeys, but this time they had forgotten to do so.

Keep in mind, we are speaking about thirteen passengers in a boat being rowed approximately seven miles across the sea – an effort that probably required several hours.

Further, there is no record of them eating since the four thousand were fed – supposing that they also ate at that time. Notwithstanding, they had embarked on this journey without any procuring any supplies of food.

NO BREAD WAS IN THE SHIP. What is even more, there was no supply of bread remaining in the ship from their trip to the area of Dalmanutha. So here is the scene with which we are faced: thirteen men crossing the sea of Galilee with no food, and no record of them having eaten for a significant period of time.

IS THERE A LESSON TO BE LEARNED HERE? It may appear as though this is only incidental information. However, there is some very valuable insight available in this text.

The matter of the Lord's leadership is one in which a good understanding is required. The Lord is a Good Shepherd, leading forth His people (John 10:3). He goes before them (John 10:4). He leads His people by His voice, and they know that voice (John 10:5). Of old time, the Psalmist declared, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delighteth in his way*" (Psa 37:23). Isaiah affirmed that the Lord would "*guide*" His people (Isa 49:10). Zecharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied that the Savior would "*guide the feet*" of His people (Lk 1:79). God also orders the steps of a good man (Psa 37:23).

Some, armed with a surface understanding of these things, withdraw themselves from the arena of initiative. They are persuaded God will always let them know what they are to do. They feel as though waiting on the Lord is doing nothing until you have that certain feeling or sure awareness that the Lord wants you to do this or that. Such people would never do like Saul following his conversion, assaying [or trying] to join himself to disciples who were obviously afraid of him (Acts 9:26). They would never "*assay*," or attempt, to go into Bithynia, only to be blocked by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:7). They would never purpose to go to the brethren in Rome, only to be frustrated in the attempt (Rom 1:13), or try and to go to Thessalonica again and again, only to be hindered by Satan (1 Thess 2:18). For people like this, the blocking of their plans would mean they were out of the will of God and operating in the energy of the flesh. However, Saul was eventually received by the brethren (Acts 9:27-28), the Gospel eventually got into Bithynia (1 Pet 1:1), Paul eventually got to Rome (Acts 23:11; 28:16), and Paul got to Thesslonica by means of his letters (1 Thess 1:1; 2:1).

The early believers did not suffer under the delusion that the Lord would work everything out for them independent of their own involvement – particularly in the practical matters of life. If, for example, a man did not work, he was to be deprived of the luxury of eating (2 Thess 3:10). There is also such a thing as not having because one does not ask (James 4:2). There is also such a thing as asking for the wrong thing, and therefore not receiving (James 4:3).

Take, our text as an example. The disciples "*had forgotten to take bread.*" Jesus did not tell them "Do not forget to bring some bread!" He did not move upon them to consider the fact that they had run out of bread, and there was none in the boat. Even though they had remained with Him, and entered the boat with Him, they still forgot bread, and He did not do a thing about it. They had just been instrumental of the feeding of a multitude. They had even gathered up seven baskets full of fragments – surely sufficient to provide something for thirteen men traveling across the sea. But they forgot, and Jesus let them do so.

It is true that David said he had never "*seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread*" (Psa 37:25). But that does not mean God will abort all hunger, or always interfere

when men do not have enough. Lazarus desired to be fed with the crumbs from the rich man's table (Lk 16:20). Paul himself knew what it was like to be "hungry" (Phil 4:12). His hunger was different than that of the disciples – it took place while he was laboring for the Lord. The disciples were without bread because they forgot to bring some with them.

Sometimes we endure inconveniences simply because of our forgetfulness. The Lord Jesus, however, does not rush to our aid, eliminating all inconveniences. If we are deceived into thinking that is the kind of care He has for us, we will suffer many needless annoyances and aggravations. It is important to learn how to "use the world" and not "abuse" it (1 Cor 7:31).

" 15 And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod."

HE CHARGED THEM. Other versions read, "giving orders to them," NASB "warned them," NIV "cautioned them," NRSV "enjoined them," NAB "admonished them," WEYMOUTH and "[repeatedly and expressly] charged and admonished them." **AMPLIFIED Remember, this is the real Jesus.** He is one who charges, gives order, warns, cautions, and admonishes. He does not allow souls to continue in their own selfish ways, unchallenged, and content with their own thoughts. Just as surely as Satan hurls fiery darts into our minds, so the Lord provokes us with spiritual inquiries and demands.

A lot of people are not acquainted with this Jesus. They think of Him only in regard to their own needs, troubles, aspirations, trials, etc. Some think of Him only with regard to what absolutely must be done to please God. They do not, however, consider Him as One who directs thought, requires the consideration of certain matters, and expects the profitable use of the mind.

The word "charged" involves something that is distinct and clear. As used here, it also carries the idea of something repeatedly charged, especially confirming that this warning was needed. The picture is that of the Lord delivering this charge over and over, perhaps from differing perspectives, pressing the matter upon the disciples, and not letting it go. Again, this is a Divine manner that must be realized by believers. When the Scriptures say "quench not the Spirit," it is referring to refusing to ignore the repeated overtures of the Spirit.

TAKE HEED, BEWARE! Other versions read, "Watch out! Beware," NASB "Take care to be on the watch," BBE "Watch out, guard against," NAB and "Look out; keep on your guard and beware." **AMPLIFIED** There is an obvious urgency in this word, as there is in all warnings. It suggests the subtlety of the matter of which they are warned. It also suggests there is a natural simplicity resident in men that causes them to be unprepared to face such dangers. Additionally, there are holy instincts and aptitudes that need to be stirred up.

It is possible for a person to adopt an overly simplistic view of spiritual living that causes him to drift through life as though there were no genuine dangers. Thus Satan and his strategies are not seen as real dangers, and wicked men in the religious arena are not perceived. Divine protection is seen as occurring automatically, with all threatening approaches to the child of God being consistently blocked. This way of thinking is too naive for God's people. It is possible to be "carried away" with a wrong attitude (Gal 2:13), be "defiled" by a "root of bitterness," and be corrupted by "evil communications" (1 Cor 15:33). This is a day when the "Beware!" mentality needs to be restored in the church.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES. Leaven is yeast – a substance that, though proportionately small, effects the whole of a matter – i.g. “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9). In this case, there was something associated with the Pharisees that had a spreading and contaminating effect. Matthew states that the disciples finally understood that this referred to the “*doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees*” (Matt 16:12). Other versions read “*the teaching,*” for that is what “*doctrine*” is – **teaching** .

“*Doctrine*” has to do with instruction – that is, summarizing the Scriptures, drawing certain conclusions from them, and teaching people what they mean and how to apply them. The people were “*astonished*” at Christ’s “*doctrine,*” because it was radically different from that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 7:28-29). He came to different conclusions, perceived different issues, and urged men to different involvements.

It is what the Pharisees **taught** that was so dangerous. It was at variance with the mind of the Lord, and therefore led people into the “*ditch,*” rather than to the narrow way that leads to life (Matt 15:14). Their doctrine, like that of Hymenaeus and Philetus “*spread like cancer,*” NKJV devouring soundness of mind, tenderness of heart, and purity of conscience (2 Tim 2:17).

THE LEAVEN OF HEROD. This has particular reference to the Herodians, who apparently had adopted the views of Herod, as well as being devoted to him. The Herodians are mentioned three times in Scripture. The Pharisees once sent out their disciples “*with the Herodians*” to question Jesus about taxes (Matt 22:16-17; Mk 12:13). Early on, the Pharisees also conspired with the Herodians “*how they might destroy*” Jesus (Mk 3:6). These were not a religious sect, but a political one that feigned affinity with the Jews. Deep within, they viewed Jesus as a threat to their government – a sort of competitor at a political level.

Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the doctrine of Herod as well – a doctrine that could produce an anarchist like Barabbas among the Jews (Mark 15:7). A parallel in our time would be political people described as “*conservative right,*” “*right to life,*” etc. Such people often have little or no interest in “*the things of the Spirit of God*” (1 Cor 2:14). Their approach to life, therefore, has a fundamentally corrupting influence on the people. Over the years I have observed that a “*God and country*” emphasis always gives priority to “*country.*”

“ 16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. 17 And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?”

THEY REASONED AMONG THEMSELVES. A lot is revealed in the way in which we talk among ourselves. The disciples concluded that Jesus was upbraiding them because they had no bread, and perhaps warning them about eating bread associated with the Pharisees and the Herodians. It did not seem foolish to them to think like this. In fact, it appeared to make perfect sense to them. Yet, they could not possibly have been more wrong. One of the dreadful traits of carnal-mindedness is that its folly does not appear to those caught in its snare.

JESUS KNEW IT. Other versions read, “*being aware of it,*” NKJV and “*aware of their discussion,*” NIV “*perceiving it.*” ASV It would transform all communication among believers if they were conscious of the fact that Jesus knows what they are talking about. Solemnly we are reminded, “*all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*” (Heb 4:13). This includes even discussions among ourselves.

WHY REASON YE? Jesus does not blurt out, “*You are wrong!*” He rather summons them into a more sober frame of mind. Other versions read, “*Why do you discuss the fact that you have no*

bread?” NASB “*Why are you talking about having no bread?*” NIV WHY? WHY? They were talking as though He was not even there – as though He had no power – as though His concern was for the bread that perishes. Do you suppose He still, monitors our conversations, and asks us why we are discussing certain things, and reasoning after a certain manner?

PERCEIVE YE NOT YET, NEITHER UNDERSTAND? What a stunning rebuke! “*Do you not yet discern or understand?*” AMPLIFIED Were they still unable to traffic in spiritual thought? Did they remain in a state where the words of Jesus made no sense to them? When they considered Christ’s words, they saw men as trees walking – they could not make out their subject or direction. This was saying something like He would later say to Philip: “*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?*” (John 14:9). At the time of our text, Jesus had been with them around two years. He had been with them over three years when He asked Philip that telling question. I know professed Christians who confess to have been with Jesus for decades, and still have no understanding. How do you suppose He speaks to them?

Is Jesus indifferent to those still cannot perceive or understand? Does He overlook those who only know about daily food, earthly obligations, physical conditions, families, and institutional concerns? What of those who can only associate His words with their earthly circumstances? Do these conditions pass unnoticed before the face of the Lord?

Note, Jesus does not ask if they have limited perception, but whether or not they perceive at all. He does not ask if they have a little understanding, but if they have any at all! It is true that there is a sense in which some perception and some understanding are found in the growing believer. There is also a sense in which there is no perception or understanding at all – where nothing of importance is clearly seen.

IS YOUR HEART STILL HARD? Other versions read, “*Is your heart still hardened,*” NKJV “*are your hearts so hard?*” BBE “**How long** will your hearts be hard?” MRD and “*Are your hearts in [a settled state of] hardness?*” AMPLIFIED This is how Jesus assessed their situation. It is how He called them to sobriety, and awakened them from spiritual slumber.

Again, here is a most telling question. This is asked by the shepherd who “*gently leads those that are with young*” (Isa 40:11). This is the Savior of whom it is said, “*A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench*” (Matt 12:20). This is the Lord who said, “*I am meek and lowly in heart*” (Matt 11:29). If, however, people are led to believe that His gentleness means overlooking serious deficiencies in the people He loves, they are in serious error. He is careful with bruised reeds, but not so careful as to pass over flawed conditions. He gently fans the smoking flax to cause it to flame again, but that does not mean He ignores what has put out the flame. Jesus is, indeed, “*meek and lowly in heart,*” but He is not indifferent to any degree of hardness of heart. It is the responsibility of every child of God to **not** receive and culture erroneous views of Jesus. Such views are always lethal to the soul.

When men do not have “*spiritual understanding,*” it is directly associated with the condition of their hearts. Erroneous reasoning, a lack of perception, and flawed understanding come from a hard heart – a heart that is more like stone than flesh. Men might prefer not to diagnose things this way, but nevertheless, that is the way it is. **There is a direct correlation between the condition of the heart and the ability of the individual to perceive, understand, and discuss the things of God.** That is why the heart must be “*established by grace*” (Heb 13:9). It is also why it is written, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*” (Prov 4:23). It is to the advantage of every believer to seek to develop a keen sensitivity to the response of Jesus to their level of perception and understanding, and how they reason.

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By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 88

“Mark 8:18 *Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? 19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. 20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. 21 And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?”*

(Mark 8:18-21; Matthew 16:9-12)

INTRODUCTION

As they make their way to the other side of the sea of Galilee, Jesus has taken the occasion to teach His disciples by a different means. He knows nothing of keeping away from spiritual things in order to deal with practical matters, yet it appears to the disciples as though that is precisely what He has done. When they hear Him tell them to “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod,*” they assume He is drawing attention to their failure to bring bread for their journey. Jesus asked them if they still did not perceive, and still had their hearts hardened (8:17). We learn from this that our spiritual condition is not ignored by the Lord Jesus. He will not always draw attention to our flaws publically, as He did with the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23). However, He will confront us with our own hardness and unbelief. As confirmed in our text, it is possible to be in the presence of Jesus, behold His marvelous works, and even participate in them, yet fail to grasp the significance of those works. One of the besetting conditions of the modern church is its failure to nurture spiritual understanding. A host of people are being raised up who have only a curious interest in the things of God. It is an interest that cannot be sustained, causing the people to waffle back and forth like the pre-Pentecost disciples. However, even before Jesus died, He did not pass over the slowness of His disciples. How much less does He do so now that sin has been put away, the devil destroyed, and the way to heaven opened? In this text we are being exposed to the heart and mind of the Lord Jesus. Blessed is the person who will be able to correlate this text with the situations of life, confirming that even very practical matters have a direct relationship to Christ’s work.

“Mk 8:18 *Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?”*

Capacities, however minuscule they may appear, are a stewardship. The ability to see demands that we do, in fact, see. The ability to hear requires that we hear. The power to recall and remember makes it essential for us to do so. These capacities are granted to be used – employed in the acquisition of a correct perception of things. If this was true before “*the day of salvation,*” how much more true it is now.

One thing will become apparent in this text. Jesus does not allow for the disciples, or anyone else, to think of His requirements as something they simply cannot do. Men may look

at this incident and excuse the disciples by saying they were not capable of seeing, or hearing, or remembering. A finely spun technical argument can be presented to support this conclusion. But when all is said and done, we must return to the assessment of Jesus. He did not overlook the failure of His disciples – even before they were born again.

When Jerusalem rejected Jesus, they were judged for doing so – even though they did not have a new heart and a new spirit (Lk 19:42-44). Even though the hearts of the citizens of Chorazin and Bethsaida had not been circumcised, Jesus pronounced a “*Woe*” upon them because they did not respond properly to the works of Himself (Matt 11:21-22).

What Jesus does do, is require that all men use what they have been given. Faithfulness in this matter will bring further advantages. In the case before us, we are confronting capacities that will assist a person in thinking with Divine aptitude in mind rather than human deficiencies or forgetfulness.

HAVING EYES. They were not blind – they had eyes, and could behold what Jesus had just done – feed a multitude of four thousand men. They saw Jesus take the bread and give it to them. They saw the multitude receive the bread and eat it. They personally saw the seven baskets of fragments they gathered up by themselves. Yet it appears that they did not think on what they saw. The eyes of their hearts did not see something worthy of much cogitation. Their minds did not dwell upon what they had seen with their eyes.

Elsewhere Jesus referred to this sort of thing as seeing, yet not perceiving (Mk 4:12). The Psalmist referred to this condition in these words, “*eyes have they, but they see not*” (Psa 115:5). Isaiah also wrote of seeing, yet not perceiving (Isa 6:9). Jeremiah also rebuked the people “*which have eyes, and see not*” (Jer 5:21).

For some of these people, the condition was a judgment from God (Psa 69:23; Isa 6:9-10; John 12:40; Rom 11:8). That judgment was owing to the rebellion of the people, and their refusal to hear God. **That is not the kind of thing we are confronting in this text.** This is more related to slothfulness than to stubbornness. However, this is the kind of condition that, if not corrected, will lead to stubbornness and rebellion.

HAVING EARS. This refers primarily to the natural capacity for hearing. Paul refers to this hearing when he writes, “*Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world*” (Rom 10:18). They had heard Jesus say He had compassion on the multitude (8:2-3). They heard Him ask how many loaves they had (8:5). They heard Him command the people to sit down (8:6a). They heard Him give thanks for the bread and the fish before distributing them (8:6b). They heard His confrontation with the Pharisees who asked Him to show them a sign from heaven (8:11-12).

Yet, there were implications in Christ’s words that they did not hear. There was instruction in them that they did not perceive. There was a spiritual tone in them that escaped their attention. I wonder how many people are still being asked this question by Jesus.

REMEMBERING. These were events to which the disciples had been exposed that were designed to be remembered – to be recalled and mused upon. The Psalmist well said, “*He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered*” (Psa 111:4). In fact, it is in the remembrance, or recollection, of His works that the real benefit is realized. Knowing intellectually that Lot’s wife was turned to a pillar of salt is one thing; remembering Lot’s wife is quite another thing (Lk 17:32). An intellectual grasp of the fact that Christ died is one thing, remembering Him is something else (Lk 22:19).

When men are exposed to the truth of God, there is a certain obligation laid upon them to revisit that truth in the hearts and minds. When this is done, the truth is heard the second time, and that is when the benefit is realized. This is precisely the experience to which the Psalmist referred when he wrote, “*God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God*” (Psa 62:11). The wicked are described as a people who do not bring God into their thoughts: “*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts*” (Psa 10:4). In the text before us, we are not confronting wicked men, but men who, because of their surface view, did not ponder what they had heard.

“ 19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve. 20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.”

WHEN I BRAKE THE FIVE LOAVES. Notice how the Lord Jesus calls attention to Himself: “*when I brake the five loaves among the five thousand . . . the seven among the four thousand.*” He reminds them how many loaves they started with on both occasions, and who it was that did the miraculous breaking of the bread. **It is possible to behold what the Lord is doing, yet miss the significance of the One doing the work.** In the case before us, the Person of Christ is what the disciples had not yet comprehended. That is why they could so easily forget the things He had done.

HOW MANY BASKETS FULL? Because the disciples had thought their present inadequacy of bread was the cause for Jesus’ words, He asks them about the overabundance of bread that followed both the feeding of the four thousand and the five thousand. When the ordinary things of life cannot be associated with the Living God, men will not be able to obtain insight into God’s “*eternal purpose*” (Eph 3:11), or “*everlasting love*” (Jer 31:3), or something that was determined “*before the foundation of the world*” (Eph 1:4).

There are still people who cannot properly assess left-overs, or more than what is needed, with the Lord. It is ever true that the Lord gives “*seed to the sower, and bread to the eater*” (Isa 55:10; 2 Cor 9:9-10). In the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand, this was more apparent than in the ordinary course of life. Yet the disciples had not pondered it.

YOU TOOK THEM UP. The irony of the situation is that the disciples themselves had gathered up the “*fragments,*” doing so after everyone had been filled. This is not something that was reported to them. They were the ones who gathered the fragments and knew first hand how many baskets they filled.

Is it possible to be an actual participant in what the Lord does, and yet fail to remember it? The Israelites, who knew firsthand what the Lord can do, provide an answer to this question. “*They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them*” (Psa 78:10-11). And again, “*They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel*” (Psa 106:13). And again, “*They forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt*” (Psa 106:21). It is remarkable how extensively the works of God can be wrought in the presence of people, and yet those works be forgotten. That is a commentary on the nature of the flesh and the frailty of the natural man.

THEIR ANSWERS. The answers of the disciples were precise and to the point. When asked how many baskets THEY gathered on each of the occasions mentioned, they responded, “*Twelve,*” and “*Seven.*” There is not an academic institution that would not be satisfied with those answers. However, Jesus will not be satisfied with these answers because they did not provoke a proper

remembrance of what the Lord had done, or its significance.

NOT ABLE TO HANDLE THE TRUTH. What is being made known here is the disciples inability to “*handle*” the truth at that time. This is a limitation they would not have after Christ’s enthronement in glory. Matthew presents Jesus as addressing the matter from this perspective. “*Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?*” (Mat 16:9-10). They could not make an association of those events with their present condition – a malady that still afflicts the sons of men.

There are several dimensions to the working of the Lord. First, there is **what** is openly being done, and is perceptible to everyone. Second, there is **the One** who is doing the work, and that is not perceptible to everyone. Third, there is the revelation of **Divine purpose** in what is being done, and this also is not discerned by everyone.

The lasting benefit of what is being done is realized at this third level – connecting with Divine will and purpose. Of course, that requires that men have some understanding of the One doing the work. He has to be more than a mere supplier of needs, or one who is sympathetic and tends to come to the aid of the people. Such a view of Christ can be easily forgotten, only being remembered in the hour of crisis, if, indeed, it is even remembered then.

As an example of the power of a proper understanding, consider the death of Christ. When Jesus died, all of the people saw it, with some of them being completely indifferent, and others even mocking the Christ. A few comprehended **who** it was that was dying – His mother and some of His disciples (John 19:25-27), the penitent thief (Lk 23:42), and the centurion who said “*Truly this Man was the Son of God*” (Mk 15:39). But only when the purpose that constrained that death is comprehended is genuine benefit realized from it: i.e. “*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us*” (1 John 3:16). The lack of that perception is the root of all unbelief and indifference.

“**21 And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?**” Notice that Jesus does not brush aside their failure to understand, as though it was of no consequence. This is a Divine trait that we all do well to perceive. It is not unusual to confront professed Christians who ask us to overlook their spiritual incapacities, failure to grow up into Christ, and the remarkably long time they spend in spiritual infancy. Of course, such people have ready explanations for their condition.

The Savior, however, will not listen to them. He will confront them with the fact that they have lived beneath what they **could** do. He will not expect more of them than they are able to give – although He has been known to tell lame men to walk (John 5:8), a man with a withered hand to stretch it out (Matt 12:13), and a dead man to come out of the tomb (John 11:43). When the Lord Jesus asks us concerning our failure to do something, He is not looking for an explanation.

HOW IS IT? What a penetrating question? Of all people, why was it that these disciples did not understand? They were with the Lord when the need arose with these two groups. They were challenged by the Lord concerning what should be done with both hungry multitudes. They knew how many loaves they had to start with on both occasions – which, from the human point of view, were wholly inadequate. They knew what happened when, on both occasions, these loaves were placed into Jesus’ hands. Both times, they themselves had passed out the bread and fish. On both occasions, they personally saw the people all eat until they were filled. They also were the very ones who gathered up the fragments when both groups had been filled. Now Jesus asks them, “*How is it that YE do not understand?*” Of all people, why have **you** failed to comprehend?

How much truth does a person need to know in order to form some valid spiritual conclusions? Is this something that requires a protracted period of time? If the earthly ministry of Jesus was expected to produce some sound thinking, what about now, when He is ministering in the heavenly “sanctuary” (Heb 8:2)? When those who have been washed from their sins (Rev 1:5), made partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), and of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4), fail to understand, what kind of reason can be provided for their ignorance?

NOT CONCERNING BREAD. “*How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?*” (Matt 16:11). Jesus never does tell His disciples what He was talking about. He rather wisely draws them into more involvement. He candidly tells them He was not speaking “concerning bread” when He told them to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” How will they respond to this very brief elaboration? Have they already received enough from Him to be able to reprocess what He said, reaching further into the realm of thought and deeper into their own hearts? Are they capable of more than has been evidenced to this point?

THEN THEY UNDERSTOOD. Matthew informs us that the disciples then became aware of what He really meant. “*Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*” (Matt 16:12). Other versions read, “they saw,” BBE “they comprehended,” DARBY “they perceived,” WEYMOUTH “they realized,” MONTGOMERY and “they discerned.” AMPLIFIED

This is a most remarkable conclusion. I know of many professed “Christians” who could not possibly have arrived at this determination. It reveals that those who remain with Jesus are given more ability than they dare to imagine. To my knowledge, this is the only reference in all of the Bible to the “*doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*” There is not a solitary reference anywhere else to the Pharisees “teaching,” what they “taught,” or their “doctrine.” What the Sadducees said about the resurrection, angels, and spirits is mentioned (Matt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Acts 23:6). The disciples knew what the “scribes” said about the coming of Elijah “first” (Matt 17:10; Mk 9:11), and what they said about Christ being “the Son of David” (Mk 12:35). Once Jesus told His disciples to “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Lk 12:1). However, Jesus had not said a lot about the doctrine of either the Pharisees or the Sadducees. He asked them to remember how many baskets of bread they had taken up, but He did not ask them what He had told them about the doctrine of the Pharisees. That is something they would have to think out, and they proved equal to the occasion.

The disciples could not reach back in their memories making an association between leaven and doctrine. They could not recall specific teaching Jesus delivered concerning what the Pharisees taught. Yet, upon Christ’s declaration that He was **not** speaking about “bread,” the disciples immediately knew He was really talking about “doctrine.”

This is a sterling example of how people can be brought to think if they will listen to the Lord. There are very real associations that can only be discovered by reasoning upon the truth. All of the answers are not provided in clear and concise sentences. Some conclusions can only be reached by pondering what has been done and said, and perceiving their very real association.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 89

“ Mark 8:22 And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. 23 And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought. 24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. 25 After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and He was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26 And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”
(Mark 8:22-26)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has returned to the other side of Galilee from *“the parts of Dalmanutha.”* Perhaps you have picked up on this throughout the Gospel of Mark : **it is all about Jesus – where He went, and what He was doing.** The only time we are told about what the disciples did is when Jesus sent them out (Mk 6:12; Lk 9:2), or commanded them to distribute the food He supplied the multitudes (Mk 8:6-7). The only discussions of the disciples that are recorded are those that required some response from Jesus. The only time anything is said about their homes or their relatives is when they were being called by, Jesus, or were with Him (Mk 1:19-20; Mk 1:30). The only reference to their occupation is related to their call from it (Mk 1:16,19–20; 2:12; Lk 5:10). Throughout the Gospels, and with no exception, the disciples are pictured as being with Jesus. Jesus is not presented as being with them. Even when Jesus promises to be with His disciples following His return to heaven, it is only as they are engaged in His work (Matt 28:20). The promise of the Lord being with His people is now contingent upon their separation from this world – being *“without covetousness,”* and *“content”* with the things they have (Heb 13:5). It is a dangerous thing when the emphasis of *Christianity* is shifted from Jesus to the individual. Such an accent is in sharp conflict with the Gospel of Christ, and the doctrine of the apostles as well. Spiritual life is not about the Lord being with men in all of the details of their lives, but with them devoting themselves wholly to the Lord and His purpose. The well known aphorism *“the will of God for my life”* is skewed in the wrong direction. If you remove the will and purpose of God from all consideration, there is not so much as a syllable of Scripture that affirms His interest in or concern for the lives of people. Even if we consider the need of food, drink, and clothing, it is within the context of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:31-33). I take care to say I am speaking of an **emphasis** , lest any unwarranted conclusions be reached.

“ Mk 8:22 And He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. 23a And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town . . . ”

COMING TO BETHSAIDA. This was a town on the Western side of the Sea of Galilee, and belonged to the region of Galilee, being called *“Bethsaida of Galilee”* (John 12:21). Philip, Peter, and Andrew were from this city (John 1:44). It was also in the vicinity of Capernaum and Chorazin.

This triad of cities is described as a place “*wherein most of His mighty works were done*” – and yet it is said of them, “*they repented not*” (Matt 11:20). Jesus pronounced a “Woe” upon both Chorazin and Bethsaida, declaring that it would be “*more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment*” than for them (Matt 11:21-22). He told Capernaum, where He Himself resided (Matt 4:13), that they had been “*exalted into heaven*” by virtue of His presence, yet would be “*cast down into hell.*” He told them it would be “*more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment*” than for them (Matt 11:23-24).

There are places and people who are exposed to Jesus primarily to fulfill the Scriptures. This was true of the region of these cities of Galilee. It is written that Jesus moved to and ministered there “*That is might be fulfilled which was spoken of Isaiah the prophet The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up*” (Mat 4:14-16). As a whole, the people were not responsive to Jesus, as confirmed in the woes He pronounced again them.

Jesus told His disciples there would be times when the Gospel would actually be a testimony “*against*” those who heard it (Mk 13:9-10). On one occasion, Paul and Barnabas told some unbelieving Jews, “*It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*” (Acts 13:46). Referring to the preaching of the Gospel, Paul affirmed, “*For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*” (2 Cor 2:15-16).

All of this emphasizes that Christ’s ministry was primarily motivated by His desire to “*please*” the Father (John 8:29). Jesus confessed that His “*meat,*” or the things that nourished and strengthened Him, was to “*do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work*” (John 4:34). There is no other way to account for Jesus doing “*most of His mighty works*” in this region.

I say these things knowing that it is possible to draw incorrect conclusions about Christ’s attitude toward the people. It is necessary, however, to learn to think in terms of the priority of God’s will. So far as we are concerned, that is often the only explanation available to us.

THEY BRING A BLIND MAN TO HIM. Although Jesus is entering into the last part of His ministry (Mk 8:31), the people have not become so used to Him that they can ignore His presence. Even in this area, noted for its rejection of the Christ, the people associated Him, with great things. They were not bringing their disputes to Him, like the people did to Moses, when they brought to Him their “*hard causes*” (Ex 18:13,18,26). Solomon exercised the same kind of judgment, judging when there were disputes (1 Kgs 3:16-28).

The discernment of the people can be seen in the greatness of the causes they bring to Jesus. Where nothing more than social issues are brought to the Lord, with no quest for His power, there is some question about whether or not Jesus has been seen properly.

In this case, it seems clear that those who brought the blind man to Jesus did not represent the populous as a whole. They were more like Peter, Andrew, and Philip, who were also from that area. You might say they were an example of a remnant.

HE LED HIM OUT OF THE TOWN. Once Jesus had led a deaf man with an

impediment of speech away from the multitude to heal him (Mk 7:33). Now Jesus “*took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town.*” In the first case, even though certain had brought the deaf and dumb man to Jesus, the multitude were a distraction because they lacked depth and true interest. Now Jesus takes the blind man by the hand and leads him out of the town of Bethsaida – away from this citadel of unbelief, for no place upon which Jesus pronounces a “*Woe*” is in any sense conducive to “*the mighty acts of the Lord*” (Psa 145:4).

There are environs that must be left before the wonderful works of God can be realized. **The progress of many in the faith is as much owing to where they left as to where they have come.** There are places and people who “*are not worthy*” of Christ (Matt 10:37-38). There are communications that “*corrupt good manners*” (1 Cor 15:33). There are people from whom we must “*turn away*” (2 Tim 3:5), and some individuals from whom a godly man must “*purge himself*” (2 Tim 2:21). There is a religious society concerning which the Spirit says, “*come out from among them*” (2 Cor 6:17), and “*come out of her My people*” (Rev 18:4).

“ 23a . . . and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought. 24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.”

Some people had brought this blind man to Jesus, “*and begged Him to touch him.*” NKJV But Jesus did not do so – at least not in the manner they specified. Instead, Jesus took the man by the hand and led him out of the town. In the eyes of men, that certainly should have qualified as a “*touch*” – **but it was not a touch of power, and therefore no change was wrought by it.** It is, therefore, possible to have some immediate contact with Jesus, and yet not be changed by it. Here is an example of one with a bodily infirmity. Judas is an example of a man with a corrupt heart. Judas was a man whose feet Jesus washed on the night of His betrayal (John 13:5,27-30). Yet, Judas only became worse that night, though touched by Jesus, for that night Satan “*entered . . . into Judas*” (Lk 22:3), and he went out and “*communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them*” (Luke 22:4).

It appears to me that some people view Jesus more as a glorified magician than as the Savior of the world, who is bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). They see Him as able to correct their personal dilemm(as as they have assessed them), and are disappointed when He does not do so. We do well to develop a view of Jesus that is in strict accord with the Father’s representation of Him – the “*record*” He has given of His Son. Lest we be confused on the matter, John carefully summarizes that record. “*And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world*” (1 John 4:14). “*God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him*” (1 John 4:9). “*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8).

HE SPIT ON HIS EYES. This is the only time of record that Jesus used such a means to heal the blind. One time Jesus healed a blind man with a word (Lk 18:12). Another time He anointed the eyes of a blind man with clay made from His own spittle, and told him to wash in a specific pool (John 9:6-7). Our text presents a third method.

Here is a classic example of the revealed Divine manner: “*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are*” (1 Cor 1:28). No one but a fool would attempt to duplicate this miracle by this means. On the other hand, if the Lord had pronounced some formulae by which the man’s sight was restored, I have no doubt that men would have sought to do the same – like the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:14-

16).

It is the lack of awareness of this Divine manner that moves religious men to promote empty routines – like twelve disciplined steps, forty days of purpose, daily regimens, and the likes. They seek to correct human behavior, or make spiritual advance by stereotyped means.

HE PUT HIS HANDS ON HIM. The laying on of hands is not common in our society, but during the time of our text, people associated this with blessing – particularly when it involved Jesus. Once the people brought little children to Jesus, “*that He should put His hands on them, and pray*” (Matt 19:13). In His “*own country,*” He “*laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them*” (Mk 6:5). When faced with a multitude of infirm people in Capernaum, “*He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them*” (Lk 4:40). When confronting a woman bowed together with the spirit of infirmity, Jesus “*laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight*” (Lk 13:13). He healed Peter’s mother-in-law by touching her hand (Matt 8:15). When Peter cut off Malchus’ ear, Jesus “*touched his ear and healed him*” (Lk 22:51). Once He “*touched*” a leper, said “*be thou clean,*” and the leper was healed (Mk 1:41-42). When Jesus touched the open coffin of a dead man, the man “*sat up and began to speak*” (Lk 7:14). It seems to me that the point is this: when Jesus clearly identifies Himself with any difficulty, it will soon be addressed and resolved.

HE ASKED HIM. Jesus asked the man, “*Do you see anything?*” NIV Eyes that are opened must be used. What did the man see? How clearly did he see the things around him? This is equivalent to telling a man with a withered hand stretch it out (Mk 3:5), or a lame man on a bed to pick it up and walk (Mk 2:11). When Jesus heals our infirmities, He will no doubt call upon us to employ them.

MEN AS TREES WALKING. This is the only time in all of Scripture when a healing appeared to not be complete. The man made an effort; He “*looked up,*” but confessed people looked to him “*like trees walking around.*” NIV What he saw was confusing. It was not clear. It appears as though his vision was also blurred, so that men appeared larger than they really were. Some assume that this was a special working of the Lord that was intended to show how understanding is gradually given to believers. It seems to me that the text justifies seeing this as a demonstration of the remarkably hindering influences of an unbelieving environment.

“ 25 After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26 And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”

HE PUT HIS HANDS ON HIS EYES AGAIN. Some have conjectured that Christ could have healed this man instantly, had He desired to do so. Philosophically, this may appear to be very true. However, we have this word about Jesus’ ability within the context of great unbelief – and it was in the same geographical area: “*And He could there do **no mighty work**, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them*” (Mark 6:5). **This inability was not owing to any lack of power on Jesus part, but was rather related to His nature, which recoils and withdraws from unbelief.** Matthew confirms this when he writes, “*And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief*” (Mat 13:58).

It is possible for the attitudes and expressions of men to limit what God can do for them. As it is written, “*Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel*” (Psa 78:41). Some versions, instead of using the word “*limited,*” neutralize this text by using the word “*pained,*” NASB “*vexed,*” NIV or “*provoked.*” NRSV Thus they rob men of the perspective that when God is vexed or provoked He will **not** bless those who cause that response! In this case “*cannot*” refers to the violation of Divine character, not the lack of ability. He “*cannot deny Himself*”

(2 Tim 2:13), which He would surely do if He lavished blessings on those who provoke Him to anger.

Properly seen, this second touch is an exhibition of Divine mercy triumphing over judgment, and not a second attempt in which even more power was used. In these surroundings it took more mercy, more compassion, and more pity than it took more power.

HE MADE HIM LOOK UP. We are not sure how Jesus “*made*” the man look up, but in some way he moved him to peer into the same area he had previously looked. He had to look at the same thing again. It is as though the unbelief of that region had caused a spiritual mist to descend upon the area. As a result, everything looked distorted and lacked clarity. Now, however, for this man, that circumstance would be changed.

I have observed that there are areas in which spiritual understanding is nearly impossible. There is a blanket of blindness cast over the people, so that the things of God can be scarcely understood. In such environs it is easier to leave one’s “*first love*” (Rev 2:4). There, it is easier to allow the propagation of wicked teaching (Rev 2:20). Spiritual deadness therefore flourishes, while the shell of religion is meticulously maintained (Rev 3:1).

Those extracted from such places require an extraordinary amount of grace to fully recover. Many of us can testify that the lingering effects of distorted religion are often as challenging to “*unlearn*” as it is for the truth to be perceived. That is why we are admonished to turn away from corrupt and debilitating religion (2 Tim 3:5).

HE WAS RESTORED. Now, the man “*saw everyone clearly.*” NKJV Notice, the man’s vision was not said to be “*restored*” until he saw everything clearly. This puts the lie to the notion that one can be healed, yet retain the symptoms of the malady from which he was healed. Spiritually speaking, those who “*cannot see afar off*” are said to be “*blind*” (2 Pet 1:9).

The Lord is never said to have partially healed someone. That is a charge leveled at the false prophets, who are said to have “*healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly,*” or “*superficially*” NASB (Jer 6:14; 8:11). Such a condition is like a “*carnal christian*” – only a figment of the imagination.

DO NOT GO BACK TO THE TOWN. Jesus sent the man to his own house. He gave the same instructions to others (Matt 9:6; Mk 2:11; Lk 5:24). This indicates that the blind man had been brought into the town of Bethsaida from another place. There were times when Jesus told people not to tell what He had done for them (Mk 5:43; 7:36; Matt 8:4; 9:30; 12:16). **But that is not the instruction that is given here.** “*Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.*” Other versions read, “*Do not even enter the village,*” NASB “*Don't go back into the village on your way home,*” NLT and “*Do not [even] enter the village or tell anyone there.*” AMPLIFIED

This village was doubtless Bethsaida, the town into which this man had been brought. Now Jesus forbids the man to return to that town, or to tell anyone from it what had happened. This was a city that had heard Jesus speak and saw Him work, and yet it is written that “*they repented not.*” Like the people of Jeremiah’s day, showers of blessing were “*withholden*” from them because they “*refused to be ashamed*” (Jer 3:3). It could well be said of them, “*your sins hath withholden good things from you*” (Jer 5:25).

It is a serious condition when anyone at variance with the Lord is exposed to the truth and fails to repent, abandoning their former way of life and cleaving to the Lord “*with purpose of heart*” (Acts 11:23). Men may grow patient with such conditions and continue to labor endlessly

where there is no favorable response. Our text, however, does not reflect that mind-set. Keep in mind that this area had been exposed to the Lord's Christ for about two years.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 90

“ Mark 8:27 And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. 29 And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ. 30 And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.” (Mark 8:27-30; Matt 16:13-20)

INTRODUCTION

Again, the disciples are depicted as being with Jesus, **not** Jesus with the disciples. He was setting the agenda, choosing where they went, and they were following Him. This is still the manner of the Kingdom, which is completely Christ-centered. Further, Jesus is moving about in strict accord with the purpose of the Father, and the commission that has been delivered to Him – to lay down His life, and take it up again (John 10:17-18). In all of this, He is giving us an example of what it means to “*live unto the Lord*” (Rom 14:8). This is not merely keeping a set of rules, but involves willingness, commitment, and alertness. As Jesus nears the time appointed for laying down His life, He begins preparing His chosen twelve for what is ahead. They will have occasion to remember His words after He has left them. The Holy Spirit will bring them to their remembrance (John 14:26). Jesus often spoke in prospect of **this** experience, and not merely to profitably teach them at the time. He will ask them how the people have assessed Him, and how the disciples themselves see Him. These remain critical questions, and we do well to carefully consider them. It will become apparent that the clear and powerful sight of Jesus in the flesh not only lacked transforming power, it did not, of itself, lead people to a sound conclusion concerning His person. This ineptitude still exists among men, and is evidence that they do indeed “*come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). That is, when men are only exposed to the visible workings of the Lord, it is not conducive to sound spiritual thought and conclusions. Yet, even though the people then gave a wholly improper assessment of Jesus, they were far ahead of the average churchman of our day.

“ Mk 8:27 And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.”

CAESAREA PHILIPPI. This town was in the northern part of the country – the general vicinity of Tyre, Sidon (East), and Damascus (West) – about ten miles North of the tip of the Sea of Galilee, and nearly 100 miles from Jerusalem. In a sense it was very remote area, situated on the borders of the inheritance of Naphtali, and at the foot of Mount Hermon. By Jesus coming here, the light would shine into Gentile regions.

HE ASKED THEM BY THE WAY. The distance from Bethsaida to Caesarea Philippi was

around 25+ miles. Whatever one may think about the ministry of Jesus, it certainly was an aggressive one. Apart from traveling by way of the sea, there are no references to any mode of travel other than walking. You may remember that Jesus opened the Scriptures to Cleopas and his companion “*by the way,*” as they walked along (Lk 24:32). Now, in keeping with His nature and mission, Jesus directs the talk to an important area. He is going to make the disciples more aware of His person, lest they be distracted to lesser considerations of Him – something, as we will see, men are prone to do.

WHAT DO THE PEOPLE SAY? “*Whom do men say that I am?*” Matthew reads, “*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*” What is the perception of the people? After beholding His many wonderful works and hearing His gracious words, what are people saying about **Him**? After two years of extended exposure to the Lord of glory, what kind of impression has registered upon the people. After hearing reports of mass and divers healings, the feeding of multitudes, the invasion of Satan’s kingdom, and the raising of the dead, what are the people saying about His identity? What kind of importance have they attached to Him? How relevant do they perceive Him to be? Have they made any connection between Him and God? Have they associated Him with any of the prophets? Do they see Him as the promised Messiah? **Jesus does not ask what the people think about what He has done, but about who He IS.** He does not ask what they think about His power, but seeks to know what they are saying about His **PERSON**. He is not inquiring about what the people are saying He can DO or has done: “*WHO do people say that I am?*” NKJV

That is a telling question that is not being pressed upon the people of our time. **Today, there appears to be more said about what Jesus can do than who He IS.** This is important because it is WHO Jesus is that determines what He does.

THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PEOPLE. The people, including the disciples, had said much about Jesus – mostly questions. “*What manner of man is this?*” (Matt 8:27). “*What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?*” (Mk 1:27). “*If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly*” (John 10:24). Some had said, “*This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world*” (John 6:14). Nicodemus had said He was “*a teacher sent from God*” (John 3:2). Jesus, however, is not asking concerning immediate reactions to His presence and work. There had been many quick responses to His presence and ministry: i.e., “*We have seen strange things today*” (Lk 5:26), “*We never saw it on this fashion*” (Mk 2:12), “*A great prophet is risen among us,*” and “*God hath visited His people*” (Lk 7:16). But what did they say when Jesus was not present? What about **after** the impressiveness of His presence was no longer upon them? What did they say then? Who did they say He was when they **reflected** upon what they had seen and heard?

SOMEONE COME BACK FROM THE REGION BEYOND. “*And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.*” Matthew reads, “*Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets*” (Matt 16:14). John the Baptist had died more than a year ago. Elijah was translated over 900 years ago. Jeremiah prophesied around 600 years before this. The last prophet before John the Baptist was Malachi, who had prophesied over 400 years ago. All of them were men of great strength, who significantly effected their generations. The people thought one of these, or some other prophet had come back from the world beyond. No one likened Jesus to Caiaphas the high priest (John 11:49), or one of the Pharisees, or scribes, or Sadducees, or lawyers. There was absolutely no contemporaries with whom He could be compared – and the people knew it.

It also is worthy to note that the Jews had not been contaminated with the philosophies of the world around them, or the doctrine of the Sadducees, who say there is no spirit (Acts 23:8). They knew there was another world in which spirits reside, and had no difficulty

conceiving of a visitation from some of them. Of course, two did come from this realm when Jesus was later transfigured (Matt 17:3), and Jesus Himself had “*come down from heaven*” (John 3:13). They were more advanced in their thinking than the skeptics of our day.

“ 29 And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ.”

It is also important to note that the disciples **did** know what the people were saying about Christ’s person and identity. While some are experts in what men say about politics, world conditions, entertainment, athletics, and the likes, the disciples knew what the people were saying about Jesus. How about you? Do you know who people say Jesus is?

WHAT DO YOU SAY? Jesus was really readying the disciples to give their own assessment of who He was. They had been with Him from the beginning, and had not left Him. They had seen more and heard more than the others. Also, the transfiguration had not yet taken place – a time when God confessed Jesus to be His “*Beloved Son*” (Mk 9:7). Up to this time, they had heard Jesus say, “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6:35), “*I came down from heaven*” (John 6:38), and “*I am the light of the world*” (John 8:12). Most of the well known “*I am the . . .*” statements had not yet been made (John 10:7,11,36; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). He had not yet revealed that He would suffer many things, be killed, and rise the third day (Mk 8:31; 9:31). Now, they were required to draw some conclusions from what He had said and done.

THOU ART THE CHRIST. Mark reads, “*Thou art the Christ!*” – that is, the Messiah, or the single God-sent man upon whom the hopes of the world would be suspended. “*The Christ*” was the “*Man*” God would give for a hiding place and refuge (Isa 32:2). Matthew reads, “*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matt 16:16). Jesus was the One “*anointed*” to preach the Gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, set at liberty those who were bruised, and preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:18-19).

Keep in mind that “Christ” denotes the primary relationship of Jesus to God, not to man. That is why He is called “*the Lord’s Christ*” (Lk 2:26), “*the Christ of God*” (Lk 9:20), and “*His Christ*” (Acts 4:26; Rev 11:15; 12:10). The emphasis here is not on the one we need, but the One God sent – and there is a vast difference in those views. It is true that the sick “*need*” a physician (Lk 5:31), but the point is the remedy that GOD provided – “*His Christ.*”

Matthew adds, “*the Son of the living God*” – not of Adam, or any other man, but “*of God.*” He is, in fact, “*the only begotten of the Father*” (John 1:14) and the “*only begotten Son*” (John 1:18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:19). Jesus is not a Son, but **THE** Son. This is the very point Satan challenged in the forty-day temptation (Matt 4:3,6). It is what demons confessed (Matt 8:29). Previously, when Jesus had stilled a storm, the disciples blurted out, “*Of a truth, thou art the Son of God*” (Matt 14:33). However, up to this point, there had not been much said among men on this. “*The Son of God*” was the Man who would be charged with taking away the sins of the world, destroying the devil, reconciling the world, and who would be exalted above all for the purpose of bringing many sons to glory. In a flash of insight, Peter received a glimpse of the magnitude of Christ’s person.

BLESSED ART THOU! Matthew records Christ’s response to Peter. It is doubtless omitted from Mark’s Gospel because it was, we understand, being dictated by Peter. This being true, Peter chose not to draw attention to himself. “*And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father*

which is in heaven” (Matt 16:17). Jesus does not commend Peter for giving the correct answer, but rather **informs** him that the source of this insight did not come from men – neither Peter nor some other man. **God had revealed to Peter who Jesus was!** This was not an academic achievement or a studied response. This makes perfect sense for Jesus had said earlier, “*All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father*” (Mat 11:27). **No person can arrive at a proper understanding of Jesus by study and research.** This ought to be apparent. Peter had been with “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16) for over two years. “*The fulness of the Godhead*” dwelt bodily in Christ (Col 2:9), and the one who had seen Him had “*seen the Father*” (John 14:9). Yet, it required a revelation from God in order for Peter to know and say that Jesus was “*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”

No person can accurately or profitably know about the things or word of God until Christ Himself is known. Knowing HIM is the objective of real spiritual quest (Phil 3:10).

There is something else of importance to be noted here. **The revelation was given during a time of contemplation** – when Peter was with Jesus, listening to Him, and pondering an inquiry from Him. There is a proper environment in which illumination is experienced. Permit me to refer to that environment as a state of God-consciousness – when the individual is more aware of Christ than himself, and thoughts are being wrapped around what the Lord has said. That is a blessed context in which one can be “*filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*” (Col 1:9). Many professing Christians languish in spiritual ignorance because they are rarely in the proper environment.

“ Matt 16: 18 *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*”

Matthew adds Christ’s elaboration on this occasion, and it is very significant. It is also necessary that it be properly understood. Satan has especially targeted to corrupt this saying.

THOU ART PETER. This is the first time in Scripture that Jesus referred to Simon as “*Peter.*” This is the “*interpretation*” of “*Cephas,*” the name Jesus gave Peter in the place of “*Simon*” (John 1:42). Most of the time, Jesus called him “*Simon*” (Matt 17:25; Mk 14:37; Lk 5:4; 22:31; John 21:15,16,17). This time, however, Jesus affirms that he was “*Peter,*” for his answer was harmonious with his new name, and reflected the kind of understanding for which he would be noted after he was “*converted,*” or returned, following his denial of Christ (Lk 22:32).

ON THIS ROCK. “*This rock*” was not Peter himself, but the confession that he had just made. From the standpoint of language, both “*Peter*” and “*rock*” come from the same root. However, the latter word “*rock*” is in the feminine gender, while “*Peter*” is in the masculine. The difference is “*rock*” refers to a large and complete ledge of stone, while “*Peter*” refers to a **piece** of a ledge of rock. The point here is that Peter would be large and significant among men, as will be confirmed later. But when it comes to the building of the church, it will not be founded on a man, but on Christ Himself, who is the true foundation. As it is written, “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” (1 Cor 3:11).

I WILL BUILD. Jesus Himself is building the church. **The “rock” upon which it is being built is the revelation of the Person of Christ Jesus.** That is the substance of Peter’s confession. Those who perceive what was revealed to Peter will be part of that church. Those who do not, will not – and Jesus knows “*them that are His*” (2 Tim 2:19). As an example, when the Ethiopian eunuch became part of the church, it was upon the basis of his perception of Christ: “*And Philip said, If thou*

believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ” (Acts 8:37). That is not a mere formal requirement. A confession is the acknowledgment of something that has been perceived. John confirms the effect of this confession when he writes, “*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*” (1 John 5:5).

THE GATES OF HELL. Other versions properly render the word “*hell*” as “*hades*.” This does not refer to the lake of fire, or the present base of operation for the devil. It is the same use of the word employed by David: “*For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell* ” (Psa 16:10). This refers to the resurrection from the abode of the dead, as confirmed by Peter’s exposition of this verse (Acts 2:27-32). Jesus used the word as referring to the abode of the dead, affirming that He had the keys to that domain (Rev 1:18). Finally, Revelation declares that “*death and hell*” will be “*cast into the lake of fire*” (Rev 20:13) – meaning that the grave (abode for bodies) and hades (abode of spirits) will both be cast into the lake of fire, for there will be no more death.

Christ’s meaning is not that the gates of hell, or hades, will not prevail against the church – although they will not – but that they will not prevail against the Foundation. That is, He would rise from the dead, for “*the gates of hell,*” or “*hades,*” refer to the ability of death to keep its victims within its grasp. Death, however, could not keep its hold on Christ Jesus – the Jesus Peter has just confessed (Acts 2:24). Christ is affirming He will rise from the dead to build His church. In a secondary sense, this also applies to the church, which will also be raised from the dead to assume the stewardship of “*the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven*” (Dan 7:27).

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM. These words are being spoken to Peter – “*unto thee*” (singular). **He is making Peter the gatekeeper of the kingdom.** These keys would be employed on the day of Pentecost, as Peter opened up the entrance into the Kingdom, so that men could be “*added to the church*” that Jesus is building (Acts 2:14-36). In using these keys, he decreed how men could be free from their sin and given the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). That decree was bound in heaven, being honored by the Son who gave Peter the keys. It was also honored on earth by men whose conscience was cleansed, hearts made pure, and who were liberated from the tyranny of the devil. Christ’s words were not a way of investing Peter with authority, as ordinarily conceived by men. Rather, it was the announcement of Peter’s privilege to open the way to God that had been “*consecrated*” by Christ (Heb 10:20).

TELL NO MAN. “ Mark 8:30 *And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.*” Matthew reads, “*tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ*” (Matt 16:20). This was not the time for this knowledge to be given to the people. Jesus had not yet died, been raised, or been exalted. Therefore Peter did not yet have the keys, and the way had not yet been “*opened*.” Also, as will be shortly confirmed, Peter did not have a firm enough grasp of this truth, nor did any of the other disciples. That grasp would only come after they had received the Spirit. They must wait until they would be “*endued with power from on high*” (Lk 24:49).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 91

“ Mark 8:31 And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke Him. 33 But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”

(Mark 8:31-33; Matt 16:21-23; Lk 9:22)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus did not come into the world **primarily** to assist and deliver the people in temporal matters. He was on a mission from heaven to lay down His life and take it up again. He had been well received by the people at large, bringing Divine power into their presence in a visible and tangible way. His words concerning the Kingdom of God were “*gracious words*” (Lk 4:22), and His great compassion for the people had been evidenced in Him “*doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil*” (Acts 10:38). He was a breath of fresh air from heaven, having a heart for the people, healing their sick, raising their dead, and feeding them when they had no food of their own. It is no wonder that it is written, “*And the common people heard Him gladly*” (Mk 12:37). His message opened the door of hope, and revealed aspects of God that had previously been hidden to them. Christ’s ministry was also an introduction to the manner in which He would save and direct the people. He would “*draw*” men with His lovingkindness, not push them forward with threats and intimidation. His ministry confirmed that men do not have to be driven by Law – not if they catch even the faintest glimpse of the Savior. People would come to Him because they wanted to, not because they had to. Although all of these representations were, in a way, on the surface of life, yet they spoke loudly of a Kingdom with a different purpose and manner. However, as great as these experiences were, they were not the reason for Christ’s entrance into the world. There was a high and holy reason for the Word becoming flesh, and now Jesus begins to speak more clearly about it.

“ Mk 8:31 And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM. Immediately after Peter’s insightful confession, Jesus began to teach them of His coming death. This teaching can be properly understood only within the context of who He is – “*the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*” If there is any vagueness about His Person, there can be no perception of the significance of His mission. Matthew reads, “***From that time forth*** began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt 16:21). At this precise point, Jesus changed the tone of His teaching, and even His

behavior. Luke says of this time, “*And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:51). He, so to speak, redirected His energies to prepare for His death and triumphant return to heaven.

Prior to this time Jesus had referred to His death in very vague ways. “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:19). “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up*” (John 3:14). He had hinted about His cross when He told the people, “*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me*” (Matt 10:38). Once He even said, “*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matt 12:40). But now is the first time Jesus spoke clearly about His death and the events leading up to it. Now He BEGINS to teach them concerning this matter, for the hour was fast approaching when He would lay down His life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28). The newness of this teaching to the disciples will become apparent as we proceed.

SUFFER MANY THINGS. Matthew, Mark, and Luke refer to “*suffer many things*” (Matt 16:21; Lk 9:22). That is, He would “*undergo great suffering,*” NRSV “*suffer grievously,*” NJB and “*suffer many terrible things.*” NLT Matthew adds that all of this must center in Jerusalem, “*He must go unto Jerusalem and . . .*” He also affirms that these sufferings would be instigated by “*the elders, and chief priests, and scribes*” (Matt 16:21). The sufferings are detailed in Matthew 20:18-19: His betrayal, condemnation to death, being delivered to the Gentiles, mocking, scourging, and crucifixion. Luke says that this would be according to “*all things that are written by the prophets,*” and adds that He would be “*spitefully entreated and spitted on*” (Lk 18:32). These “*sufferings*” covered the period from His arrest in the Garden through the duration of His crucifixion.

BE REJECTED. Both Mark and Luke emphasize that Jesus was “*rejected of the elders. . . chief priests, and scribes*” (Lk 9:22). That is, He was “*rejected*” as **God’s Son** (Matt 26:63-65), and as the “*the Stone*” upon which the entirety of salvation was founded (Matt 21:42). Jesus referred to the entire rejecting group as “*the builders*” (Mk 12:10). That is, these were the men who, by virtue of their acquaintance with the Scriptures and God-ordained ceremonies, were responsible for the proper direction of the people. In his First Epistle, Peter says that Christ is the “*Living Stone, disallowed indeed of men . . . the Stone which the builders disallowed*” (1 Pet 2:4,7). That is, they saw no place for Jesus in the structure and fabric of salvation itself. They perceived no relationship of His Person with the testimony of the Prophets. Because of the hardness of their hearts, what should have been apparent was actually obscured to them.

BE KILLED. Both Matthew and Mark read “*killed.*” Luke reads “*be slain*” (Lk 9:22). On the surface, this may seem to contradict Christ’s statement, “*No man taketh My life from Me*” (John 10:18). That statement is from the viewpoint of God’s “*eternal purpose.*” In this statement, Christ’s death is seen as **confirmation** of man’s rejection of Him. Both views are essential. The utter wickedness of men is seen in the fact that when they were granted the ability to actually do what they wanted, they “*killed the Prince of life*” (Acts 3:15). In voluntarily laying down His life, Jesus not only submitted Himself to the higher will of God, but to the lower will of man as well. Thus, the death of Christ reveals both the nature of the holy God and the depravity of sinful man. Blessed is the man who perceives these things.

AFTER THREE DAYS RISE AGAIN. So far as the chronological record is concerned, Jesus had already raised Jairus’ daughter (Mk 5:41) and the son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7:14). Lazarus had not yet been raised. Jesus had already alluded to His resurrection when He

referred to “*the sign of the prophet Jonah*” (Matt 12:39). At that time He also said the Son of man would be “*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matt 12:40). This, however, is His first clear reference to His resurrection from the dead after three days. Matthew says that Jesus would “*be raised again the third day,*” emphasizing that **God** would raise Him from the dead (Matt 16:21), Jesus also taking back His life as He said (John 10:17-18). All of these points are critical to the Gospel message: (1) Christ’s sufferings, (2) His rejection by the religious leaders, (3) His death, and (4) His resurrection. This is what Jesus now begins to **TEACH** His disciples.

“ 32 *And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him.”*

HE SAID THIS OPENLY. Mark is very pointed in his statement. It was “*that saying*” concerning His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection that Jesus began to declare “*openly,*” “*plainly,*” NASB and “*frankly, plainly, and explicitly, making it unmistakable.*” AMPLIFIED Here, “*openly*” does not mean publicly, although Jesus may very well have done this to some degree. The word “*openly*” means that Jesus made no effort to hide this. He did not speak about it parabolically as He did when He likened His death to Moses raising up the serpent. He does not allude to it vaguely as when He spoke of “*the sign of the prophet Jonah.*” Now, He spoke of these things “*openly*” by frequent and plain teaching. The reason for this is that His death was imminent, and it is God’s manner to draw the more attention to His appointments as they begin to draw near.

Matthew reads, “*From that time forth began Jesus to show His disciples . . .*” (Matt 16:21). That is, in His teaching of the disciples a more particular focus was introduced. His suffering, death, and resurrection were now more prominent in His teaching. The Gospels contain a marked increase in this teaching from this point on (Matt 17:22-23; 20:18-19,28; 26:2; Mk 9:31; 10:33-34; Lk 9:44; 18:31-32). As the time of His death drew close, He spoke more about it.

This has always been God’s manner. As the time of His appointments drew near, more was said about them. This was so of the Babylonian captivity (2 Kgs 20:18; Isa 39:7; Jer 20:4). As the time of Christ’s ministry approached, John the Baptist was sent to “*prepare the way,*” causing the anticipation of the people to be heightened (Mk 1:2-3).

Now that Christ’s second coming is the next great event pertaining to our salvation, much is said about it, in order to prepare the people (1 Cor 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; 15:23; Phil 3:20-21; 4:5; Col 3:4; 1 Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-17; 5:2-3,23; 2 Thess 1:7-10; 2:1-8; 3:5; 1 Tim 6:14-15; 4:1,8; Tit 2:13; Heb 9:28; James 5:7-9; 1 Pet 1:7,13; 4:13; 5:42 Pet 1:16; 3:3-4, 8-14; 1 John 2:28; 3:2). A church that is not proclaiming the coming of the Lord is like a band of disciples during Christ’s ministry who were not being taught of His death and resurrection.

PETER TOOK HIM. The idea is that Peter “*took Him aside*” NKJV – away from the other disciples for a private word. The Amplified Bible reads, “*And Peter took Him by the hand and led Him aside.*” What a stunning picture this is. Viewing the event externally, it would actually appear that Peter was more advanced than the Lord Jesus Himself. It is not that Peter had no respect for Jesus, or that He disdained Him. This is the result of spiritual ignorance – of actually having an incorrect view of Jesus at the time.

Having just confessed Jesus to be “*the Christ, the Son of the living God,*” Peter now hears Jesus begin delineating His impending rejection, death, and resurrection. We will learn from this text of the inability of the flesh to retain the truth, pondering upon it and drawing valid

implications from it. Peter hears what Jesus says, and is not able to relate it to the very real and insightful confession that he had just made. This event does not suggest his confession was not valid, or that it was pretentious. Jesus made it clear that Peter had been blessed, and that the Father Himself had revealed Christ's true identity to him.

PETER BEGAN TO REBUKE HIM. Notice that Peter "*began to rebuke*" Jesus. That is, he commenced, or started, rebuking Jesus. The suggestion is that many more words were involved than appear. However, it was not profitable to go into all of the details of this occasion.

The word "*rebuke*" means to reprove, chide, censure severely, and charge sharply. Other versions read, "*protesting*," BBE "*objected*," GWN "*reprimand*," NLT "*chide*," TNT "*correct*," IE and "*remonstrate with*." WEYMOUTH At this point, the rejection and death of Jesus simply did not make sense to the apostle. He was unable to associate that with Jesus being "*the Christ, the Son of the Living God*." To say it another way, He had seen the top of the truth, but the depth of it, or the implications of it, were not clear to him.

Matthew provides a sort of summation of what Peter said. "*Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee*" (Matt 16:22). Peter's affirmation was more than a mere wish or desire. Although he did not intend for it to be one, it was a sort of prediction based on his perception. Peter's reasoning was, "If You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, it is not possible for such things to happen to You. You are too powerful, and the world is too weak, for You to endure such things." It just did not make sense to him that the One sent by God should fall into the hands of wicked men.

Is it possible to have a right and a wrong view of Jesus simultaneously? It may appear from this text that this is possible. However, that is not the case at all. The right view must be placed to the side in order to embrace the wrong view. In this expression Peter was not thinking of Jesus being the Son of God. He was rather pondering what he thought that meant – what it entailed. At precisely this point – when he began to think as a man about the Lord's Christ – his thinking swerved aside and he spoke foolishly to the Lord Jesus.

" 33 But when He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

How does Jesus react to foolish statements – even those exuding from His own disciples? This text will confirm how serious it is to put a voice to wrong perceptions, and articulate misconceptions.

HE TURNED ABOUT. Turning aside from this private caucus, Jesus looked at His disciples, and said a word to Peter. Matthew says "*He turned, and said to Peter*" (Matt 16:23). What Peter had said to Him was private, but Jesus would make it public. In this we catch a faint glimpse of the day of judgment, when men will give an account for their "*idle words*" (Matt 12:36). We ought not to expect our hasty words to be overlooked by the Lord of glory.

HE REBUKED PETER. Mark says Jesus "*rebuked Peter*." Other versions read, "*said sharply*" BBE "*threatened*," DOUAY "*objected*," GWN "*reprimanded*," NLT "*very sternly*," LIVING "*reproved*," WILLIAMS Matthew reads Jesus "*said to Peter*." If there is any question about how sternly Jesus spoke, the words that He said will clear it up for us. We will find that Jesus is completely intolerant of erroneous views of Himself and His purpose.

GET THEE BEHIND ME SATAN. Both Matthew and Mark read the same way. The word is addressed to Satan himself: “*Get thee behind me Satan!*” The words came out of Peter’s mouth, but they expressed the mind of the devil himself, and had their origin in him. In his reasoning processes, Peter had left a place for the devil, for that is what improper thinking does. As a result, a fiery dart was hurled into his mind by Satan **while he was in the very presence of the Lord’s Christ.** There is, then, no insulation against the encroachments of the devil realized simply because we are in the presence of the Lord. Our thoughts and ways must also be in harmony with His. Otherwise there is a gaping place in which we are vulnerable.

Other versions read, “*Get out of My way,*” BBE “*Get away behind Me,*” DARBY and “*Get away from Me.*” NLT What did Jesus mean? He was preparing to lay down His life, and Satan was standing in the way, seeking to turn Him aside by suggesting that it was not necessary for Him to suffer and die. This was, in fact, a temptation, and Satan had used one of Christ’s chief disciples to hurl it at Him. To “*get behind*” Jesus means to get out of the way, ceasing to be an obstruction. It means to remove himself from the scene so that the Lord has no distractions.

There is no nice way to say “*Get thee behind Me, Satan!*” There is no way to make this sound pleasant or inconsequential. And, Jesus said it said it “*unto Peter*” (Matt 16:23). If Peter had been squeamish about receiving a stern word from the Lord, he certainly would have balked at this one. But there is no evidence that he did. So far as Peter was concerned, this word meant, “Stop standing in the way! Follow Me and make no further attempts to correct Me.”

NOT SAVORING THE THINGS OF GOD. Matthew adds that Jesus “*said unto Peter,*” “*thou art an offence unto Me.*” That is, what was said was offensive to the Master. He was not indifferent to the saying, nor would He overlook it. Other versions read, “*not mindful of the things of God,*” NKJV “*not setting your mind on God’s interests,*” NASB “*do not have a mind for the things of God,*” NIV “*setting your mind not on Divine things,*” NRSV “*understandest not the things that are of God,*” GENEVA “*not thinking as God does,*” NAB and “*do not have a mind intent on promoting what God wills.*” AMPLIFIED

The word “*savoring*” means “understanding, to feel, to think . . . cherish, agree together.” THAYER Here, it means to think like the world, prefer the ways of the world, and be in harmony with the world. It depicts a mind-set in which life in this world is seen as fundamental, and advantages in this world are considered to be preeminent – even to the neglect of heavenly realities. If you wonder how Jesus feels about this way of thinking, read the text again.

Is it really of no consequence when a person’s thoughts are at a variance with the thoughts and purposes of God? The text makes clear that such a postulate is thoroughly false. And, why is it that men do not think like God? How is it that they come to different conclusions than the living God – different conclusions about His Son? Our text makes clear that is it because they are being influenced by Satan himself. And when they are under such influence, what do their words become? Our text also confirms they become obstacles, standing in the way of those who are pursuing the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

When the mind of a person is not set on Divine interests, they become an obstacle in the path to glory. When they are not setting their mind on the things of God, they are standing in the way of those who are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

SAVORING THE THINGS OF MEN. Here “*the things of God*” are contrasted with “*the things that be of men*” – purely human interests. Instead of thinking about what God does, they are thinking on “*what pleases men.*” AMPLIFIED In our time, there are forms of “Christianity” that are

nothing more than savoring and relishing the things of this world, and thinking like men.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 92

“ Mark 8:34 And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whosoever will save His life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose His life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? ”

(Mark 8:34-37; Matt 16:24-26; Lk 9:23-25)

INTRODUCTION

Christ has just rebuked Peter most severely for balking at the thought of Jesus being rejected and killed. The teaching that follows will confirm that, at that time, the nature of Christ's mission in the world had not yet been comprehended – even by His disciples. The only person during Christ's ministry who referred to Him as “*Savior*” was the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well of Jacob (John 4:42). Even in that case, it is doubtful that she knew the full import of that term. Mary had exulted in “*God my Savior*” (Lk 1:47), and the angel had announced the birth of the “*Savior*” (Lk 2:11). However, the general perception of Jesus was that of One who came to correct things in this world. Even following Christ's resurrection, the disciples asked Him, “*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” (Acts 1:6). It was not until Jesus returned triumphantly to heaven that His work of delivering people “*from this present evil world*” became clear (Gal 1:4). In this text, Jesus begins to prepare the people, together with His disciples, for the real purpose of His coming. As “*a Leader and Commander of the people*” (Isa 55:4), He would call upon them to hate their lives in this world, counting them secondary to a higher life, and subordinating all purely worldly interests to this higher calling. This teaching is no more popular today than it was during the time of our text. In fact, it is even less acceptable, because the more a people flourish in this world, the less they are inclined to prefer heavenly realities, or prepare for the inevitability of meeting the Lord. We have before us a very important statement of truth.

“ Mk 8:34 And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

HE CALLED THE PEOPLE WITH HIS DISCIPLES. Matthew reads, “*Jesus said unto His disciples*” (Matt 16:24). Luke reads, “*He said to them all*” (Lk 9:23). Some of Christ's teaching was intended only for a few – like the Olivet discourse (Matt 24:3; Mk 13:3), His “*private*” word about having eyes to see (Lk 10:23), and His explanation concerning their inability to cast out a certain demon (Mk 9:28). This word, however, was for all of His followers, or disciples. He told the following to **everyone** who wanted to come after Him.

COMING AFTER CHRIST. There is such a thing as coming after Christ – “*desires to come after Me,*” NKJV “*wishes,*” NASB “*want to become,*” NRSV “*has the desire,*” BBE and “*intends to come after Me.*” AMPLIFIED This is not an advanced desire, but an initial one. Perhaps there has been an association of Jesus with some perceived need. Maybe something that He offers has been appealing to the person – like forgiveness, or receiving eternal life. Whatever the prompting, the Lord declares that there are restrictions concerning who can follow Him, gain advantage from Him, be taught by Him, or enjoy His company. It is true that He came to “*seek and to save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10). However, His mission makes certain demands upon would-be followers, and Jesus will not hide those demands from the people.

DENYING SELF. “*Let him deny himself,*” or “*must deny himself,*” NIV “*give up all other desires,*” BBE “*forsake himself,*” GENEVA “*must say ‘No’ to the things they want,*” GWN “*disown himself,*” YLT and “*forget, ignore, disown, and lose sight of himself and his own interests.*” AMPLIFIED The person who desires to follow Christ must no longer prefer himself. He must become personally subordinate to Christ. Competing desires must be rejected, and distracting interests vigorously subordinated.

The word “*deny*” means “lose sight of oneself and one’s own self interests.” THAYER It means to disregard oneself in an unquestionable preference for Christ Himself. It also includes the idea of disowning or renouncing, or having nothing to do with. This all is within the context of wanting to follow Jesus. It is clear, therefore, that following Jesus demands that our love be placed upon Him, that His interests become ours, and that the whole matter will be in sharp conflict with one’s natural desires. This is the exact opposite of the psychological concept of “self esteem,” and loving oneself.

TAKING UP HIS CROSS. “*His cross*” is the one belonging to the would-be follower. This is not Christ’s cross, which belonged to Him alone, and upon which reconciliation was wrought. The cross to which Jesus now refers relates to the sufferings that have been left “*behind*” (Col 1:24). Christ’s cross is referred to as “*HIS cross*” (John 19:17; Col 1:20; 2:14).

All three Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) include this statement. Luke adds one thought: “*take up his cross daily*” (Lk 9:23). This is not a “*cross*” that Christ places upon us. **It is one that must be taken up.** Other versions read, “*pick up,*” GWN “*shoulder your,*” LIVING “*carry,*” IE and “*put the cross on his shoulder.*” WILLIAMS It is not possible to do this begrudgingly or unwillingly. By its very nature, this requirement excludes all who do not have a compelling desire to be identified with Jesus, and to do so at all cost.

This is the appointed means of denying self – the crucifixion of the flesh (Gal 5:24). Self is denied when it is upon the cross, and the cross must be personally carried, just like Jesus carried His own cross and headed for “*the place of the skull*” (John 19:17). Along the way to Golgotha, some relief was given Jesus as another man was compelled to carry His cross (Lk 23:26). Nevertheless, Jesus initially took it up and carried it. So it is with those who desire to follow Jesus. They must pick up their cross of self-crucifixion and carry it every day. In that process, they also will be granted relief – but not until they pick up the cross themselves.

Further, taking up one’s cross cannot be done out of a sense of mere duty. Neither is it something that takes place once for all time, as though once you picked up the cross it remained fixed to your shoulder.

Elsewhere Jesus said, “*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is **not worthy***”

of Me” (Mat 10:38). And again, “*And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be My disciple*” (Luke 14:27). This is not, then, an option that can be ignored.

FOLLOWING HIM. “... *and follow Me.*” The point is not taking up the cross, but following Jesus! The “following” of reference cannot be done without carrying one’s cross. The way of Jesus is too rigorous for flesh to follow. That is why it is so wicked to present people with convenient religion, and a way that does not demand denying self and carrying a cross. This is the very reason why many professing believers are stunted in their growth. They have not followed Jesus because they did not take up their cross. They have stagnated because they have let “*self*” and “*flesh*” live. They have not “*hated*” their lives (Lk 14:26).

“ 35 *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*”

SAVE HIS LIFE. Other versions read, “*desires to save,*” NKJV “*wishes to save,*” NASB “*wants to save,*” NIV “*try to hang on to,*” NLT “*insist on saving,*” LIVING “*bent on securing,*” WEYMOUTH and “*Lower, natural, temporal life which is lived only on earth.*” AMPLIFIED The Gospel of John reads, “*He that loveth his life*” (John 12:25). Matthew has Jesus saying earlier, “*He that findeth his life*” (Matt 10:39). This refers to doing everything possible to preserve earthly life, even if it involves neglecting Jesus and eternal life which comes through Him. In this case, earthly life is primary, the whole of one’s existence and resources is spent in preserving it.

The picture here is that of the inevitable conflict that will arise between man’s preferences and the will of Christ, between man’s way and Christ’s way, between where Jesus is leading and where the person living for this world wants to go. All defection, backsliding, and spiritual retrogression are traced to the love of and preference for life “*in this world.*” Such a preference, regardless of the defense presented for it, is set in opposition to the will of Christ.

This is the life that must be crucified. It is the life reserved for the cross that one must pick up every day. By its very nature it competes with eternal interests, crying out for prominence and the preeminence.

SHALL LOSE IT. Every Gospel reads the same way: “*shall lose it.*” Other versions read, “*will have it taken from him,*” BBE and “*will have to give up the lower life.*” WILLIAMS The idea is that **at an inappropriate time, when the person is not ready to give up his soul, it will be required of him.** This is depicted in the person who made every effort to preserve his life by tearing down his old barns and building new ones, seeing he had harvested a bumper crop. He saw his life as being preserved “*for many years.*” Yet, the word of the Lord came to him: “*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*” (Lk12:19-20). He lost his life!

The inevitable result of attempting above all things to preserve earthly life is that one’s grip upon it will be lost. The life itself will perish, be destroyed, and lost, and there will be nothing to take its place in which satisfying energy can be spent, and fulfillment and satisfaction realized.

LOSE HIS LIFE. To “*lose*” one’s life is to choose the life of another. It is to abandon purely self-interests. John states it even more precisely: “*he that hateth his life in this world*” (John 12:25). Two separate lives confront every person who is made aware of Jesus. There is life “*in this world,*” lived with a view to the things that can be realized in and from this world. The flesh is prominent, and what can be obtained by the natural senses has the unquestionable priority. The person who “*loses his life*” chooses to make life in this world secondary, or subordinate to the life that comes from God. Rather than making life in the body the main thing, such a person chooses to seek

“first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” This is done in the full persuasion that God will supply one’s earthly needs (Matt 6:33).

MY SAKE. Jesus is not merely promoting an ascetic life, where one submits to a life of poverty and self denial. If this is not done for the sake of following Christ, such a life has no value. This also undergirds the fact that such a denial must take place **before** the person is even allowed to follow Jesus.

This puts the lie to the notion that anyone can be an “uncommitted Christian,” a “carnal Christian,” or a Christian who has not “made Christ the Lord of his life.” Such phrases are common among professing believers, but they are nothing more than an imagination that needs to be cast down. If self denial is not done for Christ’s sake – that is, so that one can be with Him – it is worthless. Too, if this is not done, one cannot follow Jesus.

THE GOSPEL’S SAKE. Mark adds *“and the gospel’s”* – *“and for the sake of the Gospel”* NRSV By this, Jesus means that the benefits of the Gospel cannot be experienced unless a person loses his life in this world. There is, therefore, something in the Gospel itself that makes a person aware that life in this world is not the main life. If the message that is delivered does not promote this idea, then it is not possible that it is the Gospel of Christ, God’s *“power unto salvation”* (Rom 1:16). It is possible that much of the deficiency in people’s thinking concerning life in this world is owing to the fact that they have not heard the Gospel preached and expounded.

SHALL SAVE IT. *“ . . . the same shall save it”* – that is, the person who chooses to let go of life in this world. Matthew says of this life, *“shall find it”* (Matt 16:25). Too *“save it”* means that life in this world is maintained for a higher reason and with greater benefits. This is so because it is maintained with the prospect of obtaining eternal life. Therefore John’s Gospel reads, *“shall keep it unto life eternal”* (John 12:25). That is, the person will make a safe and pleasing transition from this world into *“the world to come”* – *“and in the world to come eternal life”* (Mark 10:30). The saving of one’s life – or maintaining a profitable grasp upon it – requires the daily and willing abandonment of purely selfish and worldly interests.

**“ 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”**

WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN? Matthew’s gospel reads, *“For what is a man profited?”* Luke’s gospel reads, *“For what is a man advantaged?”* Other versions read, *“What good is it,”* NIV and *“What does it benefit.”* BBE The word *“profit”* means “to assist, be useful or advantageous,” THAYER and “help.” FRIBERG

Here Jesus relates profit and advantage with eternity, and one’s ultimate confrontation of *“God the Judge of all”* (Heb 12:23). How do men think of profit, usefulness, advantage, or benefit? What do they consider to be favorable, worthwhile, profitable, desirable, and satisfactory? Where are their values? Where are their preferences? What are their ambitions? That is what the Lord now sets before those who desire to follow Him – for that is the kind of person He is addressing: whoever would *“come after”* Him, or *“follow”* Him.

GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD. Men may speak of a house, a million dollars, winning the lottery, or getting everything they really want. Jesus does not waste time with such limited desires. He rather speaks of gaining, or obtaining, *“the whole world”* – all of it. **That is, that everything in the world – all of it – was at your disposal, and in unlimited amounts.**

Solomon had an extraordinary amount of wisdom, and a staggering measure of riches (2

Kgs 10:23) – but he did not have “the whole world.” Abraham was “*very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold*” (Gen 13:2) – but he did not have “*the whole world.*” In fact, there is no example in the Scriptures or in history where a person gained “*the whole world.*” It is written that “*the whole world*” lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). But even he does not **possess** it all. Gaining all of the world would be a singular feat, never before accomplished by any of Adam’s offspring. What advantage would it bring? That is Jesus’ question.

LOSE HIS OWN SOUL. To lose your soul is to lose your life, or yourself. It is to cease to be in any way advantaged by one’s existence. It is to lose all benefit, all advantage, and all satisfaction. Other versions read, “*forfeit his own soul,*” NASB “*forfeit his life,*” RSV “*lose his life,*” MRD and “*forfeit his life [in the eternal kingdom of God]?*” AMPLIFIED Luke’s gospel reads, “*and lose himself, or be a cast away*” (Lk 9:25). **The idea is that of being thrust away from the Source of life, the living God.** This is another way of referring to damnation, condemnation, or being cast into the lake of fire. **The ordinary view of condemnation is that it is imposed upon sinners by God Himself. Here Jesus accents that it is also the result of a deliberate choice of the transitory over the eternal.** Eternal life was offered in Christ, but the person exchanged it for the baubles of this present evil world.

Jesus has already stated that in order to follow Him men must hate their lives in this world, choosing to make them subordinate to the will of God. They must deny themselves and take up their cross before they will even be allowed to follow Him. All of that postulates they will make no attempt to “*gain the whole world,*” or even a significant measure of it.

Jesus is not saying a person could, in fact, gain the whole world, and still be one of His followers. How could this be if His kingdom is “*not of this world*” (John 18:36). He Himself is “*not of this world*” (John 8:23), and the people who follow Him are “*not of the world*” (John 15:19; 17:14,16). How could the Savior lead any persons to pursue the world from which He was delivering them? If the earth and all of the works within it are going to be “*burned up*” (2 Pet 3:10), what would lead any serious soul to imagine they could possess it all, yet not be burned up with it? Did not Jesus say it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:24)?

WHAT WILL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE? “*Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” Other versions read, “*give in return for their life,*” RSV “*offer in exchange for his life,*” NJB “*redeem his soul again,*” TNT “*What can a person trade for his soul?*” IE “*buy back his life,*” WEYMOUTH and “*What can a man offer to buy back his soul once he has lost it?*” PHILLIPS

Here, Jesus projects our thinking to the day of judgment. He has already said that the person who desires to save his life in this world will, in fact, lose it. Now, He considers the one who has, in reality, lived out his life for himself, without proper regard for Christ and the Gospel. **What will he be able to use to gain his life back again?** What commodity is there that has enough value to gain one’s life back again? All men’s lives have been “*bought with a price*” (1 Cor 6:20) – the “*precious blood of Christ*” (1 Pet 1:18-19). However, the person who lives for self forfeits all of the benefits of that purchase.

Now, when those who have neglected that purchase stand before the Lord of glory, what they have chosen to accent in this world will appear for what it is – worthless! They have lost their lives because of their worldly preferences. They have spurned the Savior, refusing to follow Him. Now, what can they present that is more valuable than His blood? What can they offer to compensate for their failure to follow Jesus, even after He had told them what was

required to do so? They exchanged their life for death, and now there is nothing to gain it back!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 93

“ Mark 8:37 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. 9:1 And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”

(Mark 8:38-9:1; Matt 16:32-33; Lk 9:26-27)

INTRODUCTION

We are now in a period of Christ's ministry where He is preparing Himself and His disciples for the laying down of His life. There is a different tone to His teaching – one that is attended by heightened sobriety and a sense of urgency. Something is coming during that very generation that will turn the direction of humanity, revealing hitherto unknown resources to those who would believe on Christ. It was an era that would be the result of Christ's vicarious death and justifying resurrection. As it is written, *“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification”* (Rom 4:25). This time is referred to as *“the day of salvation,” “the accepted time”* (2 Cor 6:2), and *“the acceptable year of the Lord”* (Lk 4:19). It was a time when *“repentance and remission of sins”* would be *“preached”* (Lk 24:47). In our text, Jesus declares that men will be judged by their response to the Gospel that announces that time has come. The Gospel will be a message that proclaims the fact and Divinely appointed results of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and enthronement. It will announce how heaven has reacted to the voluntary death of Jesus, and what He is doing upon earth, working from heaven. How men react to that message will determine precisely how the Lord Jesus reacts to them in the day when everything will be revealed – the day of His return. It will be exceedingly apparent from this text that we are speaking of matters of the greatest gravity. The knowledge of a God who *“is love”* (1 John 4:8,16), and that Christ is a *“meek and lowly”* Savior (Matt 11:29) must not lead anyone to imagine that either the Father or the Son are tolerant of those who are ashamed of Jesus, recoiling at His demands, or blushing because His words.

“ Mk 8:38a Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation”

WHOSOEVER. Other versions read *“whoever,”* NKJV *“anyone,”* NASB and *“those.”* NRSV The idea is that anyone falling into this category will experience the specified reaction of Jesus. No persons committing this infraction will escape the stipulated judgment because of who they are, the name they wear, or their religious identity. Their past life will not offset their present condition. Should this sin be found in a person, any former start in the faith will not cause it to be erased, or move God and His Son to forget it. This is involved in God being no respecter of persons. As it is written, *“God is no respecter of persons”* (Acts 10:34). This

applies to receiving those who “*worketh good*” – “*But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: **for there is no respect of persons with God***” (Rom 2:11). It also applies to receiving for any “*wrong*” that has been done – “*But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and **there is no respect of persons***” (Col 3:25). We are living in a generation in which these things have **not** been powerfully proclaimed.

ASHAMED OF ME. One version reads, “*has a feeling of shame because of Me.*” BBE All other versions read the same: “*ashamed of Me.*” It should be apparent from the text itself that the word “*ashamed*” is a very weighty one. The word is not as easy to define as one might think. It involves embarrassment, hesitation, reluctance, humiliation, fear, and a lack of courage. FRIBERG It also involves being disgraced. LOUW-NIDA The English word “*ashamed*” means “*feeling inferior*” and “*restrained by the anticipation of shame,*” MERRIAM-WEBSTER “*embarrassed, troubled by guilt feelings.*” OXFORD

The phrase “*ashamed of Me,*” means being embarrassed because of an association with Jesus, as though He was in some way inferior, or identity with Him was in some way unacceptable. The person who is “*ashamed*” of Jesus will not let it be known that he desires to be connected with Him. There may be some inward inclination toward the Lord, and some measure of appreciation for Him, but it is not strong enough to elicit a confession, or the acknowledgment that the person is one of Jesus’ followers, or disciples. These are people who, like some of the “*chief rulers*” of the Jews “*did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*” (John 12:42-43).

While Jesus was gentle with such souls prior to His enthronement, now that He has been confirmed to be “*the Son of God with power,*” such toleration has come to an abrupt end. In this saying, Jesus is speaking of “*the day of salvation*” that was upon them – the time following His death, resurrection, and enthronement. Once the Savior was received back into heaven, there would be no more leniency toward those who were ashamed of being associated with Him. That is precisely why Paul wrote, “*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*” (1 Cor 16:22).

Matthew associates this shame with denying Christ, or refusing to confess Him before men. “*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, Him will I confess . . . But whosoever shall deny me before men*” (Matt 10:32-33).

This is based upon the enthroned Savior sending forth the Holy Spirit, who would “*reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*” (John 16:8-11). Following that, those who were ashamed of Jesus (which presumes they are knowledgeable of Him) were those who had quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit, resisting His convicting ministry.

ASHAMED OF MY WORDS. Other versions read, “*and what I say,*” GWN “*and My message,*” NLT and “*My teachings.*” WEYMOUTH Christ’s “*words*” refer to His teaching, His doctrine, His message. In summary, that message is referred to as “*the Gospel of the Kingdom*” (Matt 4:23), and “*showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God,*” Lk 8:1). Speaking of His own matchless preaching and teaching, Jesus said, “*The law and the prophets were until John: since that time **the kingdom of God is preached**, and every man presseth into it*” (Luke 16:16). That message was a marked departure from the teaching of the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Lawyers. To embrace His message, men would find themselves at variance with the accepted teachers of the day. To be ashamed of the words of Jesus is to avoid the conflict they produced by simply not acknowledging their truth and superiority. Such people would continue to speak in the religious

jargon of the day. Jesus leaves no doubt about how He will react to such conduct.

THIS ADULTEROUS AND SINFUL GENERATION. Other versions read “*false and evil generation,*” BBE “*unfaithful and sinful,*” GWN “*faithless and sinful,*” NAB “*unbelief and sin,*” LIVING and “*adulterous (unfaithful) and [preeminently] sinful generation.*” AMPLIFIED An “*adulterous*” generation is one in which the heart that to be given to the Lord is given to someone or something else – spiritual prostitution. This is a generation that is intimately involved with this present evil world – its ways and its wisdom. A “*sinful*” generation is one that expresses its wayward desires – a generation that sees itself as being preeminent.

“ 38b . . . of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

OF HIM. This is the individual who was embarrassed by an association with Jesus. It is the one who would not take the words of Jesus into his mouth before the world – the person who did not prefer to obtain and keep those words at all cost. Convenient explanations may be offered for being ashamed of Jesus and His words, but Jesus will not receive them, and neither should we. This does not mean we do not make every effort to influence such people for Jesus. This is a word delivered to those who are ashamed. Sometimes, we may be the ones who have to deliver it.

THE SON OF MAN BE ASHAMED. Matthew says of this occasion, “*But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven*” (Matt 10:33). **That is, the Son will refuse to be associated with such a person in the hour when His approval will determine the eternal destiny of the individual.** The words are frightening to consider, and every sober person will do whatever is necessary to avoid this experience. Elsewhere the Lord expressed being ashamed of a person in these words, “*I never knew you : depart from Me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt 7:23). Again the affirmation is seen as being said to five foolish virgins, “*I know you not*” (Mat 25:12). Luke records the Lord saying to such people, “*I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity*” (Luke 13:27). Oh, the dread of the very thought of Jesus being “*ashamed*” of any person!

Now, in this “*day of salvation,*” grace has provided a means of Jesus NOT being “*ashamed*” of us. It is written, “*For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth [Jesus] and they who are sanctified [believers] are all of One [the Father] : for which cause He [Jesus] is **not ashamed** to call them brethren*” (Heb 2:10-11). Those who “*are sanctified*” are the ones Jesus is bringing to glory. They are the ones who are being changed from one increasing stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18) – the ones who are pursuing the Captain, who is leading them to glory. Of such, Jesus will **not** be ashamed. However, those who are ashamed of Him or His words are removed from that number, for Jesus will not lead anyone to glory who is ashamed of Him in the world from which He has delivered them.

WHEN HE COMES. The shame of which Jesus speaks is not experienced in this world. Men can only speculate about Jesus being ashamed of any person here. In fact, men may claim to have been received by Jesus. Or, as men are wont to say, they may claim they have received Him into their hearts. It may not be clear what Jesus thinks of them now. However, Jesus is speaking of a time when there will be no speculation on this matter.

This is not speaking about a secret coming – a doctrine that manages to bring comfort to some. Jesus never referred to such a coming. When Jesus leaves the Throne room, it will be the end of His intercession, and will induct the conclusion of the present heavens and earth (2 Pet 3:10; Rev 20:11). At that time, when “*the Son of man shall come in His glory,*”

“before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Matt 25:31-32). It is **then** that Jesus will *“be ashamed”* of those who were *“ashamed”* of Him in an unfaithful and sinful generation.

IN THE GLORY OF THE FATHER. To further clarify His coming, Jesus says it will be when He comes *“in the glory of His Father,”* a description He provided elsewhere (Matt 16:27). Luke says of that return, *“He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels”* (Luke 9:26). Matthew says He will come *“in great glory”* (Matt 24:30). Again, *“the Son of man shall come in His glory”* (Matt 25:31). Again, He will come *“with great power and glory”* (Mk 13:26). And again, *“with power and great glory”* (Lk 21:27). Paul writes that when He comes believers will *“appear with Him in glory”* (Col 3:4). Peter says His coming is a time when *“His glory shall be revealed”* (2 Pet 4:13).

Try as you may, you cannot find a word of Scripture that suggests Jesus will at any time appear **without** glory! That was the manner of His first appearing, and that is why men were not able to perceive Him. But *“the second time”* will **not** be without glory. That is why *“every eye shall see Him”* – when He comes *“with clouds,”* as the angels said, when Jesus was ascending into heaven (Rev 1:7; Acts 1:11). There are six other references to Jesus’ coming *“with clouds”* (Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mk 13:26; 14:62; Lk 21:27; 1 Thess 4:17). This is the very next time He will come.

WITH THE ANGELS. The holy angels will accompany Jesus when He returns. This is stated no less than seven times in Scripture (Matt 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31; Mk 8:38; 13:27; Lk 9:26; 2 Thess 1:7). Jesus will send forth the holy angels to gather out of the Kingdom all those who offend (Matt 13:41). He will send them to *“gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matt 24:31). The angels, Jesus said, *“will sever the wicked from among the just”* (13:49). At that time, those of whom Jesus is ashamed, will **not** be confessed *“before the angels of God,”* who are *“the reapers”* (Lk 12:8; Matt 13:39).

“ 9:1 And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”

SOME THAT STAND HERE. At this time, Jesus is speaking to all of the people, not just *“the twelve.”* Mark says He had *“called the people unto Him with His disciples”* (Mk 8:34). Luke says, *“He said to them all”* (Lk 9:23). Now Jesus addresses a word to them, speaking of things that some of them will see before they leave this world. It was up to the people to ponder what He was saying, and make some judgment about the importance of Christ’s words. Jesus is not speaking to them to merely convey information, for *“the Kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power”* NASB (1 Cor 4:20). He rather speaks this word so that when the time comes of which He is speaking, they will be able to say, *“This is that.”*

NOT TASTE OF DEATH. Other versions read, *“taste death,”* NKJV *“in no wise taste of death,”* ASV *“will not die,”* NLT *“experience death,”* NET *“will live to see,”* LIVING *“will certainly not taste death,”* WEYMOUTH *“will certainly live,”* WILLIAMS and *“will in no way taste death.”* AMPLIFIED

In Scripture, the word “taste” is a synonym for experience. Thus we read of tasting and seeing that *“the Lord is good”* (Psa 34:8), tasting of the *“heavenly gift”* (Heb 6:4), tasting the *“good word of God”* (Heb 6:5), and tasting *“that the Lord is gracious”* (1 Pet 2:3). In this case, whatever is *“tasted”* passes from the domain of theory into the realm of experience.

This word is similar to the one delivered to Simeon. *“And it had been revealed to him by*

the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" NKJV (Luke 2:26). It was impossible for death to claim the people of whom Jesus spoke, until they had seen the occasion of reference come. Satan could not take their lives any more than he could have taken Job's life (Job 2:6). The times of men are in the hands of the Lord (Psa 31:15).

I do not doubt that there are Divine appointments for us also – times that have not been revealed to us, yet which are as sure as those of our text. Perhaps, at times, the Lord will give His children a sense of what is ahead. There is no firm word on this. However, for those who choose to walk close to the Lord, it is written that *"the secret of the Lord is with them"* (Psa 25:14). Who knows the marvelous extent of that word? It is something that is vouchsafed only to those who have this single desire – *"that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple"* (Psa 27:4).

TILL THEY SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD. *" . . . till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."* Luke reads, *"til they see the Kingdom of God"* (Lk 9:27). This is a marvelous word! John the Baptist had preached, *"the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt 3:2). Jesus had preached the same thing: *"Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt 4:17). When He sent out the twelve, He told them to preach, *"The Kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt 10:7).

It is true that Jesus had also said the Kingdom of God was within, or among, the very people to whom He preached, and among whom He worked. *"And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17:21). He did not mean that the Kingdom was within those Pharisees that asked Him of the Kingdom. He rather meant that it was within the circumference of that generation – *"among"* them, NRSV or *"in your midst."* NASB He also said, *"But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you," or "has come to you"* NRSV (Luke 11:20). This was different from the statement of our text.

The *"Kingdom of God"* has to do with Divine power, Sovereignty, and rule. It relates to the subjugation of enemies, and the deliverance of those oppressed by them. **All of this was introduced in the ministry of Jesus.** However, His healings and deliverances were not the ultimate fulfillment of the Kingdom, but only an debut of it. Here Jesus is speaking of the Kingdom under His heavenly administration – the kingdom *"with power."*

This would be the fulfillment of the word of Daniel: *"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom , which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"* (Dan 2:44). It was a Kingdom established for the salvation of men from beginning to end – from deliverance from the power of darkness to an entrance into *"the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (Col 1:13; 2 Pet 1:11). This would be the **uninterrupted** rule of the exalted Christ *"in the midst of His enemies"* (Psa 110:2).

In this text, Jesus is referring to the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured forth. After His resurrection, the Lord told them this would occur *"not many days hence"* (Acts 1:5). That was the time when *"the day of salvation"* was launched, and the *"Captain"* of salvation commenced bringing *"many sons to glory"* (Heb 2:10).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 94

“ Mark 9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them. 3 And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.”

(Mark 9:2-4; Matt 17:1-3; Lk 9:28-31)

INTRODUCTION

There are aspects of Jesus' Person and work that are made known to special people at special times. These occasions are **not** determined by the people who are blessed, but by the One who blesses them. We have such an occasion before us. One of the advantages of being with Jesus is that at some moment you may hear the words, "*Friend, go up higher*" (Lk 14:10). This requires humility depicted as the disciple taking the lower position: i.e. one of service and not one of attention before men. There are times when certain disciples are given extraordinary glimpses into the Person of Christ and the truth of God. Such times are to be coveted, for they are precious beyond comprehension. These are the times of which David spoke when he wrote, "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand*" (Psa 84:10). And again, "*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God*" (Psa 84:2). This is the time when the blessed ones "*behold the beauty of the Lord*" and "*inquire in His temple*" (Psa 27:4). David pled for moments like this when he said, "*O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God*" (Psa 43:3-4). That is the kind of moment we now have before us – a time when Jesus called some of His disciples higher, and they received a glimpse into His Person they never would forget. He brought them up a His "*holy hill,*" and suddenly their perception of Jesus and the world to come was enlarged exponentially.

“ Mk 9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves . . . ”

AFTER SIX DAYS. This was six days after Jesus had spoken to His disciples about the requirements for being His disciple, and that some of them would not die until they saw the Kingdom of God come with power (Mk 8:34-9:1). None of the Gospel writers elaborate on what happened during these six days, but you may be sure, Jesus was not idle. Things taking place during that time are among those that are "*not written*" (John 20:30).

Luke says Jesus took His disciples into the mountain "*about an eight days*" (Lk 9:28). The word "*about*" indicates that a fraction of a day preceded the six day period, and another fraction after the six days. Matthew and Mark count only the whole days.

JESUS TAKES WITH HIM. There were times when, as compared with following Jesus, He took certain disciples with Him. When He went deeper into the garden on the night He was betrayed, “*He taketh with Him Peter and James and John*” (Mk 14:33). One time, from among a multitude of disciples Jesus “*took the twelve apart in the way,*” telling them of His imminent death (Matt 20:17). These occasions were strictly at the discretion of the Lord. No one should be surprised if Jesus takes some of us aside for a season, and unveils some rare and precious things. This is His manner. Such occasions, as is confirmed by Scripture, did not remain secret. However, during them, revelations were vouchsafed to favored souls that were not, at the time, personally shared with the multitudes. The masses of people only received a second-hand knowledge of them. It ought to be observed that there are remarkable advantages to remaining close to Jesus that cannot be foreseen.

PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN. This holy cluster of disciples were especially favored at least three times in Scripture. At the house of Jairus, when Jesus raised his daughter from the dead, He allowed only these three to accompany Him into the house (Mk 5:37; Lk 8:51). Second, on this occasion of His transfiguration (Matt 17:1; Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28). Third, when He prayed in agony in the Garden, they were allowed to come closer (Matt 26:37; Mk 14:33). There was another time when Andrew joined these three, and they asked Jesus of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end times (Mk 14:33).

A HIGH MOUNTAIN. It was in “*a high mountain*” that Satan tempted Jesus following His baptism (Matt 4:8), and on an especially “*high mountain*” that the devil showed Him “*all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time*” (Lk 4:5). But there were other times when He went to a mountain – as when He delivered the sermon on the mount. On that occasion He “*went up into a mountain*” (Matt 5:1). On other times, He went “*into a mountain apart to pray*” (Matt 14:23; Mk 6:46; Lk 6:12). On another occasion He “*went up into a mountain*” and great multitudes came to Him with their sick (Matt 15:29). After Jesus had risen from the dead, He met His disciples “*in a mountain where Jesus had appointed them*” (Matt 28:16). When He chose the twelve, it was while He was on a mountain (Mk 3:13). On yet another occasion “*He went into a mountain, and there sat with His disciples.*” It was on this occasion that Jesus fed the five thousand (John 6:3).

There is a picture here of separation from the world – of going higher, away from earth’s business, and even tumult. Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac on a mountain, and there is where he found God’s substitute (Gen 22:14). The Law was given from a mountain (Lev 27:34). God spoke “*face to face*” with Moses “*in the mount*” (Deut 5:4). The pattern for the tabernacle was given “*in the mount*” (Heb 8:5). Those who are in Christ Jesus are even said to have “*come unto mount Sion*” (Heb 12:22).

As was common during Jesus’ ministry, we often come “*down from the mountain*” to serve (Matt 8:1; 17:9; Mk 9:9). However, there are those precious times when we receive on the mountain, apart from the world, and elevated from its cares.

APART BY THEMSELVES. Those who imagine that Jesus was always among the multitudes, or with publicans and sinners, forget the private sessions Jesus had with His disciples. There is where the real teaching took place (Matt 24:3; Mk 9:28; 13:3; Lk 10:23). Those who place the emphasis upon reaching others, do not speak much about these private sessions, or the necessity of living by every word of God (Lk 4:4), or being personally taught by Jesus (Eph 4:20-21). However, believers are called into the fellowship of the Son (1 Cor 1:9), and it is a serious error in judgment to neglect that fellowship.

TO PRAY. Luke tells us that Jesus took the three disciples with Him and “*went up into a mountain to pray*” (Luke 9:28). Our text does not reveal the purpose of the prayer, but Luke will reveal that it no doubt pertained to His death. At this point of His ministry, Jesus “*began*

to teach them that He would “suffer many things,” “be rejected,” “be killed,” and “after three days rise again” (Mk 9:31). Now, in preparation for those experiences, He enters into a season of prayer, during which He will be fortified to finish the work He was given to do.

“2a-3 . . . and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.”

AS HE PRAYED. Luke says of this event, “as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered” (Lk 9:29). The “countenance” is “the appearance of His face.” NKJV It is obvious that in His prayers He was in communion with the Father – “face to face,” as it was. The same thing happened to Jesus that happened to Moses when He spoke: “the skin of His face shone while He talked with Him” (Ex 34:29). Jesus was in close communion with the Father.

TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM. The word “transfigured” comes from the Greek word **metemorphw,qh** (meta-morph-is). The literal English equivalent of this word is “metamorphosis” – “a change of physical form . . . especially by supernatural means.” WEBSTER In nature, two examples of metamorphosis are the caterpillar becoming a butterfly, and a tadpole becoming a frog. In the case of Jesus’ transfiguration, the glory that was veiled by His flesh actually came forward and penetrated His flesh. By contrast, Moses **reflected** the glory of God in his face. The glory that was seen in Jesus was **His own** .

HIS FACE. Matthew says “His face did shine as the sun” (Matt 17:2). Luke says, “the fashion of His countenance [appearance of His face NKJV] was altered [became different NASB] ” (Lk 9:29). In Moses’ case, “the skin of His face shone while He talked” with God (Ex 34:29). That glow was a reflection of the glory of God. The glory was not that of Moses himself. With Jesus, as He was in rich communion with the Father, His own inner glory burst forth, and “His face shone clear and bright like the sun.” AMPLIFIED Close proximity to the Father caused more of His own Person to show forth. **It is still true that when a person is exposed to the Living God, what they really are begins to show itself.**

In this we have a picture of what is involved in being regenerated, or born again – beholding the face of Jesus. It is written, “**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**” (2 Cor 4:6). We are also told that the Spirit changes us “from glory to glory” as we are “beholding” the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18).

HIS CLOTHING. Even His clothing became “radiant,” NASB and “dazzling white.” NIV It was the sort of appearance that no man could produce, no matter what earthly resources were available – “as no launderer on earth can whiten them.” NKJV Matthew says His clothing was “white as the light” (Matt 17:2). Luke says “white and glistering,” “gleaming,” NASB or “as a flash of lightning.” NIV You certainly get the impression that what is close to Jesus can reflect His glory, or nature.

THE TIME. Keep in mind the time during which this occurred. The popularity of Jesus would now begin to wane, and the influence His enemies would become more prominent. He was now beginning to concentrate on His sacrificial death. This occasion no doubt strengthened Him for making that sacrifice, upon which the hope of the world was suspended.

REFERENCES TO THE TRANSFIGURATION. Both John and Peter, who were present at the transfiguration, refer to it in their writings. John says of it, “and we beheld His glory , the glory of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14). Peter says of the occasion, we “were eyewitnesses

*of His majesty . For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from **the excellent glory** , This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in **the holy mount** ” (2 Pet 1:16-18). Notice that Peter is careful to say Jesus received glory from the Father, not when He was transfigured, but when God spoke of Him. The glory that was seen was His own – “**HIS majesty.**”*

THE SUPERIOR EXPERIENCE OF BEHOLDING HIS GLORY. In our assessment of our most blessed times, it is good to obtain a true sense of Kingdom values. Take Peter for an example. If his religion was based upon his own experience, he might have referred to the time he walked for a short distance upon the water (Matt 14:29). Or, perhaps, when he paid the Temple tax with a coin he took out of a fish’s mouth (Matt 17:27). He could have related when they were first sent out to “*heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons*” (Matt 10:8). He might even have told how Jesus healed his mother-in-law with a touch and a word (Lk 4:39). Instead, both Peter and John chose to emphasize when they saw the glory of Jesus, and heard what God said about Him.

This is the perspective that David had when he said, “*One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD , and to inquire in his temple*” (Psa 27:4). **Kingdom life is characterized by the perception of the superior value of seeing Jesus.** We are not born again by doing this or that, but by God shining in our hearts with the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6). That is also the means of changing us to be more like Him (2 Cor 3:18).

“ 4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.”

THERE APPEARED. Mark and Matthew say Elijah and Moses “*appeared unto them .*” Luke says they “*appeared in glory*” (Lk 9:31). By saying they “*appeared,*” the Spirit means that the three disciples were allowed to see what was otherwise invisible.

Within the majestic glory of Christ, other glorious things could be seen – in this case, two men from the past, who **also** “*appeared in glory*” with Jesus (Lk 9:31). The disciples could not have seen them apart from the glory of Christ. When Jesus is seen, other things are seen also.

The men were Moses (the lawgiver), and Elijah (the prophet). In these two men were comprehended “*the Law and the Prophets*” (Mat 7:12; 22:40; Lk 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; Rom 3:21). To “*the Law*” and its ministration, belonged Moses in particular, with Aaron the High Priest, and the Judges, who clarified the Law to the people. Now Moses, standing for that branch of revelation, is seen with Jesus. Jesus is not with him, he is with Jesus! Elijah also stands with Jesus, representing the prophets, that unique class of individuals to whom things of God were revealed. With him it is also true: Jesus does not stand with him, he stands with Jesus, yielding himself and his glory to the greater glory found in the Lord’s Christ.

TALKING WITH HIM. Contrary to the-sleeping hypothesis, these two men, who had left the world, were not unconscious, or in unconscious repose. Moses left the world by death around 1,500 years before this occasion. Elijah left the world by translation a little over 900 years before Christ’s transfiguration. Yet, here they came from another realm and met with Jesus on a certain mountain. They were not only seen “*in glory,*” but were seen “***talking***” with Jesus.

We learn from this incident of the intelligence and interest of those who have departed from this world. John saw the souls of those who had been “*slain for the word of God,*” and they had an intense interest in the matter of their vindication on the earth (Rev 6:9-10).

The Gospels confirm the interest of heaven in the Lord Jesus while He walked among men. God the Father Himself encouraged Jesus after He had said, “*Father, glorify Thy name.*” God responded, “*I have both glorified it and will glorify it again*” (John 12:23). On another occasion, after Jesus was tempted by the devil, “*angels came and ministered unto Him*” (Matt 4:11). Now, two spirits come from the unseen world to talk with Jesus. We will find that they also will minister to Him, regarding what He was do to upon the earth.

We do not know the extent to which heaven is involved in our own pilgrimage in “*this present evil world.*” We do know that Jesus Himself teaches us (Eph 4:21). Holy angels are sent to minister to us (Heb 1:13-14). The Father’s ears are open to our cries (1 Pet 3:12). The Holy Spirit bears witness “*with our spirit, that we are the children of God*” (Rom 8:16). We have also come to “*the spirits of just men made perfect*” (Heb 12:23). Just as surely as it was true of the prophet Elisha and his servant, “*they that be with us are more than they that be with them*” (2Kgs 6:16). The saints of the Lord have every reason to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Our Head has set the tone for the Kingdom He is administering. While the measure of ministry He experienced was much larger, it was of the same order and nature as the ministry we now enjoy.

THEY SPOKE OF HIS DECEASE. When “*talking*” with Jesus, Moses and Elijah spoke of things of which they knew little or nothing when they were upon the earth. They talked about His death – something, so far as the record is concerned, they never addressed when they were in this world. Two things, therefore, become apparent. First, believers who leave this world are in a learning-state on the other side. Second, the death of Christ was apparently of paramount importance to those who were awaiting the expiation of their sins from the other side, and the confirmation that they had not died in vain.

They spoke to Him about “*His decease.*” Other versions read, “*His departure,*” NASB “*His death,*” BBE “*His exodus,*” NAB “*His passing,*” NJB “*His outgoing,*” YLT and “*His exit [from life.]*” AMPLIFIED The word “*decease*” means “*exodus, departure, the close of one’s career.*” THAYER It is taken from a Greek word which is transliterated “*exodus.*” They were, then, speaking about HOW Jesus was going to leave the world. He would do this by laying down His life, as He was commanded (John 10:17-18).

AN ACCOMPLISHED DECEASE. Luke says they were speaking with Jesus concerning “*His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:31). Their discussion was remarkably precise. The death of Christ would be an **accomplishment**, not His fate. That is, He would die in such a manner as to achieve something. There would be significant results from His death that would ripple into eternity itself. His death would deliver a mortal bruise to Satan (Heb 2:14), spoil principalities and powers (Col 2:15), put away sin (Heb 9:26), and reconcile the world (2 Cor 5:18-20). All of this was surely encouraging to the Son of God, who would be “*crucified through weakness*” (2 Cor 13:4). Now, two who were fearless warriors upon the earth return to comfort and strengthen Him for this accomplishment. They even knew **where** this death was going to occur – “*at Jerusalem.*” Shortly after this, Jesus would set His face steadfastly “*to go to Jerusalem*” to die (Lk 9:51). Moses and Elijah helped to ready Him for the work.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 95

“ Mark 9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him. 8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.”

(Mark 9:5-8; Matt 17:4-8; Lk 9:32-36)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has been transfigured, His glory bursting forth “*while He prayed*” – as He was in communion with God. Among other things, this confirms the total absence of sin or defilement in the Lord Jesus. When He was praying, exposed to the Person of God, before whose eyes “*all things are naked and open*” (Heb 4:13), His glory burst forth. Peter, James, and John were there also, but they were not transfigured. The reason was that “*glory*” was not inherent in them. Of themselves, they were, like us, as “*an unclean thing,*” and “*all*” of their righteousnesses were “*as filthy rags*” (Isa 64:6). All humanity has “*sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). It only takes exposure to the living God to confirm that this is the case. However, it was not so with Jesus. He came “*in the likeness of sinful flesh*” (Rom 8:3), but His flesh was not sinful – for something “*sinful*” cannot be transfigured. Jesus did not have a “*carnal mind*” (Rom 8:7), and His “*flesh*” was not in the category that “*profiteth nothing*” (John 6:63). In fact, Jesus said of His flesh, “*My flesh is meat indeed*” (John 6:55). He had a body, but not a “*vile body*” (Phil 3:21). He was “*tempted in all points like as we are*” (Heb 4:15), but did not have “*flesh*” in the sense of a “*sinful nature*” NIV (Rom 7:18). He did not have an “*old man*” that required putting off (Eph 4:22). He was truly “*separate from sinners*” (Heb 7:26), and Satan had “*nothing*” in Him (John 14:30). The only sin in any form that touched Jesus was when “*our sins*” were imputed to Him and He bore them in “*His own body on the tree*” (1 Pet 2:24). We know this doctrinally. We also know it because of His transfiguration, when “*HIS glory*” (Lk 9:32) broke forth as He communed with the Father.

“ Mk 9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.”

THEY WERE HEAVY WITH SLEEP. Luke provides us with some further details of this event. It appears they had been in the mountain for some time, with Jesus praying to the Father – doubtless about His impending death. Christ was actually transfigured some time after the disciples fell asleep, unable to stay awake because of their fatigue. Luke records, “*But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him*” (Luke 9:32). Upon waking, the three see Jesus in His glory – transfigured. They

also see Moses and Elijah “*in glory*” talking with Jesus. This is not what they were seeing when they had fallen asleep.

Luke adds one more fact to our arsenal of thought: **Moses and Elijah were in the process of leaving Jesus.** “*And it came to pass, as they*” [Moses and Elijah] “*departed from Him , Peter said unto Jesus*” (Lk 9:33a). Peter said “*us,*” referring to everyone there. However, Moses and Elijah were with “*Him*” – Jesus – **not** them. What a startling sight to behold upon awakening – Jesus glorified, and Moses and Elijah in glory departing after talking with Him!

Oh, what things had been taking place while they slept! It is still true that when we are not alert in the presence of the Lord things are taking place that we will regret having missed. Even though Moses and Elijah had appeared for the sake of Jesus Himself, who knows what clarity could have been experienced had the disciples heard the details of their talk about the death Christ would accomplish. Of course, that is nothing more than speculation.

IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE. It appears as though Peter quickly blurted out these words as Moses and Elijah were leaving. All three Gospels record the words, “*it is good for us to be here*” (Matt 17:4; Mk 9:5; Lk 9:33). Peter is not speaking only for the three disciples, but for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah as well – all six of them. Even though half of that company had missed the discussion that had been going on, yet it seemed best to stay there. The suggestion is that Peter thought it would be good to remain there on “*the holy mount*” (2 Pet 1:18), taking advantage of the solitude and learning that could be experienced.

Matthew says Peter began by saying “*Lord.*” Mark and Luke say “*Master.*” Each Gospel writer used a different Greek word. Matthew reads “*Lord,*” from the Greek word *kurios* , meaning supreme in authority, and controller. Mark reads “*Master,*” from the Greek word “*rabbi,*” which means “my Great One, or teacher.” Luke also reads “*Master,*” from the Greek word “*epistates,*” which means “the One appointed over, or the Commander.” These are three different ways of accenting Jesus’ absolute supremacy. He is *over all*, is the exclusive *Teacher* , and has been *appointed over us* . We will see that Peter was speaking hastily, for he will suggest Jesus was not the only teacher to whom they should listen.

IF THOU WILT. Even though Peter is speaking, in a sense, superficially, he is not speaking thoughtlessly. He knows which of the men is Superior. Therefore, Matthew tells us Peter preceded his suggestion with, “*if Thou wilt*” (Matt 17:4). With the attitude of a true disciple, he submitted his request to the discretion of the Master.

LET US MAKE THREE TABERNACLES. All three Gospel writers read the same way: “*one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*” Even though they had only briefly witnessed the three of them talking together, now Peter suggests they make each of them a separate habitation. Perhaps his suggestion would induce Moses and Elijah to want to stay, for they were in the act of leaving. The insinuation is that the disciples could spend time in each tent, listening to the words of all three: Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. I do not doubt that the suggestion would have appeared quite excellent to academic addicts.

HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY. Mark adds, no doubt at the dictation of Peter himself, “*because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.*” NKJV Luke reads, “*not knowing what he said*” (Lk 9:33). Mark provides **why** Peter did not know what to say: “*for they were sore afraid,*” or “*terrified,*” NRSV or “*were in a violent fright (aghast with dread).*” **AMPLIFIED** How are natural men impacted by an awareness of Deity, or even someone from another realm, whether angel or departed spirit? Here we find the inner circle of the disciples

“sore afraid.” After sin entered the world, when God came close Adam confessed, “*I was afraid*” (Gen 3:10). Israel was even “*afraid to come nigh*” to Moses when his face was shining with but a reflection of Divine glory (Ex 34:30). When the people of Gadara saw the Jesus and the demonic He had healed, “*they were afraid*” (Mk 5:15). When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the stormy sea, about 3½ miles from shore, “*they were afraid*” (John 6:16).

When “*the flesh*” dominates us (as it did prior to the disciples’ new birth), an awareness of the presence of Deity causes fear. That is just the nature of things. Those who imagine that a truly spiritual environment can be made comfortable for the worldly only display their ignorance.

“ **7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.**”

A CLOUD OVERSHADOWED THEM. This was a supernatural cloud, imposed from heaven upon this cluster of men. It was intended to hide certain things from them, and prepare them to adjust their priorities. Matthew reads, “*a bright cloud overshadowed them*” – a cloud full of light, like a dazzling white cloud (Matt 17:5). Luke tells us that the cloud descended upon them **while Peter was still speaking**. “*While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them.*” He also suggests that this did not take place hastily, so they could grasp the full import of what was happening: “*and they feared as they entered into the cloud*” (Lk 9:34). Their fear, then, was accentuated as they “*entered into the cloud.*”

Here was an instance when the Lord removed the attention of the disciples from seeing Jesus **with** Moses and Elijah. He did it by surrounding them with the blinding light of a bright cloud. There are, then, occasions when the focus of human attention must be adjusted.

A VOICE OUT OF THE CLOUD. While the cloud was surrounding them, an attention-getting voice “*came out of the cloud.*” All of the Gospel writers make a point of the voice coming “*out of the cloud*” (Matt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35).

In a way, this occasion was similar to Mount Sinai, when “*a thick cloud*” was “*upon the mount*” and “*the voice of the trumpet exceedingly loud*” was heard, causing all of the people to tremble (Ex 19:16). Later, Moses told the people God had spoken to them “*out of the midst . . . of the cloud*” (Deut 5:22). That occasion differed from this one in that the cloud was dark and foreboding, while this cloud was bright, as though pregnant with promise. This is like a commentary on the difference between Law and Grace.

THIS IS MY BELOVED SON. There will be no question about the One owning this “*voice.*” This is not the voice of an angel, but of God Himself. It is the same voice that was heard from heaven when Jesus was baptized, and it will say precisely the same thing: “*This is My beloved Son*” (Matt 3:17; Matt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35). In recounting this event in his second epistle, Peter says that Jesus “*received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (2 Pet 1:17). Notice, Peter said the voice came to Jesus (“to Him”), not to the disciples. By this he means that God spoke this on account of Jesus, and to draw attention to His superiority over even the best of all previous teachers.

The “*beloved Son*” is the One God especially loves. In fact, He is referred to as “*the Beloved*” (Eph 1:6). The word “*beloved*” means “esteemed, dear, favorite, and worthy of love.” This is why He is called God’s “*dear Son*” (Col 1:13), and “*His own Son*” (Rom 8:3,32). His love for the Son is so pronounced that our eternal destiny is based upon whether or not we have “*received Him*” (John

1:12), and believe “*the record*” God has given of Him (1 John 5:10-11). **I am persuaded that the average American churchman has not taken Jesus seriously.** The alarming presence of ignorance concerning His Person, words, and works, confirm that this is the case. Now, let us hear what the Father says concerning His “*beloved Son.*”

HEAR HIM! Other versions read, “*Listen to Him,*” NASB “*give ear to Him,*” BBE “*Listen to what He says,*” IE “**Keep on listening to Him,**” ISV and “**Be constantly listening to and obeying Him!**” AMPLIFIED Matthew reads, “*hear YE Him*” (Matt 17:5). Peter had suggested they make provisions to listen to Moses and Elijah as well as Jesus – as though they were equals. God Himself clarifies that He has made **no allowance** for competitive teachers, or for the attention of His people to be focused on someone else, or their attention divided between imagined peers.

The Spirit makes clear that **today** is the time when God is speaking to people through His Son: “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds*” (Heb 1:1-2). That is, man’s thoughts of God and salvation are to be shaped by what the Son says: i.e. His personal words, spoken while He “*dwelt among us*” (John 1:14; 14:26), and what He has said through His special messengers (Luke 10:16). Moses prophesied the Messiah would be One to whom the people will hearken, else they will be cut off (Deut 18:18-19). Early in the history of the church, Peter referred to this text. “*For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*” (Acts 3:22-23).

No one can ignore what Jesus says and be saved – no one! If there are those who do not know what He has said, they are to at once devote themselves to dissipating that ignorance. The modern church may make allowance for such simplicity, but God will not. The word has come down from heaven, and we are to give heed to it: “*Hear ye Him!*”

“8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.”

THEY FELL ON THEIR FACE AND WERE AFRAID. Matthew provides some further details of this occasion. He records the immediate reaction of the disciples to the *Voice*. “*And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid*” (Matt 17:6). Men could not speak to Peter, James, and John, about being *seeker friendly*. They were certainly seekers, and had even “*forsaken all*” to follow Jesus (Matt 19:27). What is more, they were actually with Jesus in “*the holy mount*” (2 Pet 1:18). Yet, when they “*heard*” the voice of God, “*they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.*” NIV We cannot avoid the conclusion that there is a certain moral and spiritual abrasiveness when the voice of the thrice-holy God falls upon the ears of men who “*have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). It is not that God intends to terrify men, or takes delight in it. It is the sharp contrast of His nature that produces the fear.

JESUS CAME AND TOUCHED THEM. Matthew also accents the tenderness of the Savior, who will not break a bruised reed, or quench a smoking flax (Matt 12:20). While they were prostrate on the ground, shaking with fear, “*Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid*” (Matt 17:7). This is quite similar to an experience that one of these men would have over sixty years later. John the beloved was on the Isle of Patmos when the glorified Son of God appeared to him. The voice and appearance of the Lord of lords had the same effect upon John then, as this voice did on the *holy mount*. “*And when I saw him, I fell at His feet as dead. And*

He laid His right hand upon me , saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last” (Rev 1:17). How tender and gracious is the Savior! Truly, in His dealings with weak mortals He is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29).

How many times these very disciples had heard Jesus say those words – “*Be not afraid*” (Matt 14:27; Mk 6:50; John 6:20), and “*Fear not*” (Lk 5:10; 12:7,32). Only Jesus has the power to dispel debilitating fear with a word!

THEY LOOKED ROUND ABOUT. Matthew says, “*when they had lifted up their eyes*” (Matt 17:8). Their fears had been relieved through the majestic word of Jesus, they had gained some composure, and could again consider their surroundings. Upon raising up, they “*looked round about,*” once again surveying the area. The last thing they had seen was Moses and Elijah leaving as they had concluded speaking with Jesus about the death He would accomplish in Jerusalem. They are still in the same mount, and Jesus is still with them. What will they see now – now that the voice from heaven has spoken?

In order to truly benefit from what they have heard, they must again consider their surroundings. God will see to it that the circumstances will match the word that He has spoken, so that they will no more be distracted or speak foolishly. **It is the Divine manner to move us to reconsider things not formerly comprehended.** Once Asaph had gone into “*the sanctuary,*” he had to consider the prospering wicked once again (Psa 73:3-19). David had to reconsider God’s statement “*that power belongeth unto God*” (Psa 62:11). Peter had to *think “on the vision”* that he had on the rooftop, and review it in light of a greater understanding (Acts 10:19-20). When receiving a vision of a man crying out, “*Come over into Macedonia and help us,*” Paul and company had to reconsider it before concluding that God “*had called*” them to preach the Gospel in that area (Acts 16:9-10).

One of the great liabilities of congregational brevity is that people are never exposed to much truth, nor do they allow for a deeper consideration of what has been said. This side of eternity, we will never know the adverse impact this dreadful custom has had on the people.

THEY SAW NO MAN ANY MORE. “*They saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves .*” Matthew reads, “*they saw no man, save Jesus only* ” (Matt 17:8). Luke reads, “*Jesus was found alone* ” – i.e., without Moses and Elijah (Lk 9:36). It is evident that Moses and Elijah had come to encourage the Lord Jesus, not to provide some additional insights for the disciples. **The speaking Jesus would shed light on Moses and Elijah, for those who know and hear Him will find all other words from God being the better understood.**

For every believer, there must come a time when the only Teacher is Jesus. To be sure, that will include those whom He has sent, who are to be received as Himself. As He said, “*He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me*” (Matt 10:40). Paul commended the Thessalonians for receiving his word “*as it is in truth the word of God*” (II Thess 2:13). We live in a time when this attitude is exceedingly rare. An apostolic statement of the implications of this truth is, “*And ye are complete in Him*” (Col 2:10).

THEY KEPT IT CLOSE. Luke says of this epoch, “*And they kept it close,*” or “*kept silent,*” NASB or “*kept this to themselves*” NIV (Lk 9:36). It was not yet time for them to speak openly about what they had experienced. Their own understanding of it was not yet mature. It was better, for the time being, that they keep it within, pondering what had happened, and seeking an understanding of it.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 96

“ Mark 9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. 11 And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? 12 And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought. 13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.”

(Mark 9:9-13; Matt 17:9-13; John 1:19-21)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has been transfigured while praying. Moses and Elijah appeared with Him in glory, talking about the death He was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter, James, and John have awakened as Moses and Elijah were leaving, and Peter has suggested that three tabernacles be built for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. A bright and frightening cloud overshadowed them, and God spoke out of the cloud identifying Jesus as His only begotten Son, and the One to whom they were to listen. The air cleared, Jesus touched them, and when they looked up, only Jesus was visible to them. It had certainly been an eventful day. They had been eye-witnesses of supernatural phenomenon. (1) Jesus transfigured. (2) Moses in glory. (3) Elijah in glory. (4) The talking and movement of Moses and Elijah. (5) A bright cloud overshadowing them. (6) God speaking audibly from heaven. (7) A strength-imparting touch from Jesus. **We have every reason to believe that none of these things could have been experienced while separate from Jesus. We further observe from this experience that being with Jesus is not always about meeting the personal needs of the people.** None of the events occurring on the mount of transfiguration focused on the disciples themselves. They were observers and learners, and no one from heaven or earth dialoged with the disciples about their perceived needs. Jesus was the whole point of what took place there. His prayer was the focus. His Person was the center of Moses and Elijah's communication. The Father spoke of Him.

“ Mk 9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.”

THEY CAME DOWN. There are several occasions when it is written that Jesus came down from a mountain. After delivering the sermon on the mount, Jesus came down (Matt 8:1). When He came down He confronted a leper who was seeking to be healed (Matt 8:2-4). After praying in a mountain, Jesus came down to walk on the stormy waters to His disciples

who were toiling in rowing (Matt 14:23-25). On that occasion He found His disciples fatigued and fearful (Matt 14:26). After praying and choosing the twelve disciples, He came down and “*stood in the plain*” (Lk 6:12-17). It was then that He faced a multitude of diseased and infirm people (Lk 6:17-19).

There does come a time when lofty experiences come to an end, and we reenter into the arena of conflict and challenge. It is there that our faith is put to the test, and growth takes place. Disappointment is the inevitable experience of those who imagine that life in Christ is one continuous mountain-top experience. That is not the manner of true spiritual life.

HE CHARGED THEM. Other versions read, “*He commanded,*” NKJV “*gave them orders,*” NASB “*strictly forbid,*” WEYMOUTH and “*admonished and expressly ordered them.*” AMPLIFIED The word “*charged*” means *to give express orders*. These are the words of the King. They are not a suggestion or a mere consideration to be accepted or rejected. This is the Master speaking with His disciples. **The truth of the matter is that every believer must learn to take orders from Christ without questioning them.** Many professing Christians have never arrived at this point, and therefore have very little knowledge of Christ’s demands.

TELL NO MAN UNTIL. Although the things Peter, James, and John had seen were unparalleled, and never before experienced by any other person or persons, Jesus said they were not to tell “*what things they had seen.*” Matthew emphasizes the miraculous nature of the events by saying, “*Tell the vision to no man*” (Matt 17:9). That is, what they had seen was a supernatural revelation. God had pulled back the curtain covering invisible things, and allowed them to see realities for which mortal eyes and senses are not suited.

They were not to keep this matter quiet permanently, but only until Jesus was “*risen from the dead.*” Both Matthew and Mark say Jesus referred to Himself as “*the Son of Man*” (Mk 9:9; Matt 17:9). This confirms that the transfiguration related more to Christ’s resurrection and consequent glorification than to His death. The glory of Jesus was of the same order that would be fully realized with God “*glorified*” Him following His return to heaven (Acts 3:13). Moses and Elijah appeared with Him “*in glory,*” which was more closely related to the involvement of spirits on the other side of the veil.

Now, within a short period of time, Jesus has revealed things concerning Himself that had not yet dawned upon the understanding of the disciples – not even Peter, James, and John. The “*Son of man*” would (1) “*suffer many things,*” (2) “*be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests, and scribes,*” (3) “*be killed,*” and (4) “*after three days rise again*” (Mk 8:31; 9:9). These had more to do with **why** He came into the world than all of His preaching, teaching, and mighty miracles. A view of Jesus Christ that does not find its apex in His vicarious death, triumphant resurrection, and enthronement at the right hand of God is not correct. The **focus** of Jesus’ ministry is not the welfare of people in this world.

THEY KEPT THE SAYING. “*They kept that saying with themselves.*” Other versions read, “*they seized upon that statement,*” NASB “*they kept the matter to themselves,*” NIV “*they kept that saying in their mind,*” MRD “*they observed the warning faithfully,*” NJB “*they obeyed and kept it,*” IE “*they held that caution fast in their minds,*” WILLIAMS and “*So they carefully and faithfully kept the matter to themselves.*” AMPLIFIED

The idea is that they hid the saying in their hearts and minds, and would not let go of it. There did not come a time when they were tempted to relate what they saw that they did not

recall the charge of their Master. Men do forget the words of the Lord when they do not take them seriously, hiding them in their hearts and pondering them. In a day that promotes scattered and fragmented thinking, keeping the sayings of Jesus is an exceedingly rare thing. This text touches upon something that is similar to letting the word of Christ dwell in us “richly” (Col 3:16).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? The disciples did not testify to what they had seen, but they were “*discussing it with one another.*” NASB Jesus had already told them He was going to rise from the dead (Mk 8:31). Yet, this extended beyond the border of their understanding. That is one reason why they were not to relate what they had seen. Those who do not see the sense of Christ’s resurrection also have no adequate understanding of His death, glory, or His purpose. The resurrection of Christ is what puts everything together, confirming His Sonship (Rom 1:4), the validity of His death (Isa 53:11), and Him being “*both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36).

“ 11 And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? 12 And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought.”

WHY? Having witnessed Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus, the minds of the disciples had been stirred up, particularly concerning Elijah, and what the scribes had said about him. Of course, if they had not been familiar with valid teaching, and with the Prophets themselves, they would not have asked this question. “*Why,*” they asked, were the scribes saying that “*Elijah must first come?*” They had just seen Elijah, and he had left. Surely that did not fulfill what they had heard about the coming of Elijah.

The scribes had based their teaching on a statement made by Malachi. “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD : and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*” (Mal 4:6). Like many teachers of our day, the scribes thought the prophecy pertained to Christ’s first coming, when He dwelt among men. To them, this confirmed that Jesus was not the Christ, for Elijah had not come, turning the hearts of the people so that the Lord did not “*smite the earth with a curse.*” At this point, the disciples were apparently sure that Jesus was the Christ, as Peter had previously confessed (Mk 8:29). What, then, did the scribes mean in their teaching?

ELIJAH DOES COME FIRST. Christ’s answer is arresting. “*Elijah is coming first and restores all things.*” NKJV Matthew reads, “*Elijah is coming first and will restore all things*” NKJV (Matt 17:11). Thus, Jesus declares that turning the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, constitutes the restoring of “*all things.*” The idea here is that Elijah would bring the people back to the faith of Abraham, so that there would be no difference in their view and acceptance of the Messiah.

Malachi’s prophecy states that Elijah would come “*before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*” (Mal 4:5). This cannot be a description of the first appearance of the Lord, for that was not a “*great and dreadful day.*” Other versions read “*great and terrible day*” – a day filled with dread and fear: a frightening day. That is a day of judgment and accountability, of recompense and vengeance. However, that is not the kind of day that came to humanity when the Word was “*made flesh, and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). In confirmation of this, Jesus Himself said, “*For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them*” (Luke 9:56). Again He said, “*For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved*” (John 3:17). And again, “*I came not to judge the world, but to save the*

world” (John 12:47).

Rather than Christ’s entrance into the world being one of dread and recompense, it was to “*seek and save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10), “*give His life a ransom for many*” (Matt 20:28), and “*save that which was lost*” (Matt 18:11). This is not the day of which Malachi spoke. Malachi’s own testimony of the day of reference makes this quite clear. “*For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch*” (Mal 4:1). Joel also spoke of that day. “*The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come*” (Joel 2:31). The scribes thought Malachi was speaking of the coming of the Messiah to deliver Israel. Instead, he was prophesying of the punishment of the wicked, something that will occur at Christ’s second coming. His first coming was not for that purpose.

THE SON OF MAN. Jesus now speaks of Himself in a manner that confirms Malachi’s prophecy had been misunderstood by the scribes. “. . . *it is written of the Son of man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought,*” “*rejected,*” NIV or “*treated with contempt*” NASB (Mark 9:12). This is not at all how Malachi spoke of the Messiah. He said the Lord would “*tread down the wicked,*” and that the righteous themselves would participate in their overthrow (Mal 4:3).

With the wisdom of the “*Wonderful Counselor*” (Isa 9:6), Jesus prepares His disciples for the events related to Him giving His “*life a ransom for many*” (Matt 20:28). While His work will result in the sins of the world being taken away and the head of the serpent being mortally bruised, it will also reveal how desperately far the hearts of both the children and the fathers were from God.

Thus Jesus says, from a technical point of view, the scribes were correct: “*To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things.*” NIV However, their understanding of the text was flawed, because they looked for the appearance of a saving Messiah to be preceded by a great renewal under the ministry of Elijah. Jesus will now answer the question, “*Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?*” NIV

“ 13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.”

ELIJAH IS INDEED COME. At this point, Jesus refers to another section of the book of Malachi that addresses the preparation of the people for His first appearance on the earth. “*Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts*” (Mal 3:1). This is also the messenger to whom Isaiah alluded: “*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God*” (Isa 40:3).

There are some technical points to be noted here – points that were missed by the scribes. John the Baptist actually came “*in the spirit and power of Elijah.*” His own father said of him, “*And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias , to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Luke 1:17). He also said that, “*many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God*” (Lk 1:16).

A significant number of Bible scholars feel that this exhausts the prophecy of Malachi. However, Jesus adds some additional information that confirms John the Baptist did not exhaust Malachi’s prophecy. He was a sort of type of the person in question, but not the

fulfillment itself.

THEY HAVE DONE WHAT THEY LISTED . “*They have done unto him whatever they listed,*” or “*whatever they wished.*” NKJV (Mk 9:13). Rather than *restoring all things*, as Jesus said Elijah **would** do, John the Baptist was abused by the people. Matthew adds, “*Elias is come already, and they knew him not*” (Matt 17:12). That is not restoring all things.

But there is no need for conjecture here. We can call John himself to the witness stand on this matter. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, “*even from His mother’s womb*” (Lk 1:15). He knew his role in the Divine economy. What does he have to say about this matter.

During John’s ministry “*the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who art thou?’*” He informed them of three people he was **not**, and who he really was as well. First, “*he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ*” (John 1:20), for some had “*mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not*” (Lk 3:15). Therefore, he forthrightly denied that he was, removing all doubts from their minds. The inquirers, however, were not content, for they knew John was no ordinary man. They then pointedly asked him, “*Are you Elijah?*” NKJV John answered, “***I am not!***” (John 1:21). He also said he was not “*that Prophet,*” of whom Moses wrote (Deut 18:15,18). Nothing suggests John was wrong on this.

THE POINT. Matthew also draws our attention to Christ’s words concerning Himself. “*Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them*” (Matt 17:12). The point Jesus is making is that His appearance, both the first and the second, would be preceded by a forerunner who would participate in the same sort of reception Jesus had. John the Baptist, coming in “*the spirit and power of Elijah*” would experience the same kind of end at the hands of the people that Jesus Himself experienced. The end of his earthly life would be connected with what the people wanted to do to him. Jesus said it was “*likewise*” with the conclusion of the life of the Son of Man. His forerunner tasted of the same reaction of the people as the One whose way he had prepared.

Matthew adds, “*Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist*” (Matt 17:13). That is, for the time, their minds were to be occupied with what was going to happen to the Son of Man, and John the Baptist related to that. Nevertheless, Jesus left the door open for future consideration: “*Elijah is coming first and restores all things.*” NKJV A fuller understanding of that prophecy will be granted when the time arrives for its fulfillment. That is the manner of revelation, which is never granted for the sake of mere novelty.

Thus I have provided several reasons why the prophecy of Malachi did not realize its fulfillment in John the Baptist, who was a type of the prophecy. (1) Malachi spoke of a work that would immediately precede “*the great and dreadful day of the Lord*” – a description that is not at all appropriate for Christ’s first appearance. (2) John the Baptist did not “*restore all things,*” as Jesus said Elijah would do. He only provided a sampling of such a work. (3) The people did to John the Baptist whatever they wanted to do, confirming he did not “***restore all things.***” (4) John the Baptist himself said he was not Elijah. (5) Jesus spoke of the messenger sent before Him as partaking of the rejection that generation, just as He would do. (6) Christ’s first appearance was not to execute judgment or tread down the wicked, a work with which the “*Elijah*” of Malachi’s prophecy is associated.

The question of the disciples is much like the one they asked following His resurrection: “*Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” (Acts 1:6). Jesus’ answer confirmed it was not appropriate to reveal such things at that time. The same is true of this word.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 97

“ Mark 9:14 And when He came to his disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him. 16 And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto Me.” (Mark 9:14-19; Matt 17:14-17; Luke 9:37-41)

INTRODUCTION

The disciples have just had two lofty experiences: beholding the transfigured Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah, and hearing His intriguing words about the coming of Elijah. These are the types of experience that true disciples would like to continue endlessly. They are good and pleasant, and stimulating to the soul. However, such lofty climes are not always the lot of Christ’s followers, even though they may actually seek means to protract them – like Peter did. In addition, the human spirit must be cultured, and even empowered, to endure such times. Unless this happens, even interested souls can sleep with fatigue during holy exposures. The actual spiritual distance between Jesus and His disciples had become evident on that mountain. He was transfigured, but they were not. He talked with Moses and Elijah, but they did not. He was alert, but they were asleep. God spoke of him, but not of them. He understood about the coming of Elijah, but they did not. It seems to me that marked progress is being made when Christ’s superiority to ourselves becomes more and more evident. We are *“in Him,”* but we are not His equals. We still must be taught by Him, led by Him, and nurtured by Him. No disciple can afford to come to the point where Jesus becomes common, or other things assume the thrones of thought and purpose in them. However familiar we are with Jesus, that familiarity remains a matter for much development while we are in this world.

“ Mk 9:14 And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him. 16 And He asked the scribes, What question ye with them?”

HE CAME TO HIS DISCIPLES. As is frequently the case in the Gospel narrative, the **intention** of Jesus is emphasized rather than what appeared to be the case. He came to His disciples, but it looked as though He was coming to a multitude. He *“saw a multitude,”* but He *“came to His disciples.”* There is something to be learned here. Christ’s presence is promised to **His** people, not to inquiring multitudes. He promises to be with those who gather in His name

(Matt 18:20). While I do not wish to linger long on this point, this is why it is so wrong for professed believers to tailor their assemblies for unbelievers, seekers, inquirers, and the likes. Christ is with His people, and they are to center upon Him, not the strangers of this world who may be with them. It is their exclusive devotion to Him that will have a calculated effect upon the unlearned. This is confirmed by Paul's reference to an unbeliever among believers being convicted when "they all prophesy." The secrets of his heart will be "*made manifest*," and he will "*worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth*" (1 Cor 14:23-25). The stranger does not respond to their attention to him, but to their involvement with God – an involvement that resulted in them prophesying.

A GREAT MULTITUDE ABOUT THEM. Matthew says that Jesus and the three disciples "*came to the multitude*" (Matt 17:14). Luke says that this event happened "*on the next day, when they come down from the hill,*" and "*much people met Him*" (Lk 9:37). I want to emphasize the fact that Jesus was returning to the disciples, not the multitudes. **The people will gain access to Jesus because they are with the disciples.**

There is an illusion to the principle of this text in the Song of Solomon – the principle of looking to Christ's disciples in His absence. When the woman sought her beloved, and was not able to find him, she inquired where he could be found. She was told, "*If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents*" (Song 1:8). Go where the feeding is done! Go to the people who are enjoying his presence, and know his manners. That is the way it is with the Lord. **If men want access to Him, they must find His people, for He is dwelling among them.** Go where the saints of God are being fed. Find your way to the people with whom He is pleased to dwell.

THE SCRIBES WERE QUESTIONING THEM. Other versions read they were "*disputing with them*," NKJV or "*arguing with them*." NASB Here, the word "*questioning*" does not mean asking questions to learn, but entering into controversy – caviling, quibbling, and being hypercritical. It seems to me that this was an irritation to the Lord, for, as a whole, the scribes were never noted for promoting goodness or actually seeking the Lord, who Himself was the Truth (John 14:6). Yet, in the absence of the Lord, the scribes felt more bold to argue with the disciples, raising controversies they would be more reluctant to raise in His presence. We will find from the remainder of the text that the scribes were probably trying to discredit Jesus because of the disciples failure to do a mighty work in his name.

THEY BEHELD HIM AND WERE AMAZED. One version says when the people saw Jesus they were "*overwhelmed*." NIV The word translated "*greatly amazed*" relates to alarm, astounded, and even terrified. The Amplified Bible suggests that the face of the Lord was still glowing. "*His face and person yet glistening, they were greatly amazed*." I am inclined to think some vestiges of the glory remained, arresting the attention of the people. If it took some time for the **reflected** glory on Moses' face to fade (Ex 34:35), it is not likely that the greater glory in Jesus' face would quickly dissipate. The Israelites also feared when they saw Moses' face (Ex 34:30).

It is only as Jesus is seen as "*separate from sinners*" (Heb 7:26) that people properly respond to Him. Those who labor to make Jesus like us according to the flesh do a great disservice to mankind. Those who are saved have come to a point where they no longer know Jesus "*after the flesh*" (2 Cor 5:16). That is one of the major reasons for their quest to "*know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings*" (Phil 3:10). These compelling objectives are always absent when Christ is not perceived as He really is.

WHAT QUESTION YE WITH THEM? Other versions read, “*What are you discussing with them?*” NKJV and “*What are you arguing with them about?*” NIV From the disciples’ point of view, Jesus was coming to their aid, and would put an end to the disputation. From the scribes point of view, Jesus would confirm their folly in seeking to cast aspersions upon Him. From the multitudes’ point of view, their attention would be redirected to the proper Objective.

Once Jesus asked His disciples what they were talked or argued about. “*What was it that ye disputed among yourselves?*” (Mark 9:33). Many of the arguments of men would come to a grinding halt if they were acutely aware that Jesus knew what they were talking about.

“ 17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.”

ONE OF THE MULTITUDE. Mark says “*one of the multitude answered,*” indicating he was involved in the discussion. Matthew says this “*certain man*” was “*kneeling down to Him*” (Matt 17:14). Luke says “*a man of the company cried out*” (Lk 9:38). He was not the main speaker, or gifted in presenting a case. Rather, this was the person seeking mercy, and the lips of such a person are loosed to speak plainly.

I BROUGHT UNTO THEE MY SON. Note, that the man brought his son to Jesus. Matthew reads the man cried out “*Lord, have mercy on my son*” Matt 17:15). Luke reads “*Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child*” (Luke 9:38). Whatever this man knew about Jesus, it was enough to awaken faith and hope in him. He came expectantly. That is what happens when people hear the truth about Jesus, as it is proclaimed in the Gospel. That Gospel, being “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16), causes faith and hope to rise into prominence. Expectation is awakened, and anticipation visits the soul.

HE HAS A DUMB SPIRIT. Mark says he had a “*dumb spirit,*” or “*a spirit which makes him mute,*” NASB robbing him of his speech. NIV Matthew reads, “*he is a lunatic, and sore vexed,*” or “*has epilepsy (is moonstruck) and he suffers terribly*” AMPLIFIED (Matt 17:15). Luke reads, “*a spirit takes*” (seizes NKJV) “*him:*” (Lk 9:39). Here is a case of a human spirit being seized by a evil spirit, and forced to do unwilling and abnormal things. The frailty of the natural human condition is thus confirmed. The condition of this boy is explained in Scripture. There is no human science that could have properly diagnosed this condition. In fact, the father did a better job than many of the professed experts of our time. If it were not for a Sovereign God, men would be nothing more than helpless vassals of the wicked one, unable to control even their natural functions.

A MISERABLE CONDITION. Mark says when the spirit “*taketh him,*” it “*teareth him,*” or “*wherever it seized him, it throws him down.*” NKJV Matthew reads, “*for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water*” (Matt 15:15). Luke reads, “*a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him,*” or “*a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him*” NKJV (Luke 9:39).

The man adds, “*he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away,*” or “*he foams at the mouth, gnashes*” [grinds NASB] “*his teeth, and becomes rigid.*” NKJV Luke reads, “*it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising*” [mauling NASB] “*him,*” or “*it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth*” (Lk 9:39). Luke also adds that the spirit “*hardly departeth from him,*” or “*it scarcely ever leaves him*” NIV Lk 9:39).

How much can an evil spirit do to a person – doing so against the person ‘s will, and in spite of all efforts to help the person? Men may speculate about the matter, but here is a case worthy of consideration. This spirit seized, or took hold, of the boy, made him speechless (a “dumb spirit”), and threw him down to the ground. The spirit threw him into fire, threw him into water, and caused him to scream. It made him convulse, foam at the mouth, grind his teeth, and become rigid. It mauled the boy mercilessly and scarcely ever left him. I do not doubt that without the reigning Christ this would be a more common occurrence than we dare to imagine. The fact of the rarity of such things confirms that Satan and his hosts are being held in check. They cannot move among men at will.

Note that the father does not ask why God allowed this. While such words emit from religious people of our day, it was not found in the mouths of those who came to Jesus for help. A society in which such responses are found, and teachers who, in the name of Jesus, leave people with the impression that God is tolerant of such expressions, is in a miserable condition. Such confirms that the same circumstance exists in our country that is found in “*the wicked*,” of whom it is said, “*there is no fear of God before their eyes*” (Rom 3:18).

I BROUGHT HIM TO YOUR DISCIPLES. “*I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out ; and they could not.*” Matthew reads, “*And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him*” (Matt 17:16). Luke reads, “*And I besought thy disciples to cast him out ; and they could not*” (Luke 9:40). The words, “*they could not*” indicate the disciples did make an attempt to cast out the “*dumb spirit.*” They had cast out evil spirits before (Matt 10:8; Mk 6:13). But there was something different about this time. The ability that had previously been granted to them to do such things (Matt 10:1) did not extend to this situation.

It is admittedly an embarrassing thing when people come to Christ’s followers in an effort to obtain help, and they are not able to administer it. Although convenient explanations have been provided for such inabilities, I must confess I have not learned to be comfortable with them. This text will provide us some insight into the matter that will be most helpful.

“ 19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto Me.”

There is a “Jesus understands” mentality extant within the churches that leads people to imagine He is tolerant of nearly every condition existing among His people. If that impression is correct, then it will be confirmed in the record of Christ’s earthly ministry. If Jesus being touched with the feeling of our infirmity means that He is tender and patient in every situation, then that will surely be reflected in this text. There are certainly conditions that can touch the heart. A father whose only son is grievously afflicted and tormented by a wicked spirit. An effort was made to get him to Jesus. The case was brought to the disciples of Jesus, and they made a valiant effort to cure the boy, but failed. Now, we will see how Jesus responded to the situation. Remember, He has just been praying to the Father, was transfigured, and held conversation with Moses and Elijah.

O FAITHLESS GENERATION. Other versions read, “*unbelieving generation,*” NASB “*generation without faith,*” BBE “*incredulous generation,*” DOUAY “*you faithless people,*” NLT and “*O unbelieving generation [without any faith].*” AMPLIFIED Both Matthew and Luke read, “*faithless and perverse generation*” (Matt 17:17). Although these words appear to have been directed to the multitude, together with the provoking scribes, the disciples themselves were not excluded, as will be confirmed in verse twenty-nine and Matthew 17:20. They were also

addressed to the father, who had apparently joined with the scribes in arguing with the disciples. Thus you have unbelief, or faithlessness, found in the disciples, a seeker, and Christ's critics.

If we are ever prone to imagine that Jesus is tolerant of the absence of faith, then let us again consider this text. The Savior does not refer to a generation who finds it difficult to believe. That might appear as though He was forbearing of such a situation. When He says "*faithless generation*," He is speaking of a people who "*cannot please God*" (Heb 11:6), for those who do not believe will not dwell in the favor of Living God.

To be "*faithless*" is the opposite of believing. Jesus once said to doubting Thomas, "*be not faithless, but believing*" (John 20:27). It is a condition in which an affiliation with the world dominates, and involvement with heaven is thus rendered void. Knowing these things, Christ's words were a blistering rebuke as well as an assessment of the condition of the people.

HOW LONG SHALL I BE WITH YOU? Other versions read, "*how long shall I stay with you?*" NIV and "*how much longer must I be among you?*" NRSV Why, after so long a time, were they still in the grip of unbelief? We learn from this that Jesus did not simply say it was because they "*could not believe*" – although some of them could not (John 12:39). The dominance of unbelief remains a marvel – even to Jesus (Mk 6:6). It is a condition that contradicts the objective of human existence, the purpose for which men were positioned in both time and the world, and the revelation of God "*in the flesh*" (Acts 17:26-27; John 1:11-14).

HOW LONG SHALL I SUFFER YOU? Other versions read, "*How long shall I put up with you?*" NIV and "*How much longer must I put up with you?*" NRSV Unbelief irritates Jesus, and He will not long abide where it remains. The Savior's tolerance of those who remain in unbelief is referred to as "*suffering them*," or *putting up with them*. Such people are being endured by Jesus, and thus stand in a most precarious position. John the Baptist testified that the wrath of God remains on the person who does not believe on the Son (John 3:36). And, that is what we are beholding here – not believing on the Son. In this case, a "*faithless generation*" is one who has been exposed to the Son of God, yet "*received Him not*" (John 1:11). Here, it is a nation that was cultured to receive the Son, yet did not.

These are words that reflect a Divine weariness with the persistent unbelief of the people. This is an aspect of the Divine nature that is little known in our time – even though there are frequent references to it. God said to Israel, "*thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities*" (Isa 43:24). He said of their religious observances, "*they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them*" (Isa 1:14). With lamenting heart He said to them, "*Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves*" (Amos 2:13) – they became a burden to Him! Again it is written of them, "*Ye have wearied the LORD with your words*" (Mal 2:17).

Let no person think that God or Christ are indifferent to the persistent eruption of unbelief. When men cannot trust the Lord, or come short in their faith, they are to call out for help, as the father of our text will eventually do: "*help thou mine unbelief!*" (Mk 9:24).

BRING HIM TO ME. The Lord's rebuke suggests that this matter could have been resolved by His disciples – just as surely as they could have fed the hungry multitudes when they were without bread (Matt 14:16). Ultimately, however, the dependency of men must be upon the Lord Himself. Even though they may come to His disciples, it is the faith of the disciples in Christ that gives them power. Now, in tender mercy, after rebuking the unbelief that surrounded Him, the Master says

“Bring him to Me!” Now we will see who has the power.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 98

“ Mark 9:20 And they brought him unto Him: and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21 And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:20-24; Luke 9:42a)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has confronted a father with an only son who is being dominated by a “*dumb spirit*.” Having taken the boy to Jesus’ disciples, the man reports they were unable to cast the oppressing spirit out of his son – even though they had cast out demons previously. This confirms that such abilities are not accomplished by a routine, or by simply shouting out “*in the name of Jesus*.” Here were nine elite men, chosen by Jesus, taught by Jesus, and once sent forth by Him to work all manner of signs and wonders, even including raising the dead (Matt 10:8). We will find that there is more to victory than learning a procedure, building on success, or handling the name of Jesus as though there was some independent power in it, or that the vast world of fallen spirits recognize those identified with Jesus and automatically flee from them. As ideal as that may appear, we have a text before us that dashes such imaginations to the ground. The Kingdom of God is one teeming with life and purpose. It is not driven by laws, but by a Person. Some have mistakenly said it is governed by principles, as they suppose nature is. However neither the Kingdom nor nature is upheld by principles. It is the Person of Christ who upholds both (Heb 1:3; Isa 9:6), and it is not possible to exploit Him, or use Him for personal Gain and advantage. Here is a point that the legalists and religious charlatans cannot grasp – everything is controlled by Christ Himself, who holds the reins of the Kingdom – and only faith can access Him.

“ Mk 9:20 And they brought him unto Him: and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.”

THEY BROUGHT HIM TO HIM. Jesus said, “*Bring him to Me,*” and they did, instantly responding to His word. The fact that the father had been faced with failure did not cause him to leave. He had remained, waiting for Jesus, and there were still people to assist him in his quest. Oh, that men would learn to linger for the blessing, wrestle for it, and continue to cry out, though the Lord bears long with them!

Why did not the father himself bring the boy? Why did “*they*” bring him? While a precise explanation is not given, it appears that the father himself was not able to handle the boy. Perhaps the disciples to whom he had brought his son assisted him in getting his son to Jesus. They helped him like the four men who carried an impotent man to Jesus (Mk 2:3).

There are cases that require the involvement of others. When Peter and John were threatened, they went to the other believers, and together they brought the case to the Lord in a powerful prayer (Acts 4:23-31). When a certain centurion sought for the Lord to heal his servant, who was “*ready to die,*” he sent “*the elders of the Jews*” to beseech Jesus to come and heal his servant. They did beseech Jesus, and He did come and heal his servant (Lk 7:2-10). There is good reason to be hopeful that joint-petitions will be honored by the Lord.

WHEN HE SAW HIM. This refers to the spirit seeing Jesus, not Jesus seeing the boy. Other versions emphasize this: “*when the spirit saw Jesus,*” NIV “*when the spirit saw Him,*” NRSV and “*as soon as the spirit saw Him.*” GENEVA We also know this is the case by the words that follow.

The powers of darkness recognized Jesus when He was in the flesh. Satan knew who He was, and engaged in a vigorous assault of temptation upon Him (Matt 4:1-10). Satan also “*entered into*” Judas, leading him to betray Jesus, because he knew who Jesus was (Lk 22:3). We also have several instances of demons recognizing Jesus (Matt 8:29; Mk 1:24; 5:7).

This demon was able to distinguish between Jesus, in whom he could **not** work, and the boy, in whom he could work. Jesus once said, “*the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me*” (John 14:30). Satan did, however, have something in Judas, and was thus able to work in him, for he was, as Jesus said, “*a devil*” (John 6:70).

There is a principle to be seen here that will assist us in thinking properly. Just as there are certain people in whom God can work, doing “*that which is well pleasing in His sight*” (Heb 13:20), so there are people in whom Satan more readily works. It is for this reason that we are solemnly warned, “*Neither give place to the devil,*” or “*do not give the devil an opportunity*” NASB (Eph 4:27). And why are we to be mindful of this? Because if we *make room* NRSV for Satan, he will seize the opportunity! If we, by ceasing to “*go on to perfection,*” allow “*the flesh*” to have dominance, Satan will “*get an advantage of us*” (2 Cor 2:11). This is where the reasoning of those who defend the imagination of “*carnal Christians*” falls to the ground. Carnality is the domain in which the devil works. It is where imaginations grow, lusts are nourished, and rebellion against God is cultured. This is precisely why professing Christians fall. They have made a place for Satan, he recognized it, and gained the advantage over them.

The point of this text is that Satan’s worker – a “*dumb spirit*” – recognized Jesus, even though He was “*in the flesh,*” or in a body (1 Tim 3:16). He did not attack Jesus, for there was nothing in Him with which the demon could work. Neither, indeed, did he attack Peter James and John, who were with Jesus. Nor did he attack the nine disciples who attempted to cast him out, leaping on them like a demon-possessed man did on the sons of Sceva (Acts 19:14-16). Likewise, our safety is accented when we are with the Lord, and He is dwelling in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17). The presence of Christ, not our achievement, protects us, and He does not dwell where there is unbelief and carnality.

HE TARE HIM. “*... straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.*” Another version reads, “*he immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth,*” NASB Luke reads, “*as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him*” (Luke 9:42). Although this demon was subject to Jesus, he hated Him, and did what he could, even though he could not touch Jesus. From one point of view, this was a test of the father’s faith, having his son brought to Jesus, and on the way he is attacked again by the same “*dumb spirit.*” From another point of view, we see the evil nature of the powers of darkness who care nothing for mankind, or even for young children. From yet another point of view we will see that even though this demon made a last attempt to destroy the boy, he was

not able to do so.

It should not surprise us if Satan makes aggressive attempts to bring us down, even while we are en route to Jesus! When we are making an attempt to bring our needs to Christ, this does not mean we are completely insulated from Satan's attacks on the way. Believers do well to make war against religious naivety, or unwarranted simplicity. In understanding, be men! (1 Cor 14:20).

“ 21 And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.”

HE ASKED HIS FATHER. What a valuable lesson is to be learned here. The fact that there is tumult and concern among us, does not mean that is the way it is with Jesus. A person without understanding might imagine that Jesus did not have a deep care for this man and his son. Calmly Jesus asks, *“How long has this been happening to him?”* NKJV Jesus did not ask this to obtain information, *“He knew what was in man”* (John 2:25), to say nothing of the circumstances that surrounds him.

One of the grand perspectives of the book of Revelation is that when there is tumult and chaos upon the earth, there is calmness and serenity in heaven, depicted by a *“sea of glass”* (Rev 4:6; 15:2). With the government upon His shoulder, Jesus is not unsettled by what is happening upon the earth. He is never confronted with a crisis, emergency, or crossroad. He is never, as men are, brought to despair, fretting, or distress. This is reflected in our text. Calmly Jesus asks the man how long his son has been troubled by this oppressing demon.

While care must be taken not to be diverted to speculation, perhaps the Lord still deals with men in this manner, moving them to consider the seriousness and length of the difficulty they are bringing to him. Perhaps he wants to widen our view of the matter so we will give him the greater glory for what He does. Small views of the circumstance will not yield appropriate praise and thanksgiving to the Master of the circumstance.

HE SAID. This oppression has lasted for some time – *“from childhood,”* NKJV or *“from the time he was a little boy,”* AMPLIFIED or from infancy. What a pitiful situation it was! From this description we see that the affliction was not owing to any transgression on the boys part – like the punishment of Nabal (1 Sam 25:36), Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:27), Uzziah (2 Chron 26:19), Jeroboah (2 Chron 13:20), Jehoram (2 Chron 21:19), and certain at Corinth (1 Cor 11:30). All infirmity is traced to the general condition of man's sinfulness, but is not always owing to a specific sin of the individual. This boy's condition was associated with the fallen state of mankind, but was not related to anything he himself had done.

The father provided some vivid details of the oppression of his son. *“And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him ”* NKJV This demon had tried to kill the boy by burning and drowning, but had not been able to do so. The thought of a spirit throwing a boy into fire and water speaks of the frailty of humanity. It also testifies to the government of the world of demons by heaven, else they would long ago have destroyed mankind. This also provides some insight into what happens when God delivers people over to a reprobate mind, as He did in the Gentile world (Rom 1:28). At that point all manner of immorality and vice broke out among the Gentiles (Rom 1:29-32). This was not only because of man's corrupt nature, but because Satan and his hosts could now work more freely in men. It should bring great sobriety to mortals to consider that the dominance of wickedness and the proliferation of immorality could very well indicate that

God has delivered men over to a reprobate state.

IF THOU CANST DO ANYTHING. The man cries out in despair, “*But if You CAN do anything . . .*” NKJV It is as though the man had heard reports that this was the case, but had not yet been convinced. He was in the same state as many professing Christians. They have heard that God can do anything, yet stand in doubt of it, only being able to hope that this is true. Also, the man knew if Jesus could do “*anything,*” the case of his son would not be too hard for Him.

It is a human infirmity to imagine that personal circumstances are in some way difficult for God. Either He is not able, or He is not willing. In either case, the situation becomes impossible. When God confirmed His promise to Abraham concerning the birth of a son, Sarah laughed, reasoning within herself that the age of Abraham and herself prohibited such a thing (Gen 18:12-13). The Lord then said to Abraham, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” (Gen 18:14). When God called Moses, telling him he had been chosen to deliver Israel, Moses reasoned, “*Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*” (Ex 3:11). After hearing further arguments from Moses, God replied, “*I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt*” (Ex 3:17). When the angel of the Lord told Gideon the Lord was with him, Gideon responded, “*Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us*” (Judges 6:13). The Lord finally responded, “*Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man*” (Judg 6:16). This kind of reasoning is still one of man’s infirmities – imagining that his personal circumstances will somehow be ignored by God.

HAVE COMPASSION ON US. “*Have compassion on us, and help, us!*” The man knew he could not provide a meritorious reason for help. It would have to come by compassion, or mercy, or pity, or because Christ felt sympathy for them – both the father and the son.

“ 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

IF THOU CANST BELIEVE. The man had said to Jesus, “*If You can!*” Now, Jesus hurls the words back at him. There are two different ways to read this, and both are true. First, Jesus emphasizes it is **not** a matter of what HE can do, but what the **man** can do: “*If YOU can.*” That is the intent of his words “*If YOU can believe.*” NKJV The other view is that Jesus is asking the man a question, as though He said, “*Did you say ‘If I can?’*” the NIV reads this way, “*If you can ?*” Another version also reads in the same manner, “*What do you mean, ‘If I can?’*” NLT **In either case, the point is what the man can do, which is confirmed in the next clause.** That is, the man had come to Jesus, questioning what **He** was able to do. However, Jesus turned the tables on him, declaring that it was really a matter of what the man was able to do.

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. Notice how the Savior speaks. He does **not** say, “*All things are possible to Me .*” Another place Jesus **did** say, “*with God all things are possible*” (Matt 19:26). There, Jesus was speaking about something men could NOT do – under any circumstances. Speaking of being “*saved*” through human effort alone, Jesus preceded these words by saying, “*With men, it is impossible.*” But this is **not** what the Master says here. Instead He speaks of believing, or having faith, as the most productive involvement of men: “*all things are possible to him who believes .*” NKJV

Jesus does not mean that the person who believes can do **anything** . He rather means that God can do anything **for** the person who believes. The New Revised Version captures this sense of the text: “*All things can be done for the one who believes.*” The Amplified Bible reads, “*And*

Jesus said, [You say to Me], If You can do anything? [Why,] all things can be (are possible) to him who believes!"

Of old time Jehospat knew believing was the issue. He said to Israel, "**Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper**" (2 Chron 20:20). Elsewhere Jesus said those who "*have faith and doubt not*" could wither a fig tree and move a mountain. He added, when we ask in prayer believing, "*ye shall receive*" (Matt 21:21-22). One time, Paul confronted a man who heard him speak, and beheld him steadfastly. He perceived "*that he had faith to be healed.*" When Paul "*said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet,"*" the man "*leaped and walked*" (Acts 14:9-10). All things **are** possible to the one who believes!

I BELIEVE. The man senses that there is a dimension in believing that he does not possess. He confesses his inclination, and that he has spiritual perception much like the man whose physical sight enabled him to only see "*men as trees walking*" (Mk 8:24). He really did believe, but it was not a dominating or mature faith. His belief was not sufficient to bring his desire to pass. Just having some faith, therefore, is really not sufficient.

There is a faith that is present only "*for a while*" (Lk 8:13). It is enough to begin, but not enough to finish. That is why our faith must grow – like that of the Thessalonians, whose faith was one that "*groweth exceedingly*" (2 Thess 1:3). It is why Paul Prayed that the Ephesians, who were already noted for their faith and love (Eph 1:15), would receive more of both faith and love "*from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Eph 6:23). There is such a thing as being "*weak in the faith,*" that is, unable to discern the scope of truth (Rom 14:1).

Abraham was **not** "*weak in faith,*" but was "*strong in faith, giving glory to God*" (Rom 4:19-20). This father, although he believed, was **not** "*strong in faith*" like Abraham. There was an "*if*" in his perception of Jesus: "*If Thou cast do anything.*" However, the man knows what to do.

HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF. The text states this father "*cried out and said with tears.*" He caught what Jesus said, and wanted to be among those who met that criterion of believing. He saw that he needed a stronger faith, and thus he sought it from the Lord.

Other versions read, "*make my feeble faith stronger,*" BBE "*Help my lack of faith,*" GWN "*aid Thou the defect of my faith,*" MRD "*overcome my unbelief,*" NIB and "*Help me when I don't believe enough.*" IE His son's disorder was too challenging for his measure of faith, and so he sought for his condition to be helped. The word "*unbelief,*" as used in this text is found sixteen times in Scripture (Matt 13:58; 17:20; Mk 6:6; 9:24; 16:14; Rom 3:3; 4:20; 11:20,23,30,32; 1 Tim 1:13; Heb 3:12,19; 4:6,11). In every use of the term, a small measure of faith was presumed. Every case had to do with Jews, who held to a traditional view of God – a kind of creedal faith, if there is such a thing. All of the cases would have confessed belief in God and the acknowledgment of His law. Yet it did not extend far enough because the individuals were drawing back, resisting the forward thrust of faith. In a sense, there is a kind of mystery to this condition. Yet, it can be detected and corrected, as the example before us confirms.

Thus, the man asks for his faith to be strengthened so that he can be strong in it. He sees the disadvantage of being "*weak in faith,*" and therefore seeks the correction of the condition.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 99

“ Mark 9:25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.”

(Mark 9:25-27; Matt 17:18; Luke 9:42-44)

INTRODUCTION

Having come down from the mount of transfiguration, Jesus has entered into the trouble zone, where the powers of darkness are at work. On the Mount there were no immediate encounters with the wicked one. It was a time during which the Savior was being strengthened for His mission to lay down His life. For the occasion, the Father had dispatched Moses and Elijah to speak with His Son concerning the death He would “*accomplish at Jerusalem*” (Lk 9:31). Now, the Lord returns to the battleground in which the devil is boldly working. He confronts a father with an only son who is being dominated by a “*dumb spirit*.” The circumstance was too much for the nine disciples to handle, and thus the boy has been brought to Jesus Himself. The whole matter was a source of vexation to Jesus – not because of the presence of trouble, but because of unbelief, even after He had been with the people for over two years. Nevertheless, in great compassion He has called for the boy to be brought to Himself. In the process of coming, the demon, in an effort to destroy the boy’s life, throws him to the ground. After speaking with Jesus, the father has cried out acknowledging that he believed, and asking the Lord to help his “*unbelief*.” It is at this point that our text begins. We will see how Jesus conducts Himself during such an occasion. He is confronting a grieved father, an oppressed boy, nine disciples that have failed, a group of criticizing scribes, an intrigued multitude, and a hostile demon. One of those would have been a sufficient challenge for anyone else. Yet, the Master confirms His superiority by wading into this conglomeration of personalities with the confidence of one who knows, and can do, all things.

“ Mk 9:25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.”

JESUS SAW THE PEOPLE. What a marvelous picture of the drawing power of the Lord Jesus! Having arrived on this scene of confusion, the people were coming – “*running together*” to Him. However interesting the discussion was between the scribes and the disciples, it was no longer of any interest to the multitude. They were “*running to the scene*” NIV of Divine activity. They seemed to sense that something of great magnitude was about to happen.

Although this was only in an introductory sense, it speaks clearly of the role of **expectation** in matters pertaining to Christ. Jesus is not associated with novelty or any form of entertainment. Rather, when perceived in truth, He always relates to spiritually substantive matters – that is, matters related to God’s “*eternal purpose*” (Eph 3:11).

HE REBUKED THE SPIRIT. “*He rebuked the foul spirit.*” Other versions read, “*unclean spirit,*” NKJV and “*evil spirit.*” NIV The word “*foul*” means unclean, defiling, and without any relationship to God. Here, it is an adjective describing the kind of spirit with which Jesus was being confronted. This type of spirit is mentioned eleven times in Scripture (Zech 13:2; Matt 12:43; Mk 1:23,26; 3:30; 5:2,8; 7:25; 8:29; 9:42; Lk 11:24). Twice the Greek word is translated “*foul spirit*” (Mk 9:25; Rev 18:2). These texts associate unclean, or foul spirits with false prophets (Zech 13:2), a wild man, and seizures. Such spirits are associated with chaos and disorder, whether in life or in doctrine. They are the antithesis of God, who is associated with order, purpose, and righteous objectivity.

Now Jesus speaks authoritatively to this spirit, rebuking it. The Lord does not blow words into the air, as false prophets are prone to do. Perhaps you have heard pretentious men rebuking all manners of things, ranging from sickness, to poverty, and to the devil himself. Their words are not generally accompanied with any display of Divine authority. However, this is not the case with Jesus, into whose hand God had committed “*all things*” (John 3:35).

I CHARGE THEE. “*Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee .*” Other versions read, “*Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you!*” NKJV and “*You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you!*” NRSV Matthew says, “*Jesus rebuked the devil*” (Matt 17:18).

Notice what we have learned concerning this demon. He is referred to as “*a dumb spirit*” (Mk 9:17), “*a spirit*” (Lk 9:38), “*foul spirit*” (Mk 9:25), “*the unclean spirit*” (Lk 9:42), “*dumb and deaf spirit*” (Mk 9:25), and “*the demon,*” or “*devil*” (Lk 9:42). Consider the kind of impact this spirit had upon this boy. The man’s son had seizures (Matt 17:15), was sore vexed (Matt 17:15), foamed at the mouth, ground his teeth, became rigid (Mk 9:18), was thrown into both fire and water (Mk 9:22), was seized by the spirit, made to scream, and was mauled (Lk 9:39).

Do you wonder what the dark world of spirits can cause people to do? And do you not know that if Jesus was not governing the world, they would throw humanity into a state of utter and hopeless chaos and disorder. These spirits do not yield to education, human strength, human reasoning, the governments of the world, or false religion.

COME OUT OF HIM. This spirit had dominated the boy since he was an infant. Now, Jesus commands him to come out of the boy. Will the word of Jesus have effect? Will this malicious spirit yield to Jesus? This spirit was not on the outside of the boy oppressing him, but on the inside of him controlling him. Now he is commanded to leave the domain he has occupied for a long period of time, and to do so immediately.

ENTER NO MORE INTO HIM. Not only is this demon being expelled, he is forbidden to again inhabit the boy: “*never enter him again!*” NIV Who but Jesus can issue such a word! The disciples later confessed they “*could not*” cast this demon out (Mk 9:28). Will Jesus be able to do so as “*the Son of Man?*” The people had wondered about Jesus, marveling that God had “*given such power to men*” (Matt 9:8). The disciples themselves had earlier said of Him, “*What manner of Man is this?*” (Mk 4:41). What will this controlling demon do, now that the Christ had spoken to him?

Notice that Jesus did not say this to the boy, but to the spirit that inhabited and controlled

him. On the surface, it appeared as though Jesus was talking to the man's son, for "*a spirit hath not flesh and bones,*" and therefore cannot be seen (Lk 24:39).

It is a great advantage to men when they realize there is more activity going on in this world than that which is generated by humanity. How poignant the words that rang out of heaven following Satan's expulsion: "*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*" (Rev 12:12). Our text took place BEFORE Satan's expulsion from heaven! It is no wonder that we are admonished, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Pet 5:8).

" 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead."

What kind of hatred do the devil and his hosts have for Jesus? They obey him, but do they do so willingly? Our text serves to illuminate us concerning such matters.

THE SPIRIT CRIED. The boy had already been thrown to the ground in a convulsion, and wallowed on the ground foaming (Mk 9:20). Now, however, the "*foul spirit*" exerts himself more fully to destroy the lad, even though he is on the way out of his former residence. One version reads, "*the spirit shrieked.*" NIV The word here means to "croak," – like "the cry of a raven" – a sort of high-pitched screech. I gather the sound was more animalistic than human, and must have been frightening to those mortals who heard it. The demon did not come out without expressing his rebellion against both God and man. There are several instances recorded of demons crying out like this when confronting Jesus (Matt 8:29; Mk 1:23; Lk 4:33; 8:29). The fear and dread of Jesus are found among the powers of darkness, and we do well to reckon on that fact, abiding in Him and maintaining the fellowship with Him into which we have been called. Apart from Jesus, demons have neither a fear of, nor respect for, men.

AND RENT HIM SORE. Luke writes, "*And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him*" (Luke 9:42). Mark also confirms that this happened while they were bringing the boy to Jesus (Mk 9:20). Now, however, he throws the boy into one convulsion after another, as though making every effort to take his life. Other versions read "*convulsed him greatly,*" NKJV "*throwing him into terrible convulsions,*" NASB "*convulsed him violently,*" NIV "*shaking him violently,*" BBE and "*threw the boy into fit after fit.*" WEYMOUTH

How weak we mortals really are, and how foolish it is to boast of natural abilities, whether in the realm of wisdom or strength! Here is a demon in the process of obeying the Lord, exerting itself one last time to do what he could not do all those years from the boy's infancy to this time. On the surface, it looks as though a battle is going on between Jesus of Nazareth and this "*foul spirit.*" Some may even have surmised that Jesus was losing the battle at this point, and that the demon would finally fulfill its own will. Men must learn not to assess things according to appearance (John 7:24). What may very well appear to be the throes of death itself, may really be the beginning of joy and freedom!

AND CAME OUT OF HIM. Matthew reads, "*And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour*" (Matt 17:18). Luke says that Jesus "*healed the child*" (Lk 9:42). The demon had to yield because Jesus' word was "*with power,*" or authority (Lk 4:32). This was not a delegated power, like that of a law officer, to whom men ought to yield. If men do not yield to proper authority, they must be forced to do so – physically made to do what they refuse to do. However, there was no physical restraint here.

Jesus only spoke a word to the demon. He did not take hold of the boy and make his body quit convulsing. The word that created the worlds can surely control even demons!

We ought to note that if the Lord ever speaks to a situation, it **will** be resolved. Thus it is written of the Israelites, “**He sent His word**, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions” (Psa 107:20). He did not send an army, but His word! When young Samuel was in the process of coming to know the Lord, Eli instructed him what to say when the Lord called out to him: “*thou shalt say, **Speak**, LORD; for thy servant **heareth***” (1 Sam 3:9). He did **not** tell Samuel to say, “Work, Lord, for thy servant is watching!”

David was also aware of this Divine manner, and therefore said, “*I will **hear** what God the LORD will **speak**: for He will **speak peace** unto his people*” (Psa 85:8). A believing people always place a great emphasis on what God says. An unbelieving people find it quite easy to ignore what He says. This accounts for many of the discouraging circumstances of our time.

AND HE WAS AS ONE DEAD. Other versions read, “*he became as one dead,*” NKJV “*became so much like a corpse,*” NASB and “*was like a corpse.*” NRSV As the spirit exited the boy’s body, it looked as though it had taken his very life. The boy looked like a lifeless corpse – a body that was without a spirit. One version reads, “*pale and motionless like a corpse.*”
AMPLIFIED

MANY SAID, “HE IS DEAD.” Many of the people – the greater part of them – concluded, “*He IS dead!*” There were no signs of life, no evidence at all. Alas, it appeared as though Jesus was not more powerful than the “*foul spirit*” that had possessed this boy. When the spirit left the lad, it did not do so visibly. It was not an exit that people could see. Perhaps he was still there, or had left because he finally killed the boy, rather than leaving at the word of the King.

Could it be that there are still people who appear as though they are altogether devoid of life, yet who actually remain within the circumference of life? It certainly is not our business to speculate concerning such things. However, there is a clearly a state that appears to be hopeless– yet is not! In fact, we were all rescued from such a condition – one in which we had “*no hope,*” and were “*without God in the world*” (Eph 2:12). However, look at us now!

“ 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.”

The involvement of Jesus with those to whom He gives grace is most gratifying to ponder. Notice the very text before us. Jesus told the father if he could believe, “*all things*” were “*possible.*” He asked the father concerning the child. He spoke to the oppressing demon, commanding him to leave, and never come back. Now He personally assists the boy to his feet.

JESUS TOOK HIM BY THE HAND. A theorist might see no need for this – taking the boy by the hand. After all, the word of Jesus has power. Why, upon a word from Jesus, cannot the boy get up on his own – leap up and stand on his two feet, thus confirming the power of Jesus? Jesus commanded the demon to leave. Why did He not command the boy to get up? Instead, he takes the boy by the hand. That is the same thing He did when He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead – “*he took her by the hand*” (Matt 9:25). He did the same thing to Simon’s mother-in-law, when He “*took her by the hand*” (Mk 1:31). Similarly, before healing a blind man, Jesus “*took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town*” (Mk 8:23).

The person dominated by a “Law” mentality can see no sense in such a procedure – particularly when Jesus’ word is said to be “*with power.*” However, for the person who has suffered under the bludgeon of the devil, there is a comfort in the touch of Jesus that none know

saving those who have experienced it.

AND LIFTED HIM UP. This was also said of Jesus when He healed Peter's wife's mother: He "*lifted her up*" (Mk 1:31). Neither case suggests that the one healed remained in a weakened state, requiring assistance to get up. This is rather the manner of Divine working. When the disciples went forth into all the world, the Scriptures tell us the Lord was "*working with them*" (Mk 16:20). Those who preach the Gospel are said to be "*workers together with Him*" (2 Cor 6:1), and are referred to as "*laborers together with God*" (1 Cor 3:9). Does this mean their powers combined with God's power to do the work? Indeed not, it was wholly Divine power that accomplished the work, not Divine power plus human power. In the case of preachers of the Gospel, as well as the example before us, God's power was given to the individual. In such a case, at least two things are accomplished. First, God receives glory for doing what could not otherwise be accomplished. Secondly, great confidence is realized by the individual.

AND HE AROSE. The boy "*got up,*" NASB or "*stood up.*" NIV That is after the demon had thrown him to the ground in repeated convulsions, which ordinarily greatly deplete human strength. He "*stood up,*" confirming that the demon was powerless to take his life. He did so while holding to the hand of Jesus to substantiate that he did not stand up by his own natural power. Matthew adds, "*the child was cured from that very hour*" (Matt 17:18).

DELIVERED TO HIS FATHER. Luke says that Jesus "*healed the child, and delivered him again to his father*" (Luke 9:42). He did not carry the boy to his father, for the boy "*stood up.*" That confirmed that although the boy had been thrown to the ground, was thrashing about, and foaming at the mouth, he had not been harmed. I take it that this parallels another instance when Jesus confronted a man in the synagogue who also had an "*unclean spirit.*" When Jesus commanded that spirit to "*come out*" of the man, the demon threw the man down in the midst of all the people. It is then written that the demon "*came out of him, and hurt him not*" (Lk 4:35). When Jesus delivered this boy to his father, it was not with broken limbs, a bruised body, or any form of physical impediment – even though the demon desperately sought to do the boy harm. From that day forward, the healing of this boy could only be confirmed by testimony. The evidence of his former affliction was not present.

THE AMAZED MULTITUDE. Luke adds, "*And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God*" (Lk 9:43). I can tell you that all discussion with the scribes suddenly dried up! Their assessment now appeared as worthless as it was all along. It is still true that when the soul experiences the freedom with which Christ makes us free, all contradicting views about Jesus and His power appear what they are in truth, "*dung.*" Those whom the Son has made "*free indeed*" (John 8:36), entertain no interest in the philosophies of religious pretenders.

JESUS SPEAKS TO HIS DISCIPLES. Jesus now turns the attention of His disciples to more important matters. Luke says of this incident, "*But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men*" (Luke 9:44). The truth of the matter was that God had appointed a Person upon whom Satan and his hosts would do their worst. Even "*the hands of men*" would appear to triumph over Him! That is the singular event upon which the disciples must now fix their attention. It would seem to them to contradict what they had just seen and heard – at least until Jesus was risen from the dead. Luke goes on to say how these words of the Master were received. "*But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying*" (Luke 9:45). And what are you more intent on understanding – the circumstances of men, or the appointments of God?

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 100

“ Mark 9:28 *And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.* ” (Mark 9:28-29; Matt 17:19-21)

INTRODUCTION

It has been a most eventful period of time. For Jesus, He had been transfigured, talked to Moses and Elijah about the death He was going to accomplish, heard God speak out heaven confirming His preeminence, and confronting and healing a boy who had been controlled by an unclean spirit. For Peter, James, and John: they had heard Jesus pray, and seen Him transfigured, they had fallen asleep, awakened to see Moses and Elijah leaving, sought to lengthen their time there, and heard God tell them to listen to Jesus alone. For the nine disciples who were at the base of the mountain, they had confronted a man with son who had a demon, who had asked them to cast him out. They could not do it, had an embarrassing discussion with the scribes, and were finally rescued from the dilemma by Jesus, who took command of the situation. In these cases we see the superiority of the Lord Jesus above all. He and the Father are one, the spirits of just men made perfect center in Him, and evil spirits obey Him. Peter, James, and John confirm there are profound advantages to being close to Christ. Such disciples are given to see more and hear more. The nine disciples substantiate that effort without Jesus is more difficult, to say the least. In them we see that there is not some spiritual law in place that makes you superior because you have been with Jesus, been taught by Him, and witnessed His mighty works. You can still fail and be embarrassed by your critics. In this case we will find that all human weaknesses are not terminated because we have been with Christ. There are matters that require extended effort. Faith does not grow by itself, but requires the involvement of those who possess it. No aspect of the Kingdom is automatic, causing the individual to advance and mature independently of attention and effort – even though salvation is *“not of works, lest any man should boast.”* Blessed is the person who can see this, and acts appropriately on such knowledge.

“ Mk 9:28 *And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out?*”

HE WAS COME INTO THE HOUSE. Some versions read, *“when He had gone indoors.”* NIV/AMPLIFIED There was apparently a house near to the place this great work was done, and it was one in which Jesus was welcome. Some have even conjectured that it was the house of the man whose boy had been healed. JOHN GILL There were people who made their homes available to Jesus – such as Martha (Lk 10:38; John 12:1-3). Matthew, also called Levi, who had Jesus in his home (Lk 5:29), and Simon and Andrew who did the same (Mk 1:29). There were also people who made it their business to minister regularly to Jesus and His

disciples. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome are said to have ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, with “*many other women*” (Mark 15:40-41). Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, also “*ministered unto him of their substance*” (Luke 8:3). These precious souls made our Lord's time among men more tolerable, and they will surely be richly compensated in the world to come.

In this we see the humanity of Jesus, which involved a remarkable condescension. He who had never been weary, required rest, or was hungry, walked among men experiencing these things in order that He might be a merciful and faithful High priest in things pertaining to God (Heb 2:17). He experienced weariness (John 4:6), hunger (Matt 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), sleep (Luke 8:23), being strengthened (Luke 22:43), being ministered to (Matt 4:11; 27:55), praying (Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16; 9:18), and even being baptized (Lk 3:21). When we read of such experiences, we should always remember how far Jesus descended in order that He might partake of such things. They are all “*flesh and blood*” experiences, confirming that Jesus was a real man, with very real human experiences (Heb 2:14).

HIS DISCIPLES ASKED HIM PRIVATELY. Matthew says the disciples came “*to Jesus apart,*” or “*privately*” NKJV – when no one else was around (Matt 17:19). There were times like this when the disciples sought private tutelage from Jesus – apart from the multitudes. Toward the close of His ministry, Peter, James, John, and Andrew “*came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” (Matt 24:3; Mk 13:3-4). Another time, when Jesus was “*alone,*” the disciples asked Him to explain the parable of the sower (Matt 4:10).

There are times when private audiences with the Lord are necessary – times when it is not appropriate to speak publicly about matters upon our hearts. Jesus referred to such times when He said, “*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*” (Matt 6:6).

If you will carefully examine the Gospels, you will find very few times when Jesus gave extensive exposition to the multitudes. Such times were generally reserved for occasions when He was alone with his disciples. What is commonly referred to as *the sermon on the Mount* was delivered to “*His disciples*” (Matt 5:1). Earlier Mark contrasts how Jesus spoke to the multitudes, and how He spoke to the disciples. “*But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples*” (Mark 4:34). It is not possible to overstate the value of being **alone** with Jesus! This is an integral part of believers living “*unto Him which died for them, and rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15).

WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT? This was asked by the nine disciples who were not chosen to go up to the mount of transfiguration. In a way, this was an embarrassing thing to ask, but it is also something that must be done. Matthew also records them asking this question (Matt 17:19). This was not something to be asked in the presence of the scribes, who had questioned them (Mk 9:14). They had successfully cast out demons before (Matt 10:8), having been given power to do so (Mk 3:15). Had they lost this power, and if so, why had they lost it? What was the cause behind their failure. They knew there was a cause!

Note also, they were apparently surprised that they could not do this: “*Why could not we drive it out?*” **AMPLIFIED** They felt their impotence and were concerned about it. They could not simply dismiss this by saying God was not willing, or it was not the proper time, or it was something impossible for them. The fact that Jesus **did** cast out the demon removed all such

questions. They sensed that they were still disciples, or learners, and here was something they did not know: “*How is it that we could not expel the spirit?*” WEYMOUTH

Without pressing the matter beyond a reasonable boundary, it seems that it is often appropriate to ask the Lord why we are unable to do things that it appears would bring Him glory. Although stereotyped religion provides us with answers to such inquiries, I must admit that I am not satisfied with them. Each disciple should have a working acquaintance with Jesus, so that they can bring such inquiries to Him in the expectation of receiving an answer.

“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt 17:20).

Matthew provides this part of the dialog, and it is worthy of consideration. Because Jesus is Himself “*the Truth*” (John 14:6), His answers always clarify the situation. He has no interest in salving the conscience, or daubing inquiring souls with “*untempered mortar,*” only to “*smear whitewash upon it*” NRSV (Ezek 13:10-11).

BECAUSE OF YOUR UNBELIEF! Other versions read, “*the littleness of your faith,*” NASB “*you have so little faith,*” NIV “*your little faith,*” NRSV “*you don’t have enough faith,*” NLT “*through your want of faith,*” YLT and “*Because of the littleness of your faith [that is, your lack of firmly relying trust].*” AMPLIFIED

The word “*unbelief*” is worthy of note. It comes from one of those words for which an exact English counterpart cannot be found. It means “*want of faith and trust . . . weakness of faith*” THAYER and “*lack of trust, lack of faith.*” FRIBERG It is the opposite of being “*full of faith*” (Acts 6:5), or being “*strong in faith*” (Rom 4:20). Elsewhere Jesus also spoke of “*little faith*” (Matt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8) – that is, a faith that is infantile and requires further development. There are several things to be learned from this text.

There Are Degrees of Faith. There is a faith that is described as one that “*groweth exceedingly*” (2 Thess 1:3). There is a very real condition in which one “*staggers not*” because of unbelief, but is “*strong in faith giving glory to God*” (Rom 4:20). There is also a condition in which one is “*weak in the faith.*” In this condition, the soul is a novice, and does not see matters clearly. Because of this, they are easily confused about practical matters (Rom 14:1-3). The objective for all disciples is for faith to be their strong point, not their weakness.

Faith Is Required in Kingdom work. Men and women of God do not gain power because of their position, but because of their faith. When the members of the body of Christ are reminded to remember the individuals who are leading them, they are told, “*whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*” (Heb 13:7). I cannot begin to tell you how many Christian leaders I have known in whom little or no faith could be detected. Such people are not to be followed or heeded. They are rather to be demoted to “*the room of the unlearned*” (1 Cor 14:16).

The Powers of Darkness do Not Yield to Formulae and Principle. Whether or not men can detect the presence of faith, demons and the powers of darkness **can** . They will not yield to unbelief, little faith, and those who are weak in faith. Jesus will elaborate on this matter.

FAITH AS A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED. Other versions read, “*faith as small as a mustard seed,*” NIV “*faith the size of a mustard seed,*” NRSV “*faith like a grain of mustard seed,*” ESV and “*as much as in a grain of mustard seed.*” GENEVA Some of the versions are confusing, focusing on the size of the mustard seed. However, that is not the Lord’s emphasis.

The word “as” is a precise translation of the Greek word *ὡς*, which means “like as, even as, according as, in the same manner.” THAYER The point is not the size of the seed, but what is in it – the nature of the seed. It is not the seed itself, but what it becomes. Elsewhere Jesus said that in its beginning, the mustard seed is the “*least of all seeds.*” However, “*when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs*” (Matt 13:32; Mk 4:31-32; Lk 13:19).

When faith is found in pure heart, it tends to grow and increase just as surely as a mustard seed that is placed in good soil. “*Unbelief,*” as used in this text, is found when this growth is not being realized. Inhibiting influences are found that block the advance of faith.

SPEAKING TO THE MOUNTAIN. Jesus arrests the attention of the disciples by saying that a genuine and growing faith will result in impossible things being done: “*you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you*” NASB (Matt 17:20). In a similar passage in Mark, the following words are added, “*and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe those things that he saith*” (Mk 11:23). Luke records Jesus saying on yet another occasion, “*If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you*” (Luke 17:6).

All of this presumes involvement in the will of God, discernment, and a life that is being lived exclusively for God. Where these are not found, it is pointless to talk about what men can or cannot do. God’s house is not divided, and He does not work contrary to his purpose.

In the case before us, the matter was within the circumference of God’s will, for Jesus expelled the oppressing demon, seeing and doing the works of the Father. The deficiency was not found in the circumstance, or in the timing, but in the disciples themselves. **That confirms to us that the condition of the followers of Christ is more important than the circumstances they face.** If this was not true, there would be no point to this passage.

“ 29 And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”

Jesus now gives another perspective on why the disciples were unable to cast the dumb spirit out of thy boy who was brought to them.

THIS KIND. There are complexities in working for the Lord that exist because of the divers personalities at work all round us. Here we will find that just as all holy personalities are not the same, so all unholy personalities are not identical. For example, there are angels (Heb 1:7), archangels (1 Thess 4:16; Jude 1:9), principalities and powers (Eph 3:10), seraphim (Isa 6:2,6), and cherubim (Gen 3:24). Even so, there are diverse personalities among Satan’s host. These include demons (James 2:19), principalities, powers, rulers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:12), and princes (Dan 10:20). Even within these categories – such as demons – there are different kinds of spirit.

Jesus refers to “*this kind*” – that is, this kind of demon. Other versions read “*this sort,*” BBE “*this kind of spirit,*” GWN “*cases like this,*” LIVING “*an evil spirit of this kind,*” WEYMOUTH and “*this sort of thing.*” WILLIAMS Some have imagined that “*this kind*” refers to the kind of faith that is required. This not the case, for faith is never said to “*come out,*” or “*come forth.*” Nor, indeed, is its presence ever related to fasting. The reference here is to the kind of spirit they had confronted.

CAN COME FORTH BY NOTHING. Other versions read, “cannot come out by anything,” NASB “can come out only,” NIV “cannot be driven out by anything,” RSV “Nothing will make this sort come out,” BBE and “the only way that you can throw this kind out.” IE

Here was an opponent that required more than the disciples had at that time. It was a spirit that would not yield to powerless words, or submit to a lifeless procedure or routine. Fortunately for the disciples, their faith was apparently sufficient to keep the demon from attacking them, but he would not leave the boy upon their word or work. At that time, for them, this was something that was impossible.

PRAYER AND FASTING. There was something that would cause this demon to come out – “*prayer and fasting.*” Some more modern versions leave out “*fasting.*” When Daniel set his face to seek the Lord, he accompanied his prayers with “*fasting*” (Dan 9:3). Even if one chooses to omit the word “*fasting,*” the meaning of the text is not altered. The idea here is that of devoting oneself wholly to prayer for an extended period – as Jesus did when He prayed throughout the night prior to choosing His disciples (Lk 6:12).

The point is that here are some Kingdom tasks that require the most profound spiritual resources that are available – resources that require extensive effort. Jesus referred to this kind of endeavor when He said, “*Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you*” (John 6:27). Paul referred to this kind of diligence when he wrote of “*striving together for the faith of the Gospel*” (Phil 1:27). He did the same when he wrote to the Roman brethren, “*strive together with me in your prayers for me*” (Rom 15:30). The same fervency is seen in the words, “*seek the things which are above,*” and “*set your affection on things above*” (Col 3:1,2). The same approach to prayer is emphasized in the words, “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*” (Eph 6:18).

There are foes and circumstances to be faced that will **not** yield to “*little faith,*” or a faith that is “*weak.*” There are required spiritual resources that **cannot** be obtained with casual and intermittent efforts. Many a professing Christian has faced repeated failure, and maybe even defeat, because they simply have not extended themselves to obtain things that pertain to life and godliness. They have not added to their faith (2 Pet 1:5-9). They have not sought “*first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt 6:33). They have failed to “*press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil 3:14). Unlike Jacob, they have let go too soon, before they obtained the blessing (Gen 32:26).

One of the great jeopardies of this time is that a religion is being foisted upon men that requires very little effort, hardly any time, and absolutely no consistency. Neither God nor Satan will give any heed to it – and we must face them both. God will not shower goodness and help upon casual souls, and Satan will not yield to them. If at any time you are tempted to think this is not true, begin to tally up the great benefits you received from the Lord while you were loafing through the Kingdom, caught up in the flesh, and focusing on this present evil world. What good things came to you while you were in such a posture? And what triumphs over the wicked one did you realize while you strolled along as though there was no danger?

It has become quite fashionable for people to lift their voices to the heavens and ask “Why?” “Why did this happen to me?” I do not doubt that if they had ears to hear, they would hear the Master fairly shouting to them, “Because of your unbelief! Your circumstance

requires more investment on your part!” Perhaps, at times, you also have sensed this response.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 101

“ Mark 9:30 *And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. 31 For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day. 32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.* ” (Mark 9:30-32; Matt 17:22-23; Luke 9:44-45)

INTRODUCTION

Within the Christian community there is a lot of folklore concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. He is represented as having certain preferences and inclinations that are foreign to the record God has given of His Son. In His death and resurrection, Jesus successfully addressed the human dilemma caused by sin, and did something about sin itself. In His life He exposed men to the Divine nature over an extended period of time. The Father Himself was revealed in the manner in which Jesus lived visibly among men (John 14:9). In His life, His manners, and His teaching, He “*manifested*” the name of God among men – that is, He exposed them to the nature and purpose of the Father. His responses were those of God Himself among men. His works were the works of the Father (John 10:37; 14:10). The response of men to Jesus was actually their response to the Father (John 15:24). For this reason, a misrepresentation of Jesus is most serious. In such a case, God the Father Himself has been misrepresented. What is even more, God cannot possibly be known through a misrepresentation of Himself – and eternal life is, in fact, knowing God (John 17:3). Therefore, those who distort the Person of God by their misrepresentations of Christ have actually prohibited men from receiving eternal life, or entering into the Kingdom. In order to ensure that an accurate representation of Christ was given to men, God has provided an extensive record of His life, when He “*dwelt among*” men, and the “*glory*” of God was beheld in Him (John 1:14). John refers to the time when they beheld Jesus with their eyes and handled Him with their hands as the time when “*that eternal life, which was with the Father*” was “*manifested*” to them (1 John 1:1-2). Now, in the Gospel record, we are being exposed to that very same Jesus, and we do well to comprehend it.

“ Mk 9:30 *And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it.*”

THEY DEPARTED THENCE. Prior to the confrontation of the man with a demon-possessed son, Jesus had departed from the multitudes with Peter, James, and John. There, in a “*high mountain,*” He had been transfigured, and even spoke with Moses and Elijah concerning His imminent death in Jerusalem. Now, after coming down from the mountain and healing the oppressed son, He leaves the area and goes through Galilee. Several times it is written that Jesus “*departed*” from certain places. After hearing that John the Baptist had been thrown into prison, “*He departed into Galilee*” (Matt 4:12). Another time He “*departed . . . into a desert place apart*” (Matt 14:13). Yet another time He “*departed from Galilee,*” coming into the “*coasts of Judea*” (Matt 19:1). He

is known to have left the multitudes, departing “*to pray*” (Mk 6:46). After testifying to the woman at the well of Samaria, Jesus “*departed thence, and went into Galilee*” (John 4:43). Again, when He perceived His popularity was growing, and the people planned to force Him to be their king, “*He departed again into a mountain Himself alone*” (John 6:15).

From these, and similar, records, we learn that **Jesus’ fundamental agenda was not simply to be with the people**. There came a time when being with the people became inhibitive, and He withdrew from them. It was the clash of natures that moved Him to such action. Whatever you may think about God the Father, in the Son it is confirmed that there is a certain hostility between Him and fallen men that cannot be denied. Those who say that Jesus preferred to be with publicans, harlots, and the likes, have grossly distorted His Person, and the character of God Himself as well. Such people are fond of telling us we would find Jesus in a public place, with the destitute, among the degenerates, and so forth. They are ignorant of the fact that you might also find Him in the desert, on a mountain, or in some private place with his disciples, as is affirmed in this very text. Any individual who alleges that Christ prefers to be with the lost and the ignorant has unwittingly contradicted the whole reason for reconciliation, atonement, and justification. Such people do not deserve a hearing.

PASSED THROUGH GALILEE. That is, He “*began to go through Galilee.*” NASB Matthew says that this occasion took place “*while they abode in Galilee*” (Matt 17:22). Galilee was a place in which Jesus spent a lot of time. He taught throughout Galilee “*teaching in their synagogues*” (Matt 4:23). His fame spread throughout Galilee (Mk 1:28). Nazareth, the town in which Jesus was brought up, was in Galilee (Lk 1:26). Capernaum, where Jesus centered His ministry, was in Galilee (Lk 4:31). Before He died, Jesus told His disciples that when He had risen from the dead, He would meet them in Galilee (Matt 26:32; Mk 14:28). Following His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to meet Him in Galilee (Matt 28:7,10,16; Mk 16:7).

Matthew says Jesus went into Galilee to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah concerning His illuminating ministry. “. . . *He departed into Galilee . . . That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles . The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up*” (Matt 4:12-16).

This is not the place men would have chosen as the base of the Messiah’s ministry. In fact, Jesus’ half-brothers once admonished Him to spend more time in Judaea, where they thought He was more apt to be better known (John 7:3-4). **However, Jesus’ ministry was not driven by practicality.** His agenda had been determined by the Father, as revealed through the prophet Isaiah. Frequently, the Father’s works would require Him to go into other areas, but His base of operation remained in Galilee. Although its citizenry was not sophisticated (Acts 2:7), yet God determined that Divine light would shine forth in that area. This confirmed that “*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*” (1 Cor 1:27).

This time, however, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem of Judaea, where He would give Himself as a ransom for many. Therefore He is said to pass through Galilee. At this point, the multitudes would be a distraction, for He must concentrate on the reason He came into the world – to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17-18).

HE WOULD NOT THAT ANY MAN KNOW. Other versions read, “*He did not want*

anyone to know it,” NKJV and “*He was unwilling for anyone to know about it.*” NASB The aim of Jesus was not to become popular! He was driven by a consuming desire to do the will of the Father who sent Him. That was His “*meat,*” or the thing that sustained Him in His work (John 4:34). There was a significant part of His ministry that did not have to do with the multitudes. There came times when He did not want to be with the masses – times when He withdrew from them. Contrary to the teaching of some, the Lord is not always accessible. That is why men are admonished to seek him “*while He may be found*” (Isa 55:6).

“ 31 For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day.”

FOR. Other versions read, “*because,*” NIV and “*for He wanted to spend more time with His disciples.*” NLT This explains **WHY** Jesus departed and passed through Galilee. He had an objective for doing so, and it was not simply to get away from the fickle multitudes. Two things are involved here, and they are joined together: (1) The Father’s will, and (2) Jesus’ preference. Here is another occasion where Jesus preferred to be with His disciples. It was a time when the Father’s will called for Him to leave the masses and spend time with His “*chosen*” ones (John 15:16,19). On the eve of His betrayal, when Jesus prayed to the Father, He referred to His ministry upon earth. He made no reference to the masses, or the multitudes among whom He did mighty works, and to whom He spoke in parables. He did say, “*I have manifested Thy name unto **the men** which Thou gavest Me out of the world . . . For I have given unto **them** the words which Thou gavest Me . . . I pray for **them** : I pray not for the world, but for **them** which Thou hast given Me; for **they** are Thine . . . Sanctify **them** through Thy truth: Thy word is truth*” (John 17:6,8,9,17).

Those who insist that the gathering of the saints is a time to appeal to the multitudes need to consider the manner of Jesus, who was the revelation of the Father Himself.

HE TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES. When you consider the teaching of Jesus, when He made the things of God clear and expounded truth, His disciples were always His preference. As it is written, “*And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake He not unto them: **and when they were alone, He expounded all things to his disciples***” (Mark 4:33-34). Jesus is never said to have begun with Moses and the all the prophets, and expounded things concerning himself to the multitudes. He did, however, do this with His disciples (Lk 24:27,45).

Churches in which there is a woeful ignorance of Christ and the Kingdom of God are churches in which Jesus has not taught. Such a condition belies any profession of faith, for it is the manner of Jesus, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily, to expound all things to His disciples. This is even more true since He has been exalted. Now, He is come to “*give us an understanding*” (1 John 5:20). He is the teaching Jesus, and it is the business of those who profess His name to hear Him (Eph 4:20-21). God cannot possibly be glorified by a church in which the people are not “*taught of God,*” and are not learning Christ.

THE SON OF MAN IS DELIVERED. The closer the time of Christ’s appointed death came, the more He spoke about it. At the time, it seemed as though Jesus was popular. However, Jesus told His disciples the time was coming when He would be delivered into the hands of men, and they would not do Him good. It is God Himself who would “*deliver*” Jesus into their hands, for they were totally incapable of taking Him themselves (Rom 4:25; 8:32). On the surface, it appeared as though men took Him, but their taking of Him was actually according to “*the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23).

THEY SHALL KILL HIM. Often the Jews and their leaders had attempted to take Christ's life. "*And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him*" (John 5:16). "*Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him*" (John 5:18); "*the Jews sought to kill Him*" (John 7:1); "*Is not this He, whom they seek to kill?*" (John 7:25). However, they were unable to fulfill their ambitions for, as it is written, "*His hour was not yet come*" (John 7:30).

However, when His hour **did** arrive they "*killed the Prince of life*" (Acts 3:15). They "*killed the Lord Jesus*" (1 Thess 2:15), and are therefore referred to as His "*murderers*" (Acts 7:52). Solemnly they are charged with having "*slain*" Jesus (Acts 2:23), for they are the ones who "*slew and hanged on a tree*" the Lord's Christ (Acts 5:30).

HE SHALL RISE THE THIRD DAY. Matthew emphasizes the Father's role in Christ's resurrection: "*and the third He shall be raised again*" (Matt 17:23). For centuries men have haggled about when Jesus was crucified, citing the word of Jesus concerning being in the heart of the earth "*three days and three nights*" (Matt 12:40). Taking these to be three full days and three full nights, they tell us Jesus could not possibly have been in the earth three days and three nights if He was crucified on Friday. Being unlearned, they overlook this statement: "*He shall rise the third day*" (Mk 9:31; 10:34; Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:7,46; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor 15:4). The "*three days and three nights,*" therefore count the part of a day as a day. The book of Esther speaks in precisely the same manner, siting a period of "*three days,*" with "*the third day*" being noted as the completion of the period (Esther 4:16; 5:1).

Luke adds that Jesus said, "*Let these sayings sink down into your ears*" (Lk 9:44), emphasizing the necessity of understanding His words.

" 30 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him."

THEY UNDERSTOOD NOT. Other versions read, "*they did not understand what He meant,*" NIV "*the saying was not clear to them,*" BBE and "*they did not comprehend what He was saying.*" AMPLIFIED The text is not speaking of an academic understanding. What Jesus said was certainly clear from that point of view: He would be delivered into the hands of men, they would kill Him, and He would rise again the third day. Any person with a modicum of understanding can grasp the words themselves. However, that is not the kind of understanding to which our text refers.

Perhaps you have heard people speak about being satisfied with what the Bible says, and letting the matter go with that. However, this text, together with many others, confirms that when Jesus spoke, much more was intended than what the words themselves conveyed. **His words were like containers in which great measures of truth were concealed.** It required understanding to profit from them – the understanding that comes from faith (Heb 11:3).

THEY WERE EXCEEDING SORRY. Matthew adds, "*and they were exceeding sorry,*" or "*deeply grieved,*" NASB or "*greatly distressed*" NRSV (Matt 17:23). **That is, they could see no profit in his death**, and had no grasp at all concerning Him rising from the dead (Mk 9:10). To them, in their present state, Christ's words conveyed the idea of tragedy and the ultimate injustice and disadvantage. However, in actuality, they would later find that this was the appointed means of destroying the devil (Heb 2:14), removing sin (1 John 3:5), reconciling the world (Rom 5:10), making peace with God (Col 1:20), and opening up a new and living way to God (Heb 10:20). As clear as those things became later, they were absolutely hidden from the disciples at this time. One of the things accomplished during those ten days of waiting and tarrying prior to Pentecost was the weaning of the hearts of the disciples from all tradition and earthly views of Jesus and His Kingdom. Remaining in the presence of the Lord

had a cleansing effect upon their souls that readied them to perceive what had formerly been hidden.

IT WAS HID FROM THEM. Luke adds, “*But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not*” (Lk 9:45). Other versions read, “*concealed from them, so that they could not grasp it,*” NASB and “*their minds had been sealed.*” **LIVING Much later, Jesus will speak again of His impending death, and they will understand “none of these things.” Of that occasion it is also written, “this saying was hid from them” (Lk 18:31-34). There are conditions of mind and heart in which truth cannot be discerned.** We know from a later incident that even after Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples were still thinking of Jesus as a political Savior, who would restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6-7).

Improper views involve more than simply not understanding. That condition also obscures the truth, so that it cannot be discerned. Faith requires the abandonment of error as well as the embrace truth. Faith cannot hold error and reality at the same time. If error is maintained, truth is hidden, as this text indicates. Error creates a sort of spiritual eclipse so that the truth cannot be seen. I can tell you from experience that it is exceedingly difficult to lay aside erroneous views of the Word of God. The only way for this to be accomplished is to “*receive the love of the truth,*” which comes from God (2 Thess 2:10). That involves a disdain for the things of this world, the wisdom of men, and all things related to them.

There is an approach to understanding the Scriptures that relies upon, what is called, “common sense.” In this approach, men are urged to simply take the Scriptures for what they say, believe them, and go on their way rejoicing. It all sounds very fine – but, if this is true, what is to be done with this text. What if the individual has distorted views of Scripture, of God, of Christ, and of salvation? Will such views not cause truth to be hidden, just as it did in this text?

THEY WERE AFRAID TO ASK. Other versions read, “*they were afraid to ask Him [what this statement meant],*” AMPLIFIED and “*they were afraid to question Him.*” WEYMOUTH Luke reads, “*and they feared to ask Him of that saying*” (Luke 9:45). Now, these disciples are in the presence of the real Jesus. If His presence makes people feel really comfortable, then that is how they will feel. If He welcomes people no matter what they do, and regardless of the condition, then these men, who have spent over two years with Him, will surely sense something of those conditions.

These real disciples sense that ignorance is not something concerning which Jesus is indifferent. Jesus had already told them before that He was going to be killed and be raised from the dead (Mk 8:31; 9:12). Now, for at least the third time, He refers to these events again, and the disciples still cannot take hold of His words. They do not throw their ignorance in the face of Jesus. They seem to sense a state of simplicity and unintelligence is out of place before the One who has spoken the truth. They had asked Him to for assistance in understanding before (Matt 17:10; Mk 7:17; 9:28; 10:10; 13:3). This time, however was different, for Jesus had spoken before of this matter. Mind you, Jesus is not waiting to destroy those who lack understanding. God Himself stands ready to give wisdom and understanding to those who require and seek it (James 1:5). **However, apart from faith, this is not at all apparent.**

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 102

“ Mark 9:33 And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. 36 And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.”

(Mark 9:33-37; Matt 18:1-7; Luke 9:46-48)

INTRODUCTION

This text provides a very needed perspective of spiritual life – **self is not at life’s center!** There are thirteen references to Deity in these verses. Jesus was the One leading, asking, sitting, calling, taking, setting, and holding. The issue was receiving Him and the One who sent Him. The message of the church is ever the Gospel – the “*record God has given of His Son*” (1 John 5:10-11). The diagnosis of man is not the ultimate point, and the resolution of worldly problems is not the fundamental aim. What Christ thinks of the matter is the final thought on it. What Jesus does is the primary activity. A life that does not revolve around Jesus Christ is no life at all – it is really death. As simplistic as this may appear, the failure to perceive Jesus as the Hub around which everything else revolves is the cause for all confusion, discord, and waywardness. That is what causes the individual to be diverted to vanity, or to think of himself as the main person. The fact that humanity had to be delivered, justified, and directed confirms it is not the main point. A personality that has to be helped cannot be the center. Yet, because man has sinned and comes short of the glory of God, he continues to insist that even Divine activity revolves around him, what he wants, and how he feels. If we perceive this text correctly, we behold in it a gracious Master, bringing His disciples back to the proper manner of thought. In thinking about themselves, they had become distracted, and it had even caused a disputation among them – a disputation of which Jesus was keenly aware.

“ Mk 9:33 And He came to Capernaum: and being in the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.”

HE CAME TO CAPERNAUM. Capernaum is the place to which Jesus moved from Nazareth. He did this in order to fulfill the Scriptures concerning light springing up in Galilee of the Gentiles (Matt 4:13-16). He resided there frequently (Mk 2:1), although He indicated He had no dwelling place of His own – no place to “*lay His head*” (Matt 8:20). Knowing that Jesus was often there, people would come to Capernaum seeking Him (John 6:24).

Even though Jesus spent a lot of time here, it was not because the people welcomed Him, receiving His teaching and believing on Him. In fact, He upbraided Capernaum because

of their unacceptable response to Him. *“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day”* (Matt 11:23).

HE ASKED THEM. Those who follow Jesus will find themselves being questioned and scrutinized by Him. Although Jesus is often represented by men as being only interested in our welfare, and seeking to meet our needs, **He is also one who searches our hearts and calls us into account for our thinking.** Because He is holy, He cannot abide unholy manners – even among those He has called to walk with Him.

Christ’s question was a most telling one: *“What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?”* or *“What were you discussing and arguing about on the road?”* AMPLIFIED Luke says Jesus *“perceived the thought of their heart”* (Lk 9:47) – that is, they were arguing about what they were thinking about, and Jesus was very aware of both their thoughts and their speech.

The thoughts and speech of followers of Christ will be significantly altered if they will remember the Lord *“weigheth the spirits”* (Prov 16:2), and *“pondereth the hearts”* (Prov 21:2). He *“looketh on the heart”* (1 Sam 16:7), *“weighs the path of the just”* (Isa 26:7), and *“searches the reins and hearts”* (Rev 2:23). As it is written, *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* (Heb 4:13). Not only is the Lord aware of our thoughts and words, He will speak to us about them, calling us to account for them. All of this requires an acute awareness of Him.

Sensitivity to Christ’s knowledge of our ways is a marvelous deterrent to sin. It will do what no law or set of rules is capable of doing. That is precisely why Satan seeks to divert religious men to other matters that have more to do with men than with the Lord.

THEY HELD THEIR PEACE. The disciples held their peace because they were ashamed to acknowledge the subject of their discussion. What they had been arguing about might have appeared very important among themselves. However, the mentioning of it before the Christ of God was another matter. When the heart is aware of the searching eye of Christ, a sense of shame registers upon the conscience because of unacceptable thoughts and words.

They had not been aware of the all-seeing, all-hearing Christ, but had been walking with Him just as though He was an ordinary man like themselves.

This account is like a microcosm of the day of judgment, when all men will *“give account”* for every *“idle word”* (Matt 12:36). It is written, *“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Rom 14:12). What did we reason about along the road to glory? Was it the place of elders, the role of women, or our preferences of music? What was it that occupied our minds and conversations? Was it marriage, or employment, or institutional concerns? Such things may appear quite important when we blot Jesus out of our minds and think only of ourselves. However, they sound quite differently when we are aware of Him. It is our business to learn to live in view of Divine scrutiny before that day of ultimate accountability.

THEY HAD DISPUTED AMONG THEMSELVES. They had been arguing about *“who should be greatest.”* Matthew provides a little more insight on the matter. He records their discussion had to do with *“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt 18:1). Luke says that as they had been walking *“there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest”* (Lk 9:46).

The disciples were not arguing about their present status. Just before this Jesus had told Peter He was going give him “*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 16:19). Jesus had also told all of them that some of them would not die “*till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power*” (Mark 9:1). Jesus Himself had preached, “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17). When He had sent the twelve out to preach, he instructed them, “*And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt 10:7).

Even in this crude stage of their discipleship, their reasoning was based on what Jesus had said – even though their understanding of Christ’s words was flawed. **This confirms that thinking on the Word does not transform our thinking into an acceptable form.** A person must have understanding in order for thoughts and words to be acceptable.

“ 35 And He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.”

Matthew says that the disciples came to Jesus “*saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 18:1). As both Mark and Luke point out, they did not do this of their own accord. Rather, Jesus drew them out by asking them what they were discussing on the road. Now, as He sits down, they are more open, knowing that they have been discovered.

HE SAT DOWN AND CALLED THE TWELVE. Jesus did not dismiss the disciples discussion as a harmless involvement – something that is natural for men to do. Rather, He takes the occasion to sit down and call “*the twelve*” to himself for special instruction. **This is not teaching for the multitudes, but for the chosen disciples.** It is not novel teaching, but is critical to their understanding. They have been selected to be key figures in the Kingdom of God. Later, Jesus will tell them that they are going to occupy “*twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt 19:28). However, they must first be taught concerning the manner of their involvement. This is not a kingdom after the order of the world.

DESIRING TO BE FIRST. Jesus knows that the only reason the disciples had been arguing about who would be greatest in the kingdom was because of a desire to be “*first.*” **There is no other reason to discuss such matters.** Therefore, Jesus goes straight to the issue. Later, Jesus will refer to “*whosoever will be great among you,*” and “*whoever of you will be chiefest*” (Mk 10:43-44).

There are two ways to view this text. First, that Jesus is speaking of the way to greatness. Second. That He is declaring the inevitable outcome of wanting to be great: i.e. “*For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased*” (Luke 14:11). The words that follow suggest that the first condition is more prominent, even though there is an element of rebuke in what follows. Jesus will now provide the manner of the Kingdom concerning greatness and aspirations.

LAST OF ALL. “*The same shall be last of all.*” Other versions read, “*he shall be last of all,*” NKJV “*he must be last of all,*” NIV “*must take the last place,*” GWN and “*he must make himself last of all.*” NLT Jesus also stated this at other times (Mk 10:43; Lk 22:26). Luke’s words “*let him be as the younger*” underscore that this is referring the individual **voluntarily** assuming the position of a servant, not being forced to serve. **No person is great because God had to humble him.** The great person takes the lowest position, as Jesus did when he took a towel and washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:3-7).

The person who makes himself last of all is the one who, in “*lowliness of mind,*” esteems others

“better than themselves” (Phil 2:3). Matthew’s account says Jesus referred to this as one humbling himself (Matt 18:4). This is not something that can be done by self-will. Rather, it is the result of spiritual understanding. Such a person has seen the nature of their own salvation, and has freely submitted to be used by God in the fulfillment of **His** purpose.

SERVANT OF ALL. Luke refers to the one “*that is least among you*” (Lk 9:48). That is, this is the person who, like Jesus, does not come to be “*ministered unto, but to minister*” (Matt 20:28). Jesus is not speaking of fleshly servile tasks, although some of that may be involved. According to the flesh, Jesus said, “*For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth*” (Luke 22:27). The Apostles also once said of certain duties that involved meeting temporal needs, “*It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables*” (Acts 6:2). They were servants of a higher order, administering the things provided by God through Jesus Christ. In this case, it would involve feeding the flock of God (1 Pet 5:2). This does not rule out acts of kindness, and none should imagine for a moment that it does. Those are covered in the word, “*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith*” (Gal 6:10). This, however, has to do with Kingdom manners not greatness or excelling.

As used in this text, a “*minister*” or a “*servant*” has more to do with serving the eternal interests of people – things that Jesus ministers from the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:1-2). For example, when Paul wrote to the saints, he did so as a “*servant*” (Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Tit 1:1). **He was a servant of Christ and to men**, and his servitude had to do with bringing people to Christ (1 Cor 9:19). He was not serving human interests but Christ Himself, for as soon one serves men, he ceases to be a servant of Christ (Gal 1:10).

Kingdom greatness is measured by what one ministers to others. This is not found in humanly recognized achievements, like building large institutions, achieving academic excellence, and other such things. **A professed Christian leader who does not bring spiritual advantages to the people of God is neither a leader nor a servant.** I realize that this has some alarming ramifications, but it is the truth. The individual who comes in the name of a spiritual leader, yet does not care for the sheep, is an obstacle to spiritual progress. Such are not serving God, but are actually hindering men. Paul referred to such as “*the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things*” (Phil 3:19). Strong words, indeed, yet needful ones.

“ 36 And He took a child, and set Him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.”

HE TOOK A CHILD. This is a most tender scene, with Jesus taking a child and holding him “*in His arms.*” Matthew says Jesus “*called a little child unto Him, and set Him in the midst of them*” (Matt 18:2). Luke says He “*took a child, and set him by Him*” (Lk 9:47). Some have conjectured that Jesus was in Peter’s house, and that this was Peter’s child. Around the ninth century, some said this child was Ignatius, one of the early church fathers. **However, it is not who the child was that is of importance, but what Jesus said of the occasion.**

Matthew provides two additional facts concerning this event. First, Jesus said, “*Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” That is, unless they started over, laying aside pride and being willing to take the lower seat. Second, “*Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 18:3-4). Greatness, in this case, has to do with being humble before Christ,

eager and willing to receive from Him and serve Him.

RECEIVING IN CHRIST'S NAME. Other versions read, "*receives one of these little children,*" NKJV and "*accepts and receives and welcomes one such child.*" AMPLIFIED Jesus is not speaking of mere kindness to and care for children – although that is certainly proper. **He adds that the child is received "in My name" (Mk 9:37; Matt 18:5).** That lifts this activity to a higher dimension. Some versions read "*for My sake,*" WEYMOUTH "*as a disciple of Mine,*" WILLIAMS "*on My behalf,*" NLT and "*in My name and for My sake.*" AMPLIFIED Here, the idea extends beyond little children in the flesh, although they are included. This refers to people who are humble, and have laid aside the flesh, being converted – i.e. "*one of such.*" By receiving such in Christ's name, Christ Himself is being recognized in the one who is received. **In other words, the person is received because he belongs to Christ, not because of fleshly appeal or relationship.** This is the result of knowing no man "*after the flesh*" (2 Cor 5:16).

It ought to be noted that it is exceedingly difficult to build a career or name upon receiving little children, or those who are converted and have humbled themselves as little children. Such a posture has no appeal to those who think highly of themselves.

RECEIVETH ME. Jesus is very particular about this. When a person is received because they belong to Him, their reception is equated with receiving Christ Himself. Thus Jesus spoke of those who saw His needy brethren and gave them food, gave them drink, took them in, clothed them, visited them, and came to them. He said of their conduct, "*I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*" (Matt 25:40). He also affirmed that he would say to those who did **not** receive His brethren, "*Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me*" (Matt 25:45). He further said that the eternal destiny of both groups would be determined by their conduct toward the "*least of these,*" His brethren (Matt 25:34,40,45-46).

Matthew adds a word concerning those who do not receive such humble souls. He records that Jesus said it would be better for such an individual if he had a large millstone hanged about his neck, and were thrown into the sea to drown (Matt 18:6).

RECEIVING HIM THAT SENT ME. Jesus adds that the person who receives Him (by receiving the most humble of His people) was actually **not** receiving Him, but God the Father who had sent Him: "*receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.*" That is, Jesus cannot be received independently of receiving the God who sent Him. By saying this, the Savior was acknowledging His own humility, in submitting to the "*will of the Father*" who sent Him (John 5:30). The ultimate purpose of Jesus is to "*bring us to God*" (1 Pet 3:18). Through Him we have been "*reconciled to God*" (Rom 5:10). To spurn, or disdain, the children of God is to spurn Jesus, and to spurn, or reject, Jesus is to spurn God.

HE THAT IS LEAST AMONG YOU. Luke points out that this teaching provides insight into what it means to be great: "*Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great*" (Luke 9:48).

Thus Jesus has shown the disciples the foolishness of discussing and disputing about who is greatest in the Kingdom of God. Seeking priority or greatness is of the flesh, not the Spirit. The Kingdom has already assigned the greatest position to Jesus Himself, who has been "*Highly exalted*" and given "*a name that is above every name*" (Phil 2:9). And what is Jesus doing in this exalted capacity? He is ministering (Heb 8:2), mediating (Heb 8:6; 9:15), advocating (1 John 2:1), and interceding (Heb 7:25). He is, in fact, serving God (Isa 42:1), fulfilling His purpose to bringing "*many sons to glory*" (Heb 2:10). And who are those sons? They are humble ones who could

not save themselves, and have thus yielded themselves to the King. Those who follow Christ as faithful servants toward His people are, indeed “*great*,” even though none of them regard themselves as being so.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 103

“Mark 9:38 And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. 40 For he that is not against us is on our part.”

(Mark 9:38-40; Luke 9:49-50)

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Jesus, when He dwelt among men in the flesh, is summarized in a variety of ways. “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). “*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about **doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil** ; for God was with Him*” (Acts 10:38). “*Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him*” (Acts 2:22). “*God was manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16). “*And Jesus went about all Galilee, **teaching . . . preaching** the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing** all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people*” (Matt 4:23). “*And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, **that I may preach** there also: for therefore came I forth*” (Mark 1:38). Much of this pertained to Christ’s public ministry, which exposed men to the manner of the Kingdom and the nature of God, thus preparing them for the announcement of salvation. However, there was another dimension of Christ’s ministry that pertained exclusively to His disciples – particularly “*the twelve.*” He shared precious nuggets of truth with them that others did not hear. Our text provides one of those nuggets – insights into the nature of God’s dealings with men that is known by precious few people. There is a certain purity in it that completely eludes the carnal mind – particularly the carnal religious mind. However, as with all of Christ’s words, a precise representation of the case in point is provided. This is not a parable, but the affirmation of a condition that exists before God Himself. If it clashes with human perceptions, it is because those perceptions are wrong, and thus are to be abandoned.

“ Mk 9:38 And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.”

JOHN ANSWERED HIM. Jesus had just said, “*Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but him that sent Me*” (Mark 9:37). What kind of thoughts did this saying spawn in the disciples? How did they perceive His words? Of course, any perception of Jesus’ words that is at variance with **His** meaning cannot possibly be true. **In the heavenly Kingdom, there is absolutely no provision for human opinion.** This is because human thoughts, apart from faith, are degenerative in nature. The “*carnal mind,*” which is the mind operating independently of the

Holy Spirit, and “*the natural man,*” which is the man without the Holy spirit, cannot traffic in the truth as it is in Jesus (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 4:21). Now John will recount an experience that, at the time, he felt confirms what Jesus has just said about receiving Him.

WE SAW ONE. John apparently fastens on the words “*receiveth Me,*” and “*whosoever shall receive Me.*” There are two possible views of this text. First, John recounts the experience because he feels that it is perfectly harmonious with what Jesus has said. Second, that John sensed the action he describes was **not** harmonious with what Jesus said, and therefore in relating it he seeks for Jesus to elaborate on the subject. I am inclined to the latter view. It seems to me that John assessed their deeds in view of this word of Jesus, and now questions the validity of their action. At least, what they did does not appear now as it did before.

The disciples had seen a man “*casting out demons*” in Jesus’ name, yet that person was not following Jesus with the twelve. This record has caused great confusion among the expositors of Scripture. Some feel that the man was acting rashly, and was doing wrong (Calvin). Others think it was a disciple of John who had believed on Jesus (Barnes). The disciples, for whom John spoke, did not think the deed of the person was acceptable, as the following expression confirms. We ought to add that prior to this, nine of the disciples had failed in their attempt to cast out a demon (9:18,28), which sharply contrasted with this man’s success.

WE FORBADE HIM . “*We forbade him because he does not follow us.*” NKJV Other versions read, “*we tried to hinder him because he was not following us,*” NASB and “*we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.*” NIV Prior to being “*endued with power,*” the disciples often spoke to others in improper ways. Once they “*rebuked*” people for bringing their “*little children*” to Jesus, “*that he might put His hands on them, and pray*” (Matt 19:13). Another time those going before Jesus to prepare the way for Him rebuked Bartimaeus for crying out for mercy (Lk 18:39). Another time they counseled Jesus to send away a woman from Canaan who was seeking mercy for her daughter (Matt 15:23). Yet another time they asked Jesus to send away a multitude that had been following them, so they could “*buy victuals*” (Matt 14:15). Now John divulges something the disciples had done on their own, taking upon themselves to speak for Jesus. Knowing all things (Matt 9:4; 12:25; Mk 2:8; John 2:24; 18:4), Jesus already knew what they had done, but had waited for them to bring the matter up before dealing with it.

The disciples had obviously forgotten an experience recorded in the writings of Moses. The Spirit of God is said to have “*rested*” upon two men named Eldad and Medad. Although they were listed among the elders, or leaders, of Israel, they “*went not unto the tabernacle,*” but prophesied “*in the camp.*” Upon seeing this, “*there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp*” (Num 11:27). Joshua, himself a godly man, said to Moses, “*My lord Moses, forbid them.*” Surely this was not proper, for the tabernacle was the center of all godly activity among the Israelites. How could the conduct of these two men possibly be acceptable? – at least that is how Joshua reasoned at the time. Moses, who had more insight than Joshua, replied, “*Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!*” (Num 11:26-29).

It is a grand day when we come to realize that God’s kingdom is wider than our own experience. This is one of the many reasons it is wrong to live unto ourselves, shrinking down our world so that it fits within our own immediate experience. Truth has a greater application than to our own persons. In our time, men have become so accustomed to living with division and sects that they find it quite easy to completely overlook legitimate works that are being done for the Lord, only because the individual is not identified with them – “*not one of us.*” NIV

It is not possible for the work of one legitimate servant of Christ to be threatened by the work of another. That would introduce a kingdom that was “*divided against itself*,” and the Kingdom of Christ is not such a kingdom (Lk 11:17). One of the sure marks of spiritual Babylon is competition within – one part competing with another part. Where this condition exists, some semblance of unity can only be achieved by compromise. Even then, it is only in the interest of the institution – like the Pharisees and Sadducees, whose theology differed (Acts 23:8), yet they joined together in their opposition to Christ (Matt 16:1), and to Paul (Acts 23:6).

“ 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me.”

How will Jesus answer John? Will He sanction the spirit that has been revealed in the disciples response to the man casting out demons, even though he had not joined with the disciples? This is of particular importance because of the prominence of this kind of thinking in our time.

FORBID HIM NOT. Other versions read, “*Do not hinder him!*” NASB “*Do not stop him!*” NIV and “*Do not restrain or hinder or forbid him.*” AMPLIFIED Whatever the disciples thought about this man not having joined them, Jesus said not to hinder him – not to tell him he could not continue to cast out demons. Among other things, this confirms that the man really was casting out demons. He was not like the sons of Sceva, who tried in vain to do such a work (Acts 19:14-15).

It is evident that although this man had not been traveling with the disciples and Jesus, he was not unfamiliar with the Lord. He was casting out demons in the name of Christ, and therefore was in some effective way associated with Him. We know from the incident with the sons of Sceva that the demons do not respond to simply calling out religious formulae.

We are to take serious this word to cease from interfering with good deeds. Many are the preachers and teachers who have been told to stop preaching this or that because it does not agree with a sectarian creed, or is too controversial.

DOING A MIRACLE IN JESUS’ NAME. Other versions read, “*who does a deed of power in My name.*” NRSV and “*who does a mighty work in My name.*” AMPLIFIED Keep in mind that this was being done prior to Pentecost, prior to the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit, and prior to the dispensing of spiritual gifts (Eph 4:8). Yet, the legitimacy of this man’s extraordinary work is confirmed by Jesus’ defense of him.

Some dismiss this whole matter by simply saying no man can really work a miracle today, for, they aver, that ability has passed away. However, in this text, apart from Jesus and His direct involvement with others, such a day had not yet come. Yet, here was a man doing a miracle in Jesus’ name, yet maintaining no apparent, or public, identity with Him. **This again confirms that the Kingdom of God extends beyond the personal interests and involvements of ourselves. That is why the circumference of thought must reach further than the small periphery of our own lives.**

Right here, it will be well to note Paul’s response to those who preached Christ out of ignoble motives. “*Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife ; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention , not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth , Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice”* (Phil 1:15-18). That is a difficult saying for some to receive, for it

threatens their imagined exclusiveness. It ought to be noted that the ones to which Paul referred were not preaching “*another Jesus.*” It is not their message that was questionable, but their motives. Paul knew that such men would be called into account for their motives. However, he would not forbid them to preach Christ.

LIGHTLY SPEAKING EVIL OF JESUS. “*Lightly*” means quickly or immediately. Other versions read, “*soon afterward speak evil of Me,*” NKJV and “*in the next moment say anything bad about Me.*” NIV **That is, those who work in the name of Jesus do not turn around and speak evil of Him.**

There is a principle to be seen here that is most comforting. **As we become involved in the work of the Lord, doing it “heartily,” we become the more endeared to Him.** This is because our reliance upon the Lord becomes more firm as we labor together with Him (1 Cor 3:9). This, in turn, is owing to the **nature** of the work of the Lord. It is something that cannot be accomplished in the energy of the flesh. “*Doing the will of the Lord from the heart*” (Eph 6:6) requires faith, which is the means through which grace comes to us. It also requires Divine resources, which can only be appropriated “*through the knowledge of Him that called us to glory and virtue*” (2 Pet 1:3). Kingdom activity cannot be accomplished mechanically, or in an impersonal way, without conscious involvement with the Living God. It also ought to be noted that there is a phenomenal amount of religious activity that has nothing whatsoever to do with the will or work of the Lord. It is nothing more than the activity of religious flesh.

By the same token, when a professing Christian is not engaged in “*the work of the Lord,*” actually “*abounding in the same,*” faith begins to deteriorate and spiritual life begins to wane. If we are not productive, we are “*barren and unfruitful,*” which amounts to falling away (2 Pet 1:8; Heb 6:1-6). Within this in mind, it becomes apparent why Jesus said the disciples should not hinder the man who was casting out demons in His name. He was working together with Jesus, being empowered by Him. That is the nature of genuine Kingdom work.

“**40 For he that is not against us is on our part.**” Other versions read, “*For he who is not against us is on our side,*” NKJV and “*he who is not against us is for us.*” NASB Luke also records that Jesus said, “*for he that is not against us is for us*” (Luke 9:50). Similarly, Jesus also said at another time, “*He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad*” (Mat 12:30). There is a sense in which all men are either for Christ or against Him. They are either gathering with Him or wasting their time, living in vain. In this sense, there is no middle ground or gray area .

HE THAT IS NOT AGAINST US. This is a condition that must be perceived, else we will find ourselves opposing those who belong to Christ. Of course, those who live at a distance from the Lord do not look at people as being for or against Christ Himself and His people. They can only think in terms of the institution, with dividing lines that have been invented by men. Where there is a lack of acquaintance with the Lord and His ways, flawed judgments and foolish actions are inevitable.

In other words, the person who is doing a good work, [as in this case] successfully opposing the work of Satan, is **not** against Christ or His people. **Destroying the kingdom of Satan cannot possibly be a work of the devil.** Elsewhere Jesus said, “*How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end*” (Mark 3:23-26). Satan is not opposed to himself, and his kingdom is not divided. The devil’s kingdom will not fall because of division. Rather, it will be destroyed by the Kingdom of God. Failure will be **imposed** upon him and his kingdom of darkness. He will be taken and cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).

And, who is the person who is against Christ and His people? That condition cannot be determined by fleshly analysis or carnal scholarship and inquiry. Some would imagine that Apollos, who was “*an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures,*” was actually “*against*” Christ because he knew “*only the baptism of John.*” However, Aquilla and Priscilla saw in Apollos a friend, not a foe. Upon bringing him into their house and expounding unto him “*the way of God more perfectly,*” they found that was precisely what he was – a friend (Acts 18:24-26). A person who is “*against*” Christ is working against Him, laboring to establish things that have nothing to do with Christ. They have a different agenda, a different will, and a differing affection. Their God is their belly, or their earthly appetites, and they mind earthly things (Phil 3:19). They speak of this world, not the one to come (1 John 4:5). Rather than crucifying the flesh, such people culture and nurture the flesh, delighting in appetites that have wed them to “*this present evil world.*”

Such individuals can be incorrect about certain matters they have not yet seen – such as Apollos. But they will not be wrong about Jesus, and they will be open to His tutelage and inclined to His will. They will not speak evil of Jesus or question His judgment. It does require spiritual discernment to detect the one who is “*not against*” Christ or His people. At the time of our text, the disciples were not yet able to make this distinction, and therefore they had instructed a man who was freeing people from Satanic dominion to stop his work.

HE THAT IS ON OUR PART. What can be said of the person who is “not against” Christ and His people? Jesus unequivocally said, “*he is on our part,*” or “*on our side.*” NKJV In reference to Christ, therefore, there is no neutrality. Men are either for Him or against Him. They are either on His side, or are fighting against Him. There is a sense in which all who openly side with the truth bring benefit to us. It is true that this benefit is measured by the amount of truth that they publicly uphold, and the nature of the work they do. Yet, I am sure that you have realized some spiritual gain from those whose total doctrine you could not accept.

The condition of which Jesus speaks is one in which we do not go about trying to find fault in people – seeking for an occasion to withdraw from them. Here the rule of charity applies: “*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*” (1 Cor 13:4-7).

Admittedly, this view is extremely difficult to accept for those who dwell in the flesh. However, for those who walk in the Spirit and live by faith, it brings rejoicing to the heart that we are able to acknowledge the validity of any blow struck to Satan’s kingdom in the name of Jesus – which is what our text concerns. This is not talking about false gospels, but about good deeds that result in men being freed from the tyranny of the devil. We will not call for the cessation of any work that, in the name of Jesus, brings disadvantages to the kingdom of darkness, or one that tends to bring glory to the Lord Jesus. Our love of the truth and desire for Christ’s honor will assist us in making proper determinations in such matters.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 104

“Mark 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. 42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.”

(Mark 9:41-42; Matthew 10:42; 18:6-7; Luke 17:1-2)

INTRODUCTION

The words of the Lord Jesus reflect certain priorities. That is, He speaks with ultimate realities in mind, and not merely in view of the moment. In the jargon of the day He spoke with a different view of “relevancy.” In our time, men consider something relevant when it bears directly upon them personally, and for the immediate time. The less a thing appears to have to do with them, the more irrelevant it is considered. The further it is away from the present moment, the less relevant it is. However, the words of Jesus were not at all from this perspective. He always spoke with a keen sense of man’s ultimate accountability to God – the day of judgment. It is at that time that every word and deed will be judged. If a person chooses to conduct his life ignoring this reality, there is no way for a mortal to estimate, or entertain even the faintest notion, of the seriousness of such a manner of life. **The entirety of Satan’s arsenal of temptations revolve around the suppositions that self is the most important, the world is the most significant place, and the present is the most critical time.** As soon as a person adopts those views, they are at once in the place where Satan freely works, and he does so with little, if any, opposition. At some point, men must become decentralized from self, else there is no hope for them. Because this present evil world is under the sway of the wicked one, it is engaged in a constant and aggressive promotion of pleasure, convenience, and ease. Such things are encapsulated in the inspired description of “*all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,*”, and is declared to be “*not of the Father*” (1 John 2:16). Our text provides us with a most excellent example of a life that is divorced from such ignoble pursuits. Jesus will speak of two manners of life – one centers around Him, and the other around self. One is blessed, and one is cursed.

“Mk 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”

WHOSOEVER. Other versions read, “*anyone.*” NIV Here Jesus gives us a different way of measuring or assessing people. Some look at individuals as men and women, others as young and old, or professionals and non-professionals. Some perceive people according to their occupation, or their education, or their outward appearance. The word “*whosoever*” introduces us to a criterion that lies outside of the individual. Here “*whosoever*” is a person who does something because of

someone else, and not merely for self. In this instance, the name of person, or their race, or their occupation, is not the point. They are perceived from a very special vantage point – one that, in the eyes of the “*whosoever*,” gives them great worth.

GIVE YOU A CUP OF WATER TO DRINK. Here Jesus focuses on the lowest service that can be rendered – something that anyone can do, whether they are a person of means or not. **By referring to the lowliest deed, everything of greater significance is included.** For example, the Philippians sent “*once and again*” to Paul’s “necessity” (Phil 4:16). I am sure that it was decidedly more than “*a cup of water*.” Yet, the people would be blessed upon the same basis as one who was unable to give anything more than a cup of water.

There is a principle seen here – a way that the Lord speaks of rewards. Religious men are noted for making appeals to those who have means. This is the reason for focusing on estate planning, annuity gifts, will bequeathments, grants, and the likes. Institutionalism requires such gifts for its purposes. But note how differently Jesus approaches the matter of giving and gifts. He speaks of one who gives a cup of cold water to one of His disciples. He commends a poor widow who gave two small “*mites*,” declaring that she had given “*more than they all*” (Lk 21:3). He speaks of receiving a “*little child*” (Matt 18:5). He once spoke to His disciples about them simply being received into a house, and how such a home was worthy of peace (Matt 10:14). Matthew tells how Jesus spoke of giving “*a cup of cold water only*” to one of His “*little ones*” receiving a sure reward (Matt 10:42).

Our Lord is distinguishing between an interest in religious empires, like those of the Pharisees who “*devoured widows houses*” (Matt 23:14), and the cause of the Lord. In this day of religious fund raising, this all has an exceedingly strange sound.

IN MY NAME. This phrase accents the fact that the giver did so because of their own identity with Christ. Because they had an interest in the cause of Christ himself, they had an intense concern about what He was doing. This parallels doing something “in the name of a disciple” (Matt 10:42), or because they are an ardent follower of Christ.

BECAUSE YOU BELONG TO CHRIST. The gracious deed is not done because the person belongs to the same organization, but because he belongs to Christ. Paul once said of the people of God, “*Ye are Christ’s!*” (1 Cor 3:23). Here is a person who recognized it. That judgment was obviously based upon some clear evidence. Perhaps it was the manner of the disciple, or the message they were bringing, or the benefit that was realized from them. At any rate, it was their association with Christ Himself that caused the “*whosoever*” to invest of himself in the disciple.

Notice that the person **discerned** the disciple “*belonged to Christ*.” It was obvious that they were not living unto themselves, “*but unto Him which died for them and rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15).

It seems to me that in the examination of ourselves to see whether we be in the faith (2 Cor 13:5), we must seek to discover whether or not it is **apparent** to those about us that we “*belong to Christ*.” Do they take note of us, as they did the early disciples, that we have “*been with Jesus*” (Acts 4:13)? If they are not familiar with Jesus, does our manner of life provoke them to ask us “*for a reason of that hope*” that stands out in us (1 Pet 3:15)?

This text is **not** speaking of general acts of kindness in which even the lost can engage. These are deeds that are done **BECAUSE** the recipient “*belongs to Christ*.”

VERILY. The word “*verily*” is the same word translated “*amen*” – in fact that is precisely

how the Greek word is pronounced – “*amen*.” Here, the word means faithful, true, and surely to be fulfilled. Other versions read, “*truly*,” BBE “*I assure you*,” CSB “*I can guarantee this truth*,” GWN and “*I say this solemnly*.” **LIVING This kind of language is addressed to faith.** There is Divine certitude in it, so that a person can build his life upon the truth of the saying.

HE SHALL NOT LOSE HIS REWARD. Other versions read, “*by no means lose*,” NKJV “*will certainly not lose*.” NIV Matthew says “*in no wise lose*” (Matt 10:42). That is, in the Kingdom of heaven, **it is not possible for the most humble expression of kindness to Christ’s people to be overlooked.** Here is one way of laying up treasures in heaven – recognizing the people of God and ministering to them out of what you have. This is something, as Paul put it, that will “*abound to your account*” (Phil 4:17). It coincides with the affirmation, “*For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister*” (Heb 6:10).

“ 41 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.”

WHOSOEVER SHALL OFFEND. Other versions read “*causes to stumble*,” NKJV “*causes to sin*,” NIV “*put a stumbling block before*,” NRSV “*is a cause for trouble*,” BBE “*shall be a snare*,” DARBY and “*causes to lose faith*.” GWN

To “*offend*” is to put an impediment in the way that makes it more difficult for the disciple. Such a deed tempts the person to distrust, or possibly even fall into sin. Using the same word, Jesus spoke of those who, during opposition and persecution, “*by and by are offended*” (Matt 13:21). At the lower end of the scale, the offense could be not giving heed to what was said, like the enemies of Jeremiah (Jer 18:18). It may also be refusing to view the person as anything other than someone they have always known, as the people once considered Jesus (Mk 6:3). It could also be contradicting what is said, as when Peter offended Jesus in saying He would never die (Matt 16:23). At the higher end, it could be luring someone into overt sin, like the “*strange woman*” of Proverbs, who led the simple into immorality (Prov 5:3-5).

This word also includes those who discourage the hearts of God’s servants, like the churches that caused care to come upon Paul (2 Cor 11:2), and provoked him to fear that his labor was in vain (2 Cor 11:3; Gal 4:11). Such things are very common in our day, but they are all duly noted in heaven!

ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES WHO BELIEVE IN ME. This is not referring to children in the flesh, but to those who are like children in their understanding (1 Cor 14:20). There are “*simple*” souls who are easily beguiled and lured into sin (Rom 16:18). It is easy for such young souls to “*believe every word*” (Prov 14:15), and easily be led astray into false doctrine, or even into immorality. Paul spoke of some whom he characterized “*silly woman*,” who were led “*captive*” by those who saw their simplicity and tendency to be led away by “*divers lusts*” (2 Tim 3:6). Their weakness is owing to the smallness of their understanding.

To be sure, every believer is to get out of that simplistic state as quickly as possible, coming into a maturity of understanding (1 Cor 14:20; Eph 5:17). Believers are to be noted for their wisdom and spiritual understanding, not their simplicity (Col 1:9). In the meantime, Jesus now speaks of those wretched people who pray on young believers – those who are not yet stable in their understanding, yet do believe in Christ. What shall be the lot of those who seek to exploit such people in any way? How will it go for those who lure such into sin? What of preachers and youth leaders who have lured women in the church into sin? What of those

who have built careers and amassed fortunes upon the basis of ignorant and unlearned Christians?

IT IS BETTER. Jesus is not ambiguous on this point, nor is He gentle. It would be “*better*,” or more comely, to take a gigantic “*millstone*,” used to grind grain, hang it around the neck of the offender, and throw him alive into the deepest part of the sea. Matthew adds “*and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea*” – a dreadful death, to be sure (Matt 18:6). This was not a theoretical situation. Albert Barnes writes, “This was one mode of capital punishment practiced by the Greeks, Syrians, Romans, and by some other nations.” This is also confirmed by the historical writings of Suetonius and Aristophanes from earlier centuries. The phrase is used to denote the harshest treatment of the worst offenders.

Jesus does not say this would be “*better*” for someone who made a practice of offending one of His “*little ones*.” This is not a word about someone who has repeatedly offended His “*little ones*.” This refers to a person who has offended “*ONE of these little ones*.” The words “*shall offend*” indicate that Jesus is speaking of a single offence – causing one of His younger followers to stumble one time, be deceived one time, or fall into sin one time.

The Master is saying that it would be better to experience the most severe and ruthless form of temporal pain and punishment than to face God being guilty of a single offense against but one of His less knowledgeable children. This is not to mention the enormity of the punishment of those who opposed and offended the holy prophets, John the Baptist, the twelve apostles, Paul, and others. This may not fit handily into the “*God loves everyone*” view of things, but this is what the Lord Jesus said! It is His way of saying there is no possible way of conceiving the severity of the punishment that is reserved for those who have exploited, deceived, and led young believers into sin.

Having said this, it is the business of every child of God to come away from childish simplicity, let them be “*offended*.” This is one reason why believers are admonished to “*grow*” (1 Pet 2:2; 3:18). “*Unstable souls*” are easily beguiled (2 Pet 2:14). While most believers begin in this state, they are to exit it as rapidly as possible, pursuing holiness with fervor, praying for understanding, and filling their minds with the Word of God, which is the food that promotes growth. Wherever there are churches in which the people are not being fed and edified, an environment is being cultured in which stumbling stones and deceivers can flourish.

“ MATT 18:7 *Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*”

Matthew adds a word here that is worthy of some exposition. It will assist in freeing unlearned souls from the dreaded and crippling malady of naivete, or simplicity. That is life characterized by ignorance, where neither dangers nor advantages can be clearly seen. Jesus not only instructs us concerning the judgment of offenders, but of the sure presence of offence.

WOE UNTO THE WORLD. The words “*woe to the world*” are equivalent to the expression found in the book of Revelation: “*woe to the inhabitants of the earth!*” (Rev 12:12). There, the woe is pronounced because “*the devil is come down to you having great wrath*.” In our text, it is because of the jeopardous environment the devil has produced.

No person will make any progress in the Kingdom of God until it is clear in their mind that the world is a dangerous place in which to be. All that is in the world is “*not of the Father*” (1 John 5:17). The world lies under the power of “*the wicked one*” (1 John 5:19). It is truly called “*this present evil world*” (Gal 1:4).

BECAUSE OF OFFENCES. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks. They are strewn from one end of it to another! You cannot open your eyes or listen with your ears without confronting some stumbling block, some allurements, some temptation, some discouragement! This is why we have been given “*the whole armor of God*” (Eph 6:11) and “*the weapons of our warfare*” (2 Cor 10:4). It is why it is necessary to “*awake out of sleep*” (Rom 13:11) and “*put on the new man*” (Eph 4:24). The world is a dangerous place to be! It has stumbling stones, pits, and snares.

It ought to be noted that the closer a person is to this world, the more vulnerable to its devices he becomes. By “closer to this world,” I mean a condition in which the world becomes primary, its activities seem the most important, and its “things” the most desirable.

OFFENCES MUST COME. The question is not IF you will ever be tempted, or IF you will ever confront an adversary, or IF you will ever feel the tug of the world. “*It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come,*” NASB or “*occasions for stumbling are bound to come.*” NRSV You **will** be tempted! You **will** confront the powerful influences of distraction. You **will** feel the tug of temptation and the allurements to sin! “*There is a necessity for the stumbling-blocks to come.*” YLT This is one of the means through which genuine faith is certified. For example, in the matter of false doctrines that causes division among the saints, it is written, “*For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*” (1 Cor 11:19).

Confirming the certainty of facing offences Luke records Jesus saying, “*It is impossible but that offences will come,*” or “*It is impossible that no offences should come*” (Lk 17:1). If you are looking for a trouble free, temptation free, and offense free life, it simply is not possible in this world. **The solution, therefore, is to prepare to confront it.**

This is one reason why James wrote, “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience*” (James 1:2-3). **The validity of your faith is confirmed when the allurements away from it become offensive.** This is one meaning of the expression, “*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin*” (1 Pet 4:1). Sin has no appeal to the new man, for “*the wicked one toucheth him not*” (1 John 5:18). However, should you choose to neglect your soul and give yourself to other things, you will not be able to withstand the assault of offenses.

WOE TO THE MAN. Believers must learn not to live with a fatalistic view – i.e. offenses will come, there is nothing we can do about it, so just get used to it. The world is a place where offenses are found, but that is not the end of the matter. “***Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!***” **The offender will not be overlooked!** Also note, that it is a “*man,*” or offspring of Adam, through whom the offense comes. It is true that ultimately the opposition comes from Satan, and that we do not “*wrestle against flesh and blood.*” But that does not free the offender! The person who is available for Satan’s use is duly noted, and it will not go well for him, as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar can attest.

Lest we forget, we are speaking about offenses against Christ’s disciples – even the least of them. Who is capable of estimating how many saints have been offended. What of faithful ministers who have been rejected, and even opposed? What of gifted believers who have been ignored, and tempted to think they really have nothing to offer? What of young believers who have been lured into the world of contemporary music and the dwarfed spiritual views that accompany it? What of those who have been compelled to testify of Jesus, or share an insight that was blessing them, only to receive a sneer and be thrust away as a undesirable

person? It all has been duly noted in the Throneroom, and the accounts will be settled. It is true, “ *Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*”

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 105

“ Mark 9:43 *And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*”

(Mark 9:43-48; Matthew 5:29-30; 18:8-9)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has told His disciples of the seriousness of causing an offense to one of the “*little ones*” who believe in Him – those whose conscience is not fully formed, and whose understanding is not mature. This was a facet of the disciples following Him, and being His disciple. It is also part and parcel of living by faith, walking in the Spirit, and being holy. When we are truly affiliated with Christ, we are also attached to His people, and become responsible for being a help to them, not a hindrance. For those who are in Christ, this is apparent to “*the new man*” – referred to as “*whatsoever is born of God*” (1 John 5:4). However, because of the flesh, these warnings must be given, lest we fall asleep, forgetting that Jesus cares deeply for all of His children, to whom He has now been “*joined,*” becoming one spirit with them. At no point does the truth or the Holy Spirit free us to live without regarding other members of the body of Christ. Now, Jesus will elaborate on this matter of offense. He will confirm that the **cause** of offense must be removed, even if it is a part of our own constitution. His language will be strong – as it always is when addressing the matter of iniquity. Anything that personally weakens us, causes us to stumble, or puts us at a spiritual disadvantage is to be dealt with harshly. For some, this particular teaching will be difficult to fit together with our bodies being “*the temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor 6:19), and the “*members of Christ*” (1 Cor 6:15) as well. However, we must extend ourselves to take hold of this truth . Both the nature and the content of what Jesus says in this text confirm how important it is to lay hold upon it.

“ Mk 9:43 *And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off . . . And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off . . . And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out . . .*” (Mark 9:43,45,47).

THE HAND, THE FOOT, AND THE EYE. These are all capacities that become the means of drawing us into, and therefore expressing, sin. In Scripture these parts of the body often stand for certain propensities that can enslave us to sin. The “*bowels*” stand for compassion (1 John 3:17), the “*heart*” for preferences (Mk 7:21-23), the “*hands*” with productivity (1 Cor 4:12; Eph 4:28), and the “*feet*” with being aggressive to do this or that (Rom 3:15; 10:15). Both Solomon and Jesus spoke

of an “evil eye” (Prov 23:6; 28:22; Matt 7:22), and Jesus spoke of the “eye” as being the focus of our attention, or being “single” (Lk 11:34). In Matthew 5:29, Jesus speaks of our “right eye” offending us – denoting something that is very important to us – a kind of priority.

For example, the hand can steal as well as build, smite as well as administer healing balm, and knock one down as well as pick someone up. Our feet can walk in the way of sinners, or carry us to deliver the good news of the Gospel. They can cause us to stand in the way of sinners, or company with the saints of God. Our eyes can covet and lust, or behold the needs of our brethren and see the good things that God is doing.

In other words, our physical capacities, which also stand for our affections and abilities, can be used for good or evil, righteousness or unrighteousness. The hands, feet, and eyes, stand for our “members.” These are to be yielded “as members of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13), and as “servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19).

When we come into Christ “our members” do not automatically serve the Lord. Even though “old things are passed away,” and “all things are become new,” our bodies have not yet been redeemed. Until we leave them, they have been “purchased” (Eph 1:14), yet they must be managed, or brought into subjection to the will of the Lord (1 Cor 9:27).

OFFEND THEE. This teaching is not to be divorced from what Jesus has just said about offending one of His “little ones” who believe in Him. **Here, He is teaching His disciples that they can put themselves in harm’s way. They can, by corrupt appetites and thoughtless manners, make themselves available to those who cause us to stumble.** Herein are “little ones” particularly, and those who are mature as well, warned not to put themselves among those who cause offenses. As Paul said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions **and offences** contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom 16:17). Now, Jesus speaks of our own capacities becoming a source of offense.

It is possible for **your** “hand,” “foot,” or “eye” to “offend thee.” **That is, to cause you to stumble, falling into sin.** In the place of “offend thee,” some versions read “causes you to sin,” NKJV “causes you to stumble,” NASB “is a cause of trouble to you,” BBE “causes your downfall,” CSB and “serve as a snare to thee.” DARBY Here, the ultimate cause of the offense is **not** another person, but the individual himself. It is his own action that moved him into the circle of vulnerability.

In the first sin, it was the **eye** that led Eve into the place where sin became inevitable: she “**saw** that the tree was good for food,” and that it was “pleasant to the eye .” It was **her hand** that she stretched forth and “took the fruit,” and “gave also unto her husband.” It was **her mouth** that she employed to “eat” the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6). In addition, it was **her feet** that carried her to the forbidden tree, and **her ears** that gave heed to the words of the devil. **REMOVE IT.** And what are we to do with these members that cause us to offend? The Master’s words are strong. Of the offending hand and foot He says, “cut it off!” Of the offending eye He says, “pluck it out!” Matthew said of the removal of the offending members, “**and cast it from thee**” (Matt 5:29-30; Matt 18:8-9). **That is, not only remove it, but put it out of reach so that it cannot again be the cause of offense.**

This is actually an inward action, and not an outward one – although we are not to discard the outward action as though it was meaningless. If inward inclinations can be aborted by the maiming of the body, then let it be maimed. However, the inclination to sin cannot be removed by an external discipline – even if it is most harsh. Thus, speaking on this very

subject, Paul writes, “*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*” (Col 3:5). This may involve separating yourself from defiling influences (2 Cor 6:17). It may require the dissolving of relationships that tend to cause corruption. The ears may have to be turned away from listening to certain things, and the eyes from beholding things that awaken sinful inclinations. There may be some places in which you can no longer tread, some literature you may no longer read, and some friendships you may no longer culture.

This is why David spoke of not walking “*in the counsel of the ungodly,*” or standing “*in the way of sinners,*” or sitting “*in the seat of the scornful*” (Psa 1:1). Whatever you must do to diminish the tug of sin and the danger of stumbling and falling, do it, and do it aggressively!

“**43 . . . it is better for thee to enter into life maimed . . . it is better for thee to enter halt into life . . . it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye . . .**” (Mark 9:47).

IT IS BETTER. In our culture, a person can learn to think only of what it is all right to do, or things against which there is no written prohibition. Thus men excuse what they do by saying the Bible does not condemn it, or there is no word of God that tells me I cannot do this or that. This, however, is a totally flawed way of thinking. It presumes that God has purposely listed every wrong deed, so that you live life from a manual, with little attention to such things as appetite, inclination, the conscience, loves, and hates.

Now, Jesus does not speak of right or wrong, but of what is “*better.*” Other versions read “*good,*” ASV and “*more profitable and wholesome.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew says, “*it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish*” (Matt 5:29-30). The word “*better*” means excellent, surpassing, precious, good, excellent in its nature, and well adapted to its ends. THAYER It also involves the idea of being approved, free from defects, praiseworthy, and noble . FRIBERG

When a person is driven by lust, or any self-centered impulse, excellence, goodness, and approval do not even enter the mind. However, when one considers leaving this world as well as living in it, “*better*” things obtain a certain priority. It is possible for something to be pleasant to the body, yet damning in its effects. **We must therefore obtain grace to think in terms of what is best, most advantageous, and of the greatest benefit.** Thus Mary is said to have chosen “*the good part,*” or “*what is better*” NIV (Lk 10:42). This is why we are admonished to think on things that are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil 4:8), and being able to “*approve things that are excellent*” (Phil 1:10). When speaking to those who had a desire for one another, yet did not think they should marry, Paul wrote, “*it is better to marry than to burn*” [with lust] (1 Cor 7:9). When pondering remaining in this world versus leaving it, Paul said, “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better*” (Phil 1:23). In this case, he did not terminate his life, for he knew that was not lawful. Therefore, he chose to work and prepare for what was **better** – what he actually preferred and cultured.

One of the great transgressions of a self-centered society is their definition of “*good*” and “*better.*” That society thinks in terms of pleasure and things for the moment. However, the “*better*” of which Jesus speaks is something **inherently** better, bringing the greatest advantage, being wholly approved of God, and thoroughly compatible with eternity.

ENTER INTO LIFE. Note the strength with which Jesus speaks of the better: “*enter into life maimed . . . enter halt into life . . . enter the Kingdom of God with one eye.*” **Now, this is an exceedingly difficult text for those embracing the health and wealth heresy, for it postulates being alive and in the Kingdom of God with worldly incapacities and impediments.** Entering

into life is not speaking of life in the world to come – for there will *be no maimed, halt, of one-eyed people in glory*. This is speaking of life “*more abundantly*” now – in **this** world (John 10:10). This is a condition in which spiritual mindedness is enjoyed, for “*to be spiritually minded is life and peace*” (Rom 8:6).

Entering into life has to do with realizing accord with God and fellowship with Christ. It is knowing Them, so that we can hear Him who is speaking from heaven, labor together with God, and be directed by the Holy Spirit. There are capacities resident in our members that can hinder this life, and even take it from us. Jesus is teaching that none of these are worth the forfeiture of life. It is “*better*” to live with God at the expense of fleshly gratification. Many a soul has given up spiritual life and the advantage of walking in the Spirit simply because they have chosen and cultured things that excluded them from the Lord’s blessing.

ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. There is a Kingdom that is to be entered (Matt 7:21; Mk 10:23; John 3:5; Acts 14:17). This is a Kingdom in which God works everything together for the good of the individual. Jesus is speaking of being “*in the Kingdom*” here and now, participating in “*righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Rom 14:17). No person can inherit the Kingdom (Matt 25:34; 1 Cor 6:90-10; Gal 5:21), who does not “*enter*” it in this world, while in the body. It is possible that you may have to enter it maimed, or halt, or with one eye – that is, you may have to forfeit some of life’s normalities.

There are normal, or natural, human capacities – like a hand, foot, or eye – that can be the means of your downfall. They may involve a sin “*that so easily besets*” you (Heb 12:2). Of itself, the capacity may not be wrong, but it nevertheless proves to be a stumbling block to you. This is an intensely personal matter, and no man can make your decision for you concerning what causes you to stumble and what does not. You are the one who must carefully weigh the matter.

Is spiritual life and entering the Kingdom of God worth the forfeiture of a hand, a foot, or an eye – some natural capacity that brings temporary pleasure to you? If you have tasted of the Lord, “*that He is gracious,*” you know the answer to that question, and will choose the “*better part.*”

“ 44 . . . than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched . . . than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched . . . than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44,46 48).

Here is one of the most sobering texts in all of scripture. It is one of very few times Jesus so strongly reiterated a point – and it was spoken to His disciples.

TAKING YOUR CAPACITIES WITH YOU. Note that Jesus speaks of a sense in which we will take our aptitudes beyond the grave. While He has spoken of hands, feet, and eyes, He now makes clear that He is speaking of the various qualities of the soul, not the body, for our present bodies will not go with us beyond the grave.

GO INTO HELL. Jesus says some will “*go into hell,*” being “*cast into hell.*” They will “*go,*” for there will be no alternative place for them. All entrances will be closed to them, except for the entrance into hell. They will be “*cast into hell*” by Divine mandate, and will have no choice in the matter. For the wicked, there is coming as time when they will know the utter impotence of the unsanctified human will. It will certainly no longer be viewed as “*free.*”

Matthew reads, *“thy whole body be cast into hell”* (Matt 5:29). The word translated *“hell”* is NOT Hades. Here the word is *“Gehenna.”* which is the final destination of the wicked. The term is taken from a word meaning *“valley of Hinnom”* (Josh 15:8; 18:16; Neh 11:30). When Jerusalem fell into wicked idolatry, this was the valley where they burned their sons and daughters to the monstrous idol of Molech: *“And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into My heart”* (Jer 7:31; 2 Chron 28:3; 33:6). When Josiah abolished this evil practice, he filled the place with the bones of wicked men (2 Kgs 23:14-20; 2 Chron 34:4-5). From that time this was made the cesspool of the city – a sort of gigantic garbage dump. Thus, Jesus used the term to depict the eternal garbage dump for humanity, where those who are excluded from the presence of the Lord will be finally thrown.

This is *“the lake of fire”* into which the devil, his angels, and all of the wicked will be cast (Rev 19:20; 20:10,14,15). It is the *“everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt 25:41). Jesus said to fear God who *“hath power to cast into hell”* (Lk 12:5).

This is not a place of extinction, where the lost will finally be annihilated, or utterly exterminated. That is precisely why Jesus said it would be better to endure the removal of whatever causes us to offend **now**, rather than be cast into this dreadful place.

FIRE THAT NEVER SHALL BE QUENCHED. John the Baptist spoke of a time when the *“chaff”* of humanity would be burned up with *“unquenchable fire”* (Matt 3:12; Lk 3:17). The word *“unquenchable”* means the fire is incapable of being extinguished – it will never go out. Matthew read, *“cast into everlasting fire”* (Matt 18:8-9). This is like the *“flame”* with which the rich man was *“tormented”* (Lk 16:24). Although the rich man was in a temporary place until the day of judgment, his torment was of the same order as *“the lake of fire.”* That is, it did not consume him, nor will the *“fire”* of hell consume the wicked. They are, so to speak, like the fuel for the fire, and they will never be utterly consumed. Thus the wicked are said to be *“go into everlasting punishment”* (Matt 25:46). The Revelation given to John affirmed that the devil and his cohorts *“shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”* (Rev 20:10). It also appears that the wicked will be keenly aware of their exclusion from the Lord. Their eternal state is thus said to be one in which they *“shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb”* (Rev 14:10).

Those who insist on culturing or nurturing the appetites and aptitudes that cause them to fall into sin must consider the words of the Lord. If they do not deal harshly **now** with these *“members”* of their human constitution, they will go into hell with them.

WHERE THE WORM DIETH NOT. In the valley of Hinnom, maggots and worms fed on the carcasses of the dead – but that is not the kind of worm declared in this text. This is speaking of unending torment. In the English language the word *“worm”* can mean: *“something that inwardly torments or devours in a manner suggestive of the gnawing, boring, or working of a worm <the worm of care gives her no rest> <the worm of conscience gnaws incessantly>.”* MERRIAM-WEBSTER

Whenever I read this sobering passage, I recall the doleful words of Jeremiah: *“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved”* (Jer 8:20). The recollection of wasted opportunities, the prostitution of one’s affection, and the culturing of wicked desires will goad and gnaw at the condemned, but not devour them. They will want the sin they learned to love more than ever, but will not be able to fulfill those desires. The resurrection body will be incapable of both sin and destruction, and yet, for the wicked, it will house a wicked soul with wicked desires, and a hatred for everything that is holy. A dreadful state, indeed! What desire

is worth being in that place?

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 106

“ Mark 9:49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” (Mark 9:49-50; Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34-35)

INTRODUCTION

What is involved in living unto the Lord? Serving the Lord? Being a witness for the Lord? It is possible to get the idea that very little is required – just enrolling and being put on the roster, so to speak. For some, being on the roll of an established church is enough – particularly when it is viewed as part of the *one true church*. However, such notions will not be gleaned from the words of the Head of the church, or from those whom He placed *first* in the church, to lay the foundation and root and ground its members in the truth. In this text, Jesus will hearken back to the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. He will confirm that, while they were a routine, they were not merely a routine. In the various ceremonies of the Law, men were being introduced to the manner of the Kingdom, and the mind of the Lord. They established that there is a certain Divine aversion to things that are not offered to Him properly. Men may content themselves to think that God is so kind and gracious that He will receive anything we offer to Him – including our own persons. Nabad and Abihu will rise in the day of judgment to confirm such a thought it wholly spurious – that those who offer to God what he really does not want are in jeopardy. A fire came out of heaven and consumed them because they used the wrong kind of fire to offer incense (Lev 10;1-2; Num 26:61). Once, when 250 priests who sided with Korah sought to offer incense to the Lord – even the right incense – a fire came out from the Lord and consumed them all because of their opposition to Moses (Num 16:17,35). When Uzziah took it upon himself to offer incense to the Lord, even though the priests told him it was not lawful to do so, the Lord smote him with leprosy, and he was a leper until the day he died (2 Chron 26:16-21). In this text, Jesus will confirm that who a person is, and what is found in him, are critical in the matter of serving the Lord. God will not receive something that is contrary to His own nature, neither does He have any compunctions about casting all defiling influences out of His house.

“ Mk 9:4 9 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.”

EVERYONE SHALL BE SALTED WITH FIRE. Other versions read, “*everyone will be seasoned with fire,*” NKJV “*tested with fire,*” NLT and “*purified by fire.*” GNB Every other version reads “*salted with fire.*” Keep in mind, this is something that **everyone** will experience – being “*salted with fire.*” This is not something that can be avoided.

To be “*salted*” can mean to be seasoned, or preserved (Matt 5:13). Elijah used salt to miraculously purify a defiled spring of waters (2 Kgs 2:20-21). In a severe judgement from God,

Lot's wife "*became a pillar of salt*" (Gen 19:26). But "*salt*" is not the point of this text. It is not referring to a seasoning agent, or to a means of preservation. **Jesus does not say that every man will salted with salt, but "*with fire.*"**

Salted with Fire. Whether good or evil, righteous or unrighteous, "*everyone will be salted with fire!*" That is, they will be subjected to the influence of fire, just as everything upon which salt is sprinkled is subject to the influence of salt.

Jesus is teaching that everyone passes under the scrutinizing eye of the Lord, and are thus tested. This can happen to heathens like Pharaoh (Ex 6:1) and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:31-33), or saints whose faith is "*tried by fire*" (Zech 13:9; 1 Pet 1:7). This has particular relevance to those who cause offenses, making the little ones who believe on Jesus to stumble. However, this "*salting*" is not confined to them. Neither is the judgment of the Lord limited to those who have faith. When Abram passed through Egypt, Pharaoh took Sarah into his house. It is written, "*And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife*" (Gen 12:17). Pharaoh was "*salted with fire.*" When Israel was journeying through the wilderness they found no water, saving for the bitter waters of Marah. Instead of seeking the Lord, they "*murmured against Moses.*" Even though the Lord showed Moses a tree which, when cast into the waters, made them sweet, it is written, "*and there he proved them*" (Ex 15:23-25). They were "*salted with fire.*"

How often the Spirit reminds us of this "*salting.*" "*. . . the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed*" (1 Sam 2:3). Isaiah declared God "*dost weigh the path of the just*" (Isa 26:7). Even wicked Belshazzar was "*weighed in the balances,*" and "*found wanting*" (Dan 5:27). David affirmed, "*the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins*" (Psa 7:9), and "*the Lord trieth the righteous*" (Psa 11:5). Paul reminded us that God "*trieth our hearts*" (1 Thess 2:4). **Everyone shall be salted with fire!** It is something no person can escape. Men conduct themselves foolishly, even causing others to stumble, because they forget this fact. It is the responsibility of the church to keep this matter before the people (1 Tim 3:15).

EVERY SACRIFICE SHALL BE SALTED WITH SALT. Here Jesus elaborates further on the matter of salting. Now He speaks of it in the sense of sanctification, or setting apart for the Lord. He appeals to the laws pertaining to sacrifice. "*And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt ; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt*" (Lev 2:13). Ezekiel confirmed this continued even after the Babylonian captivity. "*And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them , and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the LORD*" (Ezek 43:24).

Every person who offers himself to God must be "*salted with salt,*" having the sanctifying influence of the blood of Christ (Heb 10:29, 13:12), and the "*sanctification of the Holy Spirit,*" the great Worker from heaven (Rom 15:16; 1 Pet 1:2). That sanctifying salt includes faith, without which "*it is impossible to please God*" (Heb 11:6). There is also the matter of grace, through which "*we may serve God acceptable with reverence and godly fear*" (Heb 12:28). Let no person think for a single moment that he can present himself to God without these sanctifying influences, or that God will even consider him without them.

Not only must the one coming to God be "*salted with salt,*" but what he offers must also be presented in that manner. We cannot offer sullied works to the God of heaven. What we offer to God must be holy, just as surely as the one who is offering it. Ananias and Sapphira did not salt their offering with salt, but misrepresented it, and thus incurred the judgment of God (Acts 5:1-10). Paul spoke of those who failed to salt their preaching with salt, for they preached Christ "*in pretense*"

(Phil 1:18). Even our speech is to be sanctified, being “*salted with salt.*” “*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*” (Col 4:6). We are admonished to sing “*with grace in your hearts to the Lord*” (Col 3:16) – another sacrifice “*seasoned with salt.*”

We cannot afford to be loose in our thinking concerning serving the Lord. **Our persons, conduct, and expressions are to have the grace of God and the work of the Spirit upon them. Nothing is to be offered as though our character or motives are incidental.** The sacrifice of ourselves must be holy and acceptable to God. There are no exceptions (Rom 12:1).

“ 50a Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?”

SALT IS GOOD. Other versions read, “*salt is a good thing,*” MRD “*salt is good for seasoning,*” NLT and “*salt is good [beneficial]*” AMPLIFIED By saying “*salt is good,*” the Lord means it is beneficial and useful. It possesses properties that are helpful and profitable. Salt is not noted for how it looks, but for what it does. It is not something you place on a shelf to behold, but something that is put to good use. It has utility.

However, Jesus is not referring to the properties of natural salt, but of the salt of redeemed humanity. Matthew clarifies this when he records Jesus saying, “*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt hath lost . . .*” At this point, He is **not** speaking of the salt of grace, for that “*salt*” does not lose its properties. Luke associates this saying with the individual becoming Christ’s disciple. “*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple. Salt is good . . .*” (Luke 14:33-34). The clear implication is that it is one’s disconnection with the things of this world that leads to becoming “*the salt of the earth.*” It is “*good*” when such a stance is taken.

SALT THAT HAS LOST ITS SALTNESS. In this world, there is rarely such a thing as a fixed and unalterable condition. Ordinarily, hearts that are hard can be softened (Ezek 36:26). The blinded eyes of the heart can be opened (Acts 26:18; Eph 1:18). Men can be “*delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son*” Col 1:13). Those who are given eternal life are told they “*shall never perish*” (John 10:28). However, Jesus now introduces a condition referred to as salt losing its saltness, or “*loses its flavor,*” NKJV or “*becomes unsalty,*” NASB or “*if the taste goes from it.*” BBE Both Matthew and Luke read, “*have lost his savor*” (Matt 5:13; Lk 14:34). Other versions read, “*loses its flavor,*” NKJV and “*has become tasteless.*” NASB

Remember, our Lord is speaking of people – those who have been denominated “*the salt of the earth.*” There are spiritual properties that produce this spiritual savor: **1**– New creatureship (2 Cor 5:17); **2**– A new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26); **3** – A circumcised heart (Col 2:11-12); **4** – The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-22); **5** – An ear to hear (Matt 11:15); **6** – A good conscience (1 Tim 1:5); **7** – Not loving the world or the things in the world (1 John 2:15), and **8** – The love of the brethren (1 Pet 1:22) – to name a few. These, and similar, qualities are what cause men to be salty – to have godly influence in this world.

These are part of the treasure that is being held presently in “*earthen vessels*” (2 Cor 4:7). Because of the frail vessels in which this treasure is being maintained, a certain jeopardy is introduced that requires vigilance, faithfulness, and perseverance. **It is possible for the salt to lose its distinguishing properties.** This concept would parallel phrases like, “*if they shall fall away*” (Heb 6:6), being “*entangled again*” in the things from which we were delivered, and being “*overcome*” (2 Pet 2:20), and sinning wilfully “*after that we have received the knowledge of the truth*” (Heb

10:26). What happens to those so characterized.

HOW CAN IT BE RENEWED? Jesus asks, “*wherewith shall ye season it?*” or, “*with what will you make it salty again?*” NASB When once the salt has lost its unique properties, how can such properties be restored? Men may theorize about this, but the Scriptures address the matter with alarming clarity. Matthew says it this way : “*it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men*” (Matt 5:13). Luke says, “*It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out*” (Lk 14:35). Is it remotely possible to soften those words, or make them more palatable?

Let us see how the Spirit spoke of this condition under other figures. Concerning those who “*fall away*” He said, It is impossible “*to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*” (Heb 6:6). Concerning those who become entangled in the things from which they were delivered, and are overcome, it is written, “*the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them*” (2 Pet 2:20-21). And, of those who sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth, it is written, “*there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*” (Heb 10:26-27). That is descriptive of becoming “*good for nothing*” and being “*cast out.*”

God will maintain no children in His house who do not bear in themselves the qualities received in salvation. No one will be allowed to be ornamental, with no God-glorifying utility. I understand that this sharply clashes with popular approaches to being saved – approaches that allow for carnality at the worst, and juvenility at the best.

Saltiness is the opposite of causing offences. It is what contributes to building up instead of stumbling. It causes one to be a contributor instead of a thief and a robber.

“ 50b *Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*”

HAVE SALT IN YOURSELVES. Other versions read, “*Have salt among yourselves,*” CSB “*Have salt in you,*” DOUAY “*Have salt within you,*” GWN “*Let there be salt in you,*” MRD “*You must have the qualities of salt among yourselves,*” NLT “*See that ye have salt in yourselves,*” TNT “*Don’t lose your flavor,*” LIVING and “*Keep on having salt among yourselves.*” ISV

Who dares to ignore this summons? We are to be the kind of people through whom Divine influences can be brought to bear upon men. There must be no inhibiting factors in us that darken the light, and finally put it out altogether, so that nothing of God can be seen in us. If men can make no association between God and us, of what good are we? Some may bluster and say we have no right to judge, and that every person has a right to their own opinion. But this is nothing more than smoke that obscures the truth. If any of us has really lost our saltiness – the unique properties that make us different from the world – here is the truth of the matter: we are useless! That is, useless to God! Of what value is a person whom God cannot use in the fulfillment of His eternal purpose? Where is there a place for them in the body of Christ? And if there is such a place, precisely in what sense are they part of the body?

Christ’s admonition addresses both the individual and the group. Each person is to have the savory salt of grace – “*within you.*” GWN And, the assembly is to have it as well – “*among yourselves.*” NLT Every person and every assembly must have the capability to contribute to

the work of Christ. They must be a resource through which the Lord can work. Grace must be resident within them, and flow out to others. If we are not working together with Christ, what evidence is there that He is in us? That is precisely why we are admonished, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* (2 Cor 13:5).

What God gives His people must be possessed: *“have salt in yourselves.”* If the Lord is noted for giving *“more grace”* (James 4:6), then we are to be noted for receiving *“more grace.”* If *“grace and peace”* are *“multiplied”* unto us *“through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”* (2 Pet 1:2), then we are to be noted for increased measures of those blessed gifts. *“Have grace in yourselves!”* If Jesus gives us peace (John 14:27), then we are to be noted for possessing it. *“Have grace in yourselves!”*

HAVE PEACE ONE WITH ANOTHER. This is not another statement, but a continuation of *“Have salt in yourselves . . .”* Just prior to this, the disciples had been disputing among themselves *“who should be greatest”* (Mk 9:33-34). Now, Jesus admonishes them to have done with such disputations, replacing such discussions with having *“salt”* in themselves.

Years later Paul would admonish the church, *“I . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ”* (Eph 4:1-3). He exhorted the brethren in Rome to pursue things that *“make for peace”* (Rom 14:19). He reminded the Corinthians that *“God hath called us to peace”* (1 Cor 7:15). He told the Colossians, *“let the peace of God rule in your hearts”* (Col 3:15). The Thessalonians were admonished, *“be at peace among yourselves”* (1 Thess 5:13). Peter exhorted believers to *“seek peace, and pursue it”* NKJV (1 Pet 3:11).

Why did Jesus and the apostles place such stress upon believers being at peace among themselves? Judging from the status of Christendom as a whole, one might conjecture that these words were not even in the Scriptures. However, they are present, and that for a reason. James affirmed peaceableness to be the second great trait of the wisdom that comes from above. *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable . . .”* (James 3:17). He also cites the reason for this condition. *“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”* (James 3:18). That is, righteousness springs forth from peaceful environs. The *“new man”* is cultured, edified, and renewed in a setting devoid of contention, strife, and carnal competition. Discord creates a surrounding where grace is stifled, and *“the flesh”* flourishes. Who does not know from experience that this is the case.

When we have salt in ourselves, it does not automatically make for peace, as though it was some magic potion. It equips us to express Divine qualities that strengthen the work of God in others. This is what keeps us from causing offenses – throwing stumbling blocks in the path of others. Jesus has already said that offenses are inevitable: *“For offenses must come.”* He also added, *“but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh”* (Matt 18:7). It is therefore on the part of wisdom to take the words of Jesus seriously, allowing them to mold our thinking.

Let us see to it that as an assembly, we have salt – salt in increasing and productive measures: salt that does not lose its savor. We are not in a world that is conducive to such things, but they are available in abundance in the heavenly places in which we have been placed in Christ Jesus. May the salt of grace be found in abundance in **you** .

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 107

“ Mark 10:1 And He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again. 2 And the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. 3 And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? 4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. 5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.”

(Mark 10:1-5; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

While men are prone to back away from sensitive subjects, Jesus is not. In our text we have a classic example of straightforward teaching on an unusually tender matter. As we view the words of Jesus it is important to remember that He speaks in the role of a Savior. He is not speaking as a heartless lawyer or a stern judge, seeking for a reason to condemn. He will speak the truth, and those who have received the love of the truth will be able to accept it. Further, Jesus does not speak in view of the Old Covenant alone, which would render His words obsolete following the inauguration of the New Covenant. Because Jesus is *“the Truth,”* no word spoken by Him can be discarded as though it was irrelevant for us today. Even when addressing matters relating specifically to the Old Covenant – like presenting a gift at the altar (Matt 5:24) – Jesus will speak in such a way as to make the matter relevant to those living under the greater light of the *“new and living way”* (Heb 10:20). Furthermore, we must resist any temptation to think that grace offsets the teaching of Jesus. His words are to be heard with the utmost sobriety, knowing that God will always be inclined toward those who have a *“contrite spirit”* and *“tremble”* at His word (Isa 66:2).

“ Mk 10:1 And He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again.”

HE AROSE FROM THENCE. Jesus has been in Capernaum (9:33), and has instructed His disciples extensively concerning the matter of offences. However, as precious as His disciples were, the Lord must be about His Father’s business. Matthew says of this occasion, *“and when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee”* (Matt 19:1). Jesus is heading toward Jerusalem (Lk 9:51), to lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:15). This work would take the precedence over all other works. Jesus lived in view of His **ultimate** mission, and the appointed purpose of God. He was never turned from this. He provided us an example of living with a proper focus – keeping the main thing ever before us.

HE COMES INTO THE COASTS OF JUDEA. Luke tells us that Jesus, knowing He would pass through Samaria, sent messengers before Him to *“make ready for Him.”* However,

the Samaritans sensed that He was determinedly headed for Jerusalem, and therefore did not receive Him (Lk 9:51-53). What a tragedy! Those people could have spent some time with Jesus and gained much from it. However, because Jesus had a higher priority than them, they rejected Him. There are still people who refuse to welcome Jesus unless he treats them as the most important thing. They are unwilling to yield to the will and purpose of God.

THE PEOPLE RESORT TO HIM. *“The people resort unto Him again.”* Other versions read, *“gathered to Him again,”* NKJV *“gathered around Him again,”* NASB and *“converged on Him.”* CSB Matthew reads, *“And great multitudes followed Him; and He healed them there”* (Matt 19:2). In both Matthew and Mark it is evident that the people were not thinking of convenience, ease, and comfort. For genuine profit to be realized, there must come a time when being with Jesus becomes more important than anything else. This is lived out in our text.

When there is a genuine interest in the Lord Jesus, people will come to Him. Jacob prophesied of the Messiah, *“unto Him shall the gathering of the people be”* (Gen 49:10). Because we are living in a spiritually cold and decadent age, it may appear as though such a gathering is not possible. However, think how the world was when Jesus entered into it. Apart from the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist, the spiritual ground was dry and parched. That is why the Messiah was described as *“a root out of dry ground”* (Isa 53:2). Yet, our text speaks of crowds who would not be denied – *“the people resort unto Him again .”* No one invited them, but they came. The Samaritans rejected Him, but other crowds came. They were being drawn by the Father to the Son. As Jesus affirmed, *“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him”* (John 6:44). Whatever deficiencies may be found in this multitude, their very presence with Jesus confirms the effectiveness of Divine power.

HE TEACHES THE PEOPLE AGAIN. *“ . . . as He was wont, He taught them again.”* The word *“wont”* means *“to be accustomed.”* THAYER Other versions read, *“as He was accustomed,”* NKJV *“according to His custom,”* NASB *“as was His way,”* BBE *“as He usually did,”* GWN *“as usual,”* NLT and *“as He always did.”* IE **It was the manner of Jesus to teach the people - that is what He did.** It is still His manner to do so. Speaking of advancing in the life of faith Paul wrote, *“But ye have not so learned Christ ; if so be that ye have heard Him , and have been taught by Him , as the truth is in Jesus”* (Eph 4:20-21). Fifteen times the Gospels say of Jesus,

“He taught” (Matt 7:29; 13:54; Mk 1:22; 2:13; 4:2; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:35; Lk 4:15; 19:47; 20:1; 6:59; 7:28; 8:20). There are at least fifteen references to Jesus *“teaching.”* This was the manner of the Savior – to teach the people. Nicodemus referred to Him as a *“Teacher come from God”* (John 3:2). Jesus was not an entertainer. He was a teacher. **No standard version of the Scriptures ever refer to Jesus as a “Healer” – even though He healed multitudes.**

What does it mean when it says Jesus *“taught”* ? The word itself means *“to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses.”* THAYER Teaching has to do with the communication of knowledge that is not within the cognitive grasp of the people. In the case of Jesus teaching, He acquainted the people with hitherto unknown realities and their implications. In the record of Christ’s teaching, there are no less than ninety-eight references to the Kingdom (Kingdom of heaven, Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom). His teaching related to that Kingdom, defining it, showing its nature, and declaring its priority: i.e. *“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”* (Matt 6:33).

Today, there is an astounding amount of teaching that relates **only** to this world, having

little to do with an “*everlasting Kingdom*” (2 Pet 1:11). Such teaching, however impressive it may be, is not related to the Teacher sent from God – the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to deliver us from this present evil world according to God’s will (Gal 1:4). It ought to be apparent that the thrust of His teaching would not center in the world from which He has delivered us. It goes without saying that we still need a teaching Jesus. That is why we have one.

“ 2 And the Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him. 3 And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?”

THE PHARISEES CAME TO HIM. Jesus did not **only** attract sincere inquirers. His teaching was so unique and powerful that it also got the attention of His critics. The teaching of Jesus contradicted both the thrust and the content of the Pharisees instruction. Convinced that they were right and He was wrong, they came to Him.

IS IT LAWFUL? These men did not come to Jesus inquiring about eternal life, as “*a certain ruler*” did (Lk 16:18). They did not ask for mercy, as Bartimaeus did (Mk 10:47). They asked for no explanation of his teaching, as His disciples did (Matt 13:36). They did not ask where He was dwelling, as two of John’s disciples did (John 1:38). Instead, they asked Jesus if it was right for a man to put away his wife. Of this occasion Matthew says they asked, “*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause* ” (Matt 19:3).

Such questions were put to Jesus on at least two other occasions. “*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?*” (Matt 12:10). “*Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?*” (Matt 22:17). Peter once asked Jesus, “*Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*” (Matt 18:21). Once a Pharisee tempted Jesus asking, “*Master, which is the great commandment of the Law?*” (Matt 22:35). Once the Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus, “*Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?*” (Mark 7:5). Once the Sadducees asked Jesus an elaborate question concerning a woman who had been the wife of a man and seven of brothers – all of them dying before she remarried (Mk 12:18-23).

A lot can be known of a person by the questions that come to his mind when he is standing before Jesus or one of His representatives. Questions like those above were driven by a quest for self-justification. They fell short of a quest for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

TEMPTING HIM. This reveals the ignoble motives of the Pharisees. They were trying to draw Jesus into, what they conceived to be, great difficulty. Perhaps they could debate with Him, imagining that their own wisdom could upstage that of Jesus. Here was Truth incarnate before them – the Son of God come down from heaven – and what do they ask Him? They are not in search of genuine knowledge, wisdom, or understanding. They are seeking to trap Jesus into saying something false. Here is an area in which they imagined they had more knowledge than Jesus. It is evident that they were not present when Jesus specifically addressed this matter in, what is called, the sermon on the mount (Matt 5:31-32).

One of the utterances of the Lord to Israel was, “*Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God*” (Deut 6:16). That is, “*You shall put the Lord your God to the test,*” NASB as though you doubted His integrity and faithfulness. In this text, the Pharisees doubted the wisdom of the Prophet from Nazareth. On another occasion they were “*tempting*” Jesus desiring “*that He would show them a sign from heaven*” (Matt 16:1). It is written that the Lawyer who asked Jesus what was “*the great commandment of the Law*” was actually “*tempting Him*” (Matt 22:35-36). Another lawyer once asked Jesus, “*Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” Luke says that man was tempting

Jesus (Lk 10:25). On yet another occasion the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman “*taken in adultery*,” reminding Him that Moses said she should be stoned. They then asked Him, “*but what sayest Thou?*” John adds, “*this they said tempting Him*” (John 8:3-6). It is a serious transgression to question the wisdom or ability of Jesus.

WHAT DID MOSES COMMAND YOU? Matthew provides an even more extensive record of the account, stating that Jesus asked if they had read that at the beginning God “*made them male and female*,” that they became “*one flesh*,” and that man should not “*put asunder*” what God had “*joined together*” (Matt 19:4-6). In Mark, Jesus throws the question back at them. He makes them begin with what they know. He did something similar when a lawyer asked him about inheriting eternal life: “*what is written in the Law? How readest thou?*” (Lk 10:26).

It is still the manner of Jesus to send us to what we know in answering thorny questions. Therefore we read in the New Covenant Scriptures, “*For what saith the Scripture?*” (Rom 4:3). “*But what saith the answer of God unto him?*” (Rom 11:4). “*Nevertheless what saith the Scripture*” (Gal 4:30). All of this is meaningless to a Scripturally illiterate society – especially a church that is not familiar with the Word of God.

Why does the Lord speak in such a manner? It is because God has “*magnified*” His Word above all His name (Psa 138:2). His nature, power, and purpose are revealed in His Word. There the nature of sin is unveiled, and the fallenness of mankind becomes apparent. However dimly the will of God may be reflected in certain sections of Scripture, it is still there. Enough of God is seen in His word to properly direct our thinking, and lead us to think more soberly, and even ask the right questions.

“ 4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. 5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.”

Being self-proclaimed experts in the Law of Moses, the Pharisees quickly respond concerning Moses’ words. They have in their minds what they think Moses meant, and are no doubt prepared for some extensive argumentation. This is the manner of the legalists. They place a high value on their own reasoning, even equating it with Scripture. However, these men are dealing with Him in whom all wisdom and knowledge are hidden. They have entered into a controversy that will not turn out well for them. What they did not realize is that all controversies cannot be settled by Law – as confirmed in the case of the woman taken in the very act of adultery (John 8:3-11).

A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT. The words of Moses are found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. They have to do with a man whose wife no longer has “*favor in his eyes, because he hath found uncleanness in her*” (Deut 24:1). The man was to give her a bill of divorce. The woman was then free to be another man’s wife (24:2). He continued that if the second husband put her away, or died, “*her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled.*” That, Moses continued, “*is abomination before the Lord,*” and would “*cause the land to sin*” (24:3-4; Jer 3:1). An example of this procedure is found in Joseph’s determination to put away Mary when she was found with child. At the time, he did not yet know she was bearing the Son of God. “*Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily*” (Matt 1:19). Even then, driven by a right heart, Joseph determined to do this privately, not making a public example of Mary. It was as he thought upon these things, not moving hastily, that God sent an angel to explain the circumstances to Joseph and tell him not to fear taking Mary to be his wife (Matt 1:20-21).

Moses was not at all specific about the cause for divorce – simply stating that the husband found “*uncleanness in her.*” Jewish teachers were divided over the meaning of this expression. At the time of our text two influential rabbis had formulated static interpretations of the text. “The school of Shammal seeming to limit it to a moral delinquency in the woman, while that of Hillel extended it to trifling causes.” McCLINTOK-STRONG’S

The “*bill of divorcement*” was a formal and legal document, the drawing up of which Moses “*suffered,*” permitted, or allowed. Even though the Pharisees took this as a Law, it was not so in the strictest sense. This is confirmed by Jesus’ words on this matter in the sermon on the mount: “*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I Say unto you . . .*” (Matt 5:31). This is not to be taken as a refutation of what Moses said. There was, as we will see, another factor in this to which Jesus will not refer.

FOR THE HARDNESS OF YOUR HEART. Jesus affirms that Moses wrote this “*precept*” “*because of the hardness of your heart.*” NKJV Moses **permitted** this procedure, not commanded it! In other words, there was enough inconvenience associated with putting away one’s wife to allow for some more serious thought on the matter. Every outburst of hatred and fickleness was not allowed to dictate the action of a discontent husband. Some thought had to be given to the matter – both to its cause and the action that would follow it.

The hardheartedness of the men would have given them license to treat their wives inhumanely, as though they were nothing more than vassals, and sources of carnal pleasure. Therefore, Moses wrote this precept to restrain their inconsideration and harshness.

Under the Law, a number of precepts were written to protect women who were put away. If a man had purchased a wife, and she did not please him, he could not sell her to a “*strange nation*” (Ex 21:8). If the man took another wife, he could not diminish the food, raiment, or “*duty of marriage*” for the despised wife (Ex 21:10). The man who despised his wife could not “*make merchandise of her*” (Deut 21:14).

These, and similar, laws are not intended to be guidelines for those who are in Christ Jesus. They were written for those with hard hearts, not those with new hearts and spirits (Ezek 36:26). They reflect the very nature of a conduct that must be regulated by Law. Individuals who are unregenerated must have certain restrictions imposed upon them in order to suppress the outbreak of their depraved wills.

This is precisely why righteousness cannot come through the Law. As it is written, “*But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith*” (Gal 3:11). Doing what is right is not the issue under the Law, but NOT doing what is wrong. Only one of the Ten Commandments directed that something be done: “Honor thy father and mother” (Ex 20:12). All of the other comments dealt with what was **not** to be done: “*no other gods,*” “*not make,*” “*not bow down,*” “*not take the name,*” “*not do any work,*” “*not kill,*” “*not commit adultery,*” “*not steal,*” “*not bear false witness,*” and “*not covet*” (Ex 20:1-17).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 108

“Mark 10:6 *But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*”

(Mark 10:6-9; Matthew 19:4-6)

INTRODUCTION

The Pharisees have asked Jesus, *“Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?”* Matthew adds, *“for every cause,”* giving us a clearer index into their devious ways. Jesus did not answer their question, but asked them what Moses said. After all, they were professed experts in the Law. The Pharisees answered that Moses *“suffered,”* or permitted *“to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.”* Jesus responded that Moses did this because of the hardness of their hearts – that is, to protect the woman against overly-harsh treatment. He also threw up a sort of roadblock to stall hasty actions – the preparation of a legal document. Now Jesus goes to the heart of the matter, refusing to become embroiled in *“foolish and unlearned questions”* (2 Tim 2:23) – that is, questions that are not asked because of a quest for truth. Servants of God are warned to avoid such traps – approaches to religion that *“minister questions”* (1 Tim 1:4), and produce a certain *“doting [a diseased appetite for] about questions and strifes of words”* (1 Tim 6:4). There are questions that are *“unlearned”* – that is, they are stupid because they are not the result of instruction. They flow out of the imagination and an attempt to justify self. They are questions that are not pointed in the right direction, and they cannot yield the *“fruits of righteousness”* (Phil 1:11). Being all-wise, Jesus detected when these questions were asked, and refused to get caught up in them. In this, He has provided a pattern for us all. We are to be learned enough in the ways of God and His Word to avoid the entrapments of foolish questions. Jesus will provide us a most excellent example of how to deal with such things.

“Mk 10:6 *But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.*”

Jesus will appear to launch into another subject – but He is not! The Pharisees have fastened on a leaf, Jesus will fasten on the root. Answers to questions are not found in details of procedure, but in the purpose, or intent, of God. Understanding the purpose of God is critical to resolving any honest inquiry. That discernment will also enable a person to see the folly of unlearned questions. They will grate against the soul, for they attempt to pull one away from the Lord to whom all allegiance has been given. This is one reason Ephaphras fervently prayed that the Philippians would *“stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”* (Col 4:12). He was not speaking about the fabled *“will of God for your life,”* an approach that has been concocted by fallen men.

The “*good and acceptable, and perfect will of God*” (Rom 12:2) does not have to do with your station in this world – who you marry, where you work, where you go to school, etc. It is certainly not wrong to seek God’s direction in such things. In that seeking however, it is imperative that you come to the point where you can “*discern both good and evil*” (Heb 5:14). That is how you avoid making wrong choices! When it comes to obtaining all things that pertain to life and godliness, it is always “*through the knowledge of Him*” (2 Pet 1:3) – that is, through “*our knowledge of Him,*” NIV – “*through the [full, personal] knowledge of Him.*” AMPLIFIED This knowledge involves an acquaintance with the “*ways,*” manners, or the customary ways, God has of doing things. It also involves familiarity with His revealed purpose.

A person can approach life with an eagerness to know a specific plan for his life, asking all manners of questions concerning the propriety of doing this or that. I suppose that all of us, at some time, have addressed life in this way. This, however, is not the most mature way, and we must grow out of that mode of thinking, and grow into spiritual maturity. When once it is realized that God has called us into His will and purpose, it will make no sense to us to approach life as though we are to call God into our purposes.

All of this is demonstrated in our text. Rather than Jesus being diverted into a discussion about divorce and procedures associated with it, He sets the purpose of God before His pretentious inquirers. The real question is not, “Can a man divorce his wife?” Rather, it is “What did God intend in marriage?” Jesus will now address this subject.

FROM THE BEGINNING. Mark reads, “*from the beginning of creation.*” Jesus used the same words in Mark 13:19. Matthew says, “*at the beginning*” (Matt 19:4). Here Jesus will declare **WHY** God made male and female. Any questions concerning the involvements of married people must get back to this root – “*the beginning.*” These are the first words of the Bible: “*In the beginning.*” They speak of Divine intention – an established objective or purpose. Isaiah spoke of “*the beginning of the world*” (Isa 64:4). Jesus did also (Matt 24:21). Other references to “*the beginning*” include Prov 8:22-23; John 1:1,2; 8:44; Acts 15:18; Eph 3:9; 2 Thess 2:13; Heb 1:10; 2 Pet 3:4; and 1 John 1:1. This is also called “*from the creation of the world*” (Rom 1:20). It is also referred to as “*the foundation of the world*” (Matt 13:35; 25:34; Lk 11:50; Heb 4:3; Rev 13:8; 17:8). Now, Jesus will consider marriage from the standpoint of “*the beginning*” – when it was first established.

GOD MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. Matthew reads the same way: “*made them male and female.*” Because it was “*not good for man to be alone,*” God said “*I will make him a help meet for him*” (Gen 2:18). Other versions read “*helper comparable to him,*” NKJV “*helper suitable for him,*” NASB “*helper as his partner,*” NRSV “*one like himself as a help to him,*” BBE “*a help like unto himself,*” DOUAY and “*helper meet (suitable, adapted, complementary) for him.*” AMPLIFIED He did not make another man, for He had something more in mind than companionship and sharing in a common work. God’s purpose was to create a race from which a vast multitude would ultimately be brought to glory. Two men would be of no value in that purpose, for procreation would be essential (Gen 1:28).

The postulate here is that God made Adam to DO something, and Eve was his helper in the matter – a suitable, or appropriate, helper. **Adam and Eve were a unit, not merely two separate entities.** Thus we read, “*So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He **him** ; male and female created He **them** ” (Gen 1:27). The “*him*” that was created is the same as “*the them.*” “*Man,*” in this sense, equals “*humanity*” – two in its parts, yet one in its essence. That is why it is written, “*Male and female created he **them** ; and blessed **them** , and called**

their name Adam , in the day when they were created” (Gen 5:2).

The word “*image*” denotes a representative figure, and speaks of the spiritual constitution of man, not his bodily presence. The male and female were not two separate images, but one – each one bearing God-like qualities that were complementary.

Thus Jesus brings His hearers to consider that both man and woman are God’s creation. Neither is to be considered an end of themselves, nor is their will the primary one.

“ 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.”

FOR THIS CAUSE. What is the “*cause*” or “*reason*” NKJV of which He speaks? It is because God “*made them male and female.*” Both were not “*made*” the same way. Man was “*formed*” from “*the dust of the dust of the ground*” (Gen 1:7), and Eve was made “*from the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man*” (Gen 2:22). She was not made from his head, so he could lord it over her. Neither was she made from his foot so he could tread upon her or abuse her. She was taken from his side, close to his heart, and intended to be a part of him. When the Lord presented Eve to Adam he said, “*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*” (Gen 2:23). It is “*for this cause*” that the following statement is made. Following the fall, Adam “*called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living*” (Gen 3:20).

A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER. These are come of the first words attributed to Adam, and were spoken when God brought Eve to him (Gen 2:24). This is also the first prophesy uttered by a man, for Adam knew nothing of a father and mother by experience. He spoke of things that were not yet in existence – fathers, mothers, and children. It was, therefore, an inspired utterance in which the Lord opened the future to Adam.

This utterance is worthy of some consideration. One might think that it should read, “*the woman shall leave . . .*” But it does not. It states that the man is to “*leave his father and mother*” in order to be joined to his wife. A husband is no longer under the care of his parents, but now has a charge of his own. That is, the tie between husband and wife is closer than the tie between the man and his parents. He is not “*one flesh*” with his parents. He is with his wife. Paul also quotes this in his exposition of Christ and the church, as mirrored in marriage (Eph 5:31).

The tie between husband and wife is closest than all other human relations. This is what makes sodomy such a transgression. It attempts to forge a union that contradicts the Divine intention behind the creation of male and female. There may be associations such as that between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:1-2). David said Jonathan’s love for him “*was wonderful, passing the love of women*” (2 Sam 1:26). By this he meant that it was not a love rooted in the flesh or carnal affection. Their **hearts** had been united. Notwithstanding, this was an exceedingly rare condition. Furthermore, David nor Jonathan left wives to be with one another. The closest of all fleshly associations is still that of a husband and wife.

It ought to be noted that the Pharisees have asked about a man putting away his wife. Jesus, referring to Divine intention, is speaking of a man leaving other associations to be with his wife. This is in direct opposition to the thinking of the Pharisees. They are asking about the dissolution of marriage. Jesus is speaking of every effort being made to maintain it.

CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE. Other versions read, “*be joined to his wife,*” NKJV “*be united to*

his wife,” NIV “*hold fast to his wife,*” ESV “*remain united with his wife,*” GWN “*adhere to his wife,*” MRD “*abide by his wife,*” TNT and “*be joined to his wife and cleave closely to her permanently.*” AMPLIFIED The word “*cleave*” means “to glue upon, glue to, to join oneself to closely, stick to.” THAYER The picture is of two boards securely glued together, so that one board cannot be broken without the other breaking also.

The union between a husband and wife is not a loose one. It is not one of mere subordination without careful consideration. Note, the word is not for the wife to cleave to her husband, but for the man to cleave unto his wife. This utterly decimates the notion that the wife is nothing more than a vassal, assigned to menial tasks which are done for the husband. To “*cleave*” is not to merely be around, but to culture a certain oneness. Such a man, assuming he is married to a virtuous woman, will “*safely trust her, so he will have no lack of gain*” NKJV (Prov 31:11). He is not looking for a reason to put her away, but is rather joined to her in both heart and mind. Again, this destroys the whole thought of the Pharisees.

NOT TWO, BUT ONE. When believed and embraced, these four words would resolve the great majority of marital conflicts: “*not two, but one.*” There is a sense in which individuality does not exist in marriage. That sense pertains to life in the world, not life with God, for there is only one Mediator between God and man, and it is Jesus (1 Tim 2:5). That is why our text says “*one flesh.*” We are “*one spirit*” with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17).

“*One flesh*” implies one in feelings, interest, and affection. Marriage is a moral and physical union. It involves both mind and body. Selfish interests have no place in marriage, even though some may argue that two people cannot possibly think alike. Much of the agreement between husbands and wives are the result of the man cleaving to his wife, refusing to let anything come between them.

Thus Jesus has taken the words of Adam and applied them to God Himself, confirming they were an inspired utterance – a prophecy declaring the mind of the Lord.

“ 9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Jesus is calling upon the Pharisees to think properly and draw correct conclusions. They had viewed marriage as something originating and concluded by men. The Lord has dashed their reasoning to the ground, showing that they have been speaking of something originated by the God of heaven. Therefore, when they think of marriage, God must be in the scenario.

WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER. Men have haggled over this point, asking **HOW God joins people together. Some have concluded that marriage ceremonies are worthless, and that a marriage certificate really has no value.** All of that is nothing more than philosophizing. It is like saying a bill of debt, which is also a contract, does not really amount to anything (Lk 16:6-7). The marriage of Ruth involved a formal ceremony (Ruth 4:1-11). When Isaiah married a wife, it involved the writing of a contract with two witnesses (Isa 8:1-3). Isaiah alluded to special garments worn by the bridegroom and the bride (61:10). Both Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke of the attire of a bride (Isa 49:18; Jer 2:32). There were also marriage feasts (Gen 29:22). Jesus likened the salvation of God to a “*wedding*” (Matt 22:3,8,10,11,12; Lk 12:36), and a “*marriage supper*” (Rev 19:9). Jesus’ first miracle was at a “*marriage*” (John 2:1-2). Malachi spoke of a marriage in relation to “*the wife of thy covenant*” (Mal 2:14). Solomon wrote of a woman who forsook her marital companion, thereby forgetting “*the covenant of her God*” (Prov 2:17). All of this is to confirm that being “*joined together*” by God is not something mystical that excludes ceremony or formalities.

Ultimately, marriage is not the result of a common choice between a man and woman. Rather, it speaks of what God has “*joined together,*” “*coupled together,*” GENEVA or “*united.*”

NJB That is, marriage is a sacred ordinance, not only sanctioned by God, but honorable in His sight. As it is written, “*Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*” (Heb 13:4). All marriage is honorable and to be conducted according to God’s will, whether it is the marriage of Cain (Gen 4:17), Esau (Gen 26:34), Abraham (Gen 17:15), or Jacob (Gen 28:6).

Marriage pertains strictly to this world. That is why Jesus said, “*The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage*” (Luke 20:34). Yet, even though the world is appropriately called “*this present evil world*” (Gal 1:4), there are sanctified relationships in it. During this year (2006), it has been estimated that only around 60% of the couples living together in the USA are married. This circumstance confirms that marriage is not being considered as two people whom God “*hath joined together.*” Unfortunately this delusion is spilling over into the church.

It also ought to be noted that God has joined more together than husband and wife. This is a principle that touches other areas also. **Sin and death** have been joined (Rom 8:2). **Grace and peace** have been united (Rom 1:7). In Jesus, **grace and truth** are joined (John 1:14). Other Divine unions include **faith and love** (1 Thess 5:8), **faith and hope** (1 Pet 1:21), the pursuit of **peace and holiness** (Heb 12:14), and **denying** ungodliness and worldly lust, while **living** soberly, righteously, and godly in this world (Tit 2:12). This is not to mention how the Lord has “*fitly joined*” **all believers together** in Christ Jesus (Eph 4:16). They are to be “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Cor 1:10).

LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER. Man is not to put his hand to what God has done! If God has put it together, man must make no attempt to take it apart! The Pharisees have asked if a man can put away his wife “*for every cause.*” Now Jesus apprises them that more is involved than the will of man. There is the matter of what God has done, and it must be considered.

The person who seeks to “*put asunder*” what God has “*joined*” contradicts the will of God and the law of nature as well. It is obvious that this is a most serious consideration, and we must not fear to hear what the Lord is saying.

As will be confirmed in the following verses, this does not mean that all marriages are indissoluble. **Jesus does not say that God never puts asunder what He has joined, and His words must not be interpreted to mean that. God joined Adam and Eve to the garden, and then put them asunder. Israel was joined to the land of Canaan, then expelled from it. Judas was joined to the apostleship, and was put asunder from it.**

For that matter, God took Israel to Himself as a wife, and then gave her a bill of divorce because of her unfaithfulness. “*Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away?*” (Isa 50:1). “*And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce*” (Jer 3:8). There are times when God Himself severs the bond. In such occasions, man is not separating what God has joined.

Man not separating what God has joined together also applies in the domain of the Spirit. Grace and truth are not to be put asunder, nor are sin and death, or faith and hope. When the Lord joins believer to believer, let no man engage in such wickedness as attempting to separate them by humanly conceived doctrines and other impositions of men.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 109

“ Mark 10:10 And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. 11 And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.” (Mk 10:10-12; Matt 5:32; 19:9-12; Lk 16:18)

INTRODUCTION

Having been asked by the Pharisees if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause, Jesus has pointed them to the purpose for marriage, and the involvement of God in it – joining two together, so that they become “*one flesh*.” He has, in fact, suggested that **maintaining** the marriage should be their focus, and not seeking lawful means to dissolve it. **The implication is that honest and good efforts are supported by the Lord.** If He was instrumental in ratifying the marriage – joining the man and woman together – why would He not grant what is required to maintain it? However, His mercy and grace will not be granted to those who remain self-centered instead of “*joined*,” and thus seek ways to please themselves rather than the God who instituted marriage. Unless He is hardening a person, the Lord never assists people to do wrong, nor does He bless them for doing so. For these reasons, and more, Jesus has presented the **foundational** teaching on marriage to the Pharisees, and no more. He will not enter into details and exceptions with those whose hearts are not pure. We will find in this text that **there was an exception to the rule** – an exception that was God-defined, not man-defined. Jesus will share that with those whose motives have not been sullied by selfishness and inconsideration – those who want to know the truth of the matter. It is apparent that Jesus is not in the business of merely disseminating information, feeding the intellect of inquisitive men. That is a principle that would revolutionize the “workshop” movement, which has no regard at all for whether a person is **worthy** to hear the delineation of a matter. While it may seem but a small point, **it is never proper to unload instruction about details and exceptions to those who have no love for the truth.** Give only foundational principles to them, for they are unworthy to hear any more.

“ Mk 10:10 And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter.”

In Matthew’s account of this event, it may appear as though Jesus told the Pharisees, “*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery*” (Matt 19:9). However, this was said to the disciples, and not to the Pharisees. Matthew carefully says of Christ’s initial answer, “*He said unto them* ” (Matt 19:8). It is written of his reply concerning an exception, “*And I say unto you .*” Mark makes the same distinction, preceding Christ’s words concerning being joined together with “*said unto them*,” while stating that the answer concerning the exception was given in response to the **disciples** inquiry. Luke affirms that Jesus did say a similar

word to the Pharisees when He upbraided them craftily finding ways to break the law of God (Lk 16:18). At that time, He was not commenting on marriage, but on the corrupt teaching of the Pharisees. Here, Jesus has focused on marriage, and is responding to the honest inquiry of His disciples.

HIS DISCIPLES ASK HIM AGAIN. Unlike churchmen of our day, the disciples were thinkers. They could not simply sit and listen to the words of Jesus, and then get up and go on their way, doing their own business. They had heard Jesus speak to the Pharisees on a very sensitive subject. The Pharisees were content to have Jesus conclude the discussion, but the disciples were not. When they returned to “*the house,*” and were away from the Pharisees, they asked Jesus “*again,*” unwilling to remain ignorant.

Loving the Truth. Here we are witnessing “*the love of the truth*” expressing self (2 Thess 2:10). Loving the truth cannot be simulated. This love involves an attraction to and appetite for the truth. It includes a refusal to remain in the dark about the things God reveals. It not only moves a person to relish the truth that he hears, but to pursue the truth of God as a man who is seeking goodly pearls.

Taking the Kingdom by Violence. This is also an example of taking the Kingdom “*by violence*” (Matt 11:12). The disciples were not content with what Jesus had said to the Pharisees. They seemed to sense that there was more to be known on this subject, and because it involved Divine activity and judgment, they refused to remain ignorant.

Pressing. This attitude is also a commentary on pressing “*toward the mark*” (Phil 3:14). Pressing toward the mark involves taking advantage of every opportunity – entering every open door. Here was a slot of time in which they had access to Jesus, and they took advantage of it.

Seeking the Kingdom First. In this we also have an excellent example of seeking “*first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt 6:33). The disciples did not discuss among themselves how they would have answered the Pharisees. Instead, they sought for the mind of Jesus on the subject. They inquired of Jesus’ mind first – before their own. They wanted a definition of “*righteousness*” from Him, not the Pharisees, some other teachers, or even themselves. Seeking first the Kingdom of God is not merely being religious. It is rather an earnest effort to obtain the Divine perspective of things, which is really the only one.

OF THE SAME MATTER. I have been with people who were quite willing to pursue their own matters, ignoring issues that had been brought up by others. For them, their world revolved around themselves, and they rarely involved themselves in anything they did not personally initiate. Those with whom I have been identified in the past usually have circular discussions, always covering the same topics. They rarely, if ever, touch upon a new subject, or a fresh perspective of an old one. That, of course, is the manner of traditional religion. It is lifeless with a prevailing interest in maintaining the institution and justifying self.

This is not the manner of the Kingdom of God. Those who remain with Christ obtain a genuine and holy interest in the things of God. They not only love the truth, they want to know everything that is knowable – that is, what has been revealed. If the Lord speaks to a matter, they want to know everything He has said, and what it means. They will plead like David, “*Give me understanding*” (Psa 119:34,73,125,144,169). Like Solomon they will confess, “*And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven*” (Eccl 1:13). Their quest will even extend further than that of Solomon. That is the kind of impact the presence and teaching of Jesus have on a tender heart.

Whether a person can presently articulate this thought or not, in Christ there is a kind of sensitivity to the fact that ignorance is not good. Ignorance is more beastly than manly, as Asaph confessed (Psa 73:22). It is a sign of spiritual decline, as Isaiah affirmed (Isa 56:10). Jesus and those whom He has sent do not want us to be ignorant (Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor 2:11; 1 Thess 4:13; 2 Pet 3:8). Wherever *Christian* men and woman are unlearned and ignorant about things God has revealed, faith will bring a great discontentment with the condition. Wherever that discontentment is **not** found, unbelief is sitting on the throne of a hard and calloused heart. Representative of all believers, the disciples asked for more understanding.

“ 11 And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.”

I am compelled to make a few introductory remarks about this text, lest it be misunderstood. Jesus is speaking in the capacity of a Savior as well as the Judge of all the earth. He is also delivering the foundational teaching of the matter. As Matthew will confirm, Mark does not give the complete teaching on the subject.

This does not suggest Mark was deficient. He is giving the summation of what Jesus said, for before our thinking can lead us to proper conclusions, it must be at the foundational level. There is such a thing as exceptions to the general rule. The thief on the cross was one, being saved in an unconventional manner (Lk 23:43). The woman taken in adultery is another, being delivered from the condemnation of the Law (John 8:11). On the side of exceedingly rare blessing, Enoch and Elijah were taken from the earth without having to go through the experience of death (Heb 11:5; 2 Kgs 2:11).

Any exceptions to the standard must be approved by God. Men cannot invent their own exceptions. Further, when it comes to exceptions, the grace of God will be evident, for no person is deserving of being approved in contradiction of the general rule. This will become more apparent as we proceed through this text.

PUT AWAY HIS WIFE. It is good to learn to speak in words that the Holy Spirit employs. No person in Scripture is ever said to have “*divorced*” his wife. That term is always used to describe one who has already been put away (Lev 21:14; 22:13; Num 30:9; Matt 5:32). Even when the Lord voiced His hatred of putting asunder that He had joined, he said, “*He hateth putting away*” (Mal 2:16). Other versions read “*hates divorce,*” but the words employed actually do mean “*putting away.*” Different Hebrew words are used. “*Divorce*” comes from the Hebrew word “*garash*” – to drive out. The expression “*putting away*” comes from the word “*shalach*” – forsake, push away, put away, send away. While the words are similar, “*putting away*” views the matter as putting asunder what God has joined together. “*Divorce*” is a softer term that accents the will of the one doing the putting away.

Jesus is teaching with the action of God in the background – “*what God hath joined together.*” Thus the action of the offending party must be compared with the will of the Lord, and what He has done.

MARRY ANOTHER. The insinuation is that the wife was put away because another woman had found favor in the eyes of her husband. In this case, the wife was only a source of self-gratification – which contradicts the concept of the wife being an appropriate “*helper*” (Gen 2:18,20). Again, this is against the backdrop of God joining them together as “*one flesh.*”
ADULTERY AGAINST HER. This is a strong word, but we must give heed to it. There is no way

to make adultery legal – even a “*bill of divorcement*.” What is more, the man commits adultery against the very woman he chose to put away. Ordinarily, “*adultery*” is a deed. Here, it is a marriage. Again, this is intended to discourage divorce – to confirm the gravity of such an action. This is the foundational teaching on the subject, and is to be the first way in which we consider the subject of divorce.

Matthew gives a more thorough coverage of the words of Jesus, also referring to the one who “*marrieth her which is put away*.” Not only does the husband commit adultery by taking another wife, the one who married the wife who was put away also commits adultery. There are exceptions to the general rule.

Exception #1: EXCEPT FOR FORNICATION. In Matthew’s account, Jesus states an exception to the rule: “*except it be for fornication*” (Matt 19:9). Matthew 5:32 reads, “*saving for the cause of fornication*.” Fornication is fleshly intimacy outside the bounds of marriage. By making this exception, Jesus is confirming the way God looks at unfaithfulness. In fact, God Himself put away Israel because of her fornication, or unfaithfulness (Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8).

Exception #2: DEPARTURE OF THE UNBELIEVER. Paul also cites an exception to the general rule, which general rule he affirms in Rom 7:3: “*So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man*.” Yet, when dealing with divided homes, where one was a believer and one was not, he referred to an unbeliever being unwilling to dwell peaceably with the believer. “*But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace*” (1 Cor 7:15). “*Not under bandage*” equals a lawful separation of the joining. Notwithstanding, even in that case, every effort is to be made to “*save*” the unbeliever (1 Cor 7:16).

The purpose of this teaching is not to condemn people found in uncomely situations. Jesus’ dialog with the woman at the well confirms there is mercy for those whose lives have been nothing more than a blunder (John 4:10-18). **However, let no person seek to exploit this circumstance!**

“ 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”

A WOMAN PUTTING AWAY HER HUSBAND. This is a most unusual circumstance, and indicates that both wives and husbands have equal rights in the matter of divorce, even though Moses did not speak on the matter. It ought to be evident they are also included in the exception that Jesus provides. However, with the exclusion of the revealed exception, it is incumbent for us to think of marriage within the framework of these words. God takes seriously the bond of marriage, and so should we – particularly redeemed men.

It should be clear to us that salvation makes no provision for the abuse or degradation of people, whether in the home, the church, or society in general. This is made plain in other teaching, such as that of Paul in the seventh chapter of First Corinthians. There he even allows for a woman to leave her unbelieving husband, even if he is peaceable and has not committed fornication against her. However, he adds, “*But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife*” (1 Cor 7:11).

All of this is not intended to confuse us. Rather, it is to confirm the complications that are introduced into marriage when one of the parties insists upon their own will being

dominant. Wherever ideal circumstances do not exist, men and women are not to jump to unwarranted conclusions. Rather, they should proceed with the caution of faith, seeking to do what is right in the sight of the Lord, and making no decision that puts them at a spiritual disadvantage. This will become apparent in Matthew's extensive coverage of this occasion.

THE DISCIPLES RESPONSE. Matthew provides the disciples' response to Jesus' words. "*His disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry*" (Matt 19:10). That is, if once a person is married there is no possible way to extricate oneself from the marriage, even when circumstances are unfavorable in the sight of God, it is better never to marry. Marriage, in such a case, would be an unbearable yoke. After all, even God will not remain with someone who is unfaithful. The disciples had apparently passed over Christ's clause of exception: "*except it be for fornication*" (Matt 19:9).

The kind of forethought evidenced in the disciples' response is totally foreign in our culture. To consider Jesus' teaching as directly impacting upon human conduct is not the manner of current religious thought. Having spent, at this time, nearly three years with the Lord, the disciples had picked up on the seriousness of what He said – a response to be coveted!

JESUS' REPLY. "*But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*" (Matt 19:11-12). The saying to which Jesus alludes is not His own regarding unwarranted divorces. He is rather referring to the hasty statement made by the disciples: "*it is not good to marry.*" He does not write it off as a trite saying, but rather confirms there are circumstances in which it holds true – conditions under which "*it is good not to marry.*" Striking at the root of self-centeredness, He affirms that there are situations in which it is not preferable to marry.

THOSE TO WHOM IT IS GIVEN. There are those who **can** receive this word: "*it is good not to marry.*" Ordinarily, it "*is not good for man to be alone*" (Gen 2:18) – but here is a case where it **is** good. This is not a philosophical view, but is the result of something God has given.

THOSE BORN EUNUCHS. A eunuch is one incapacitated for marriage. This could be a physical condition, or one in which there is a total lack of such a desire. Jesus first cites those who are born without the capacity for marriage. This is not a choice, but a natural condition. It is unusual, but it does exist. In such a case, "*it is good not to marry.*"

THOSE WHOM MEN HAVE MADE EUNUCHS. In ancient times, it was a practice to physically make certain men eunuchs in order that they might give themselves wholly to other interests. It appears that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were made eunuchs in Babylon, and thereby set apart to serve the interests of the king (Dan 1:3-7). Such men, by their very physical condition, had no interest in marriage, even though that condition was imposed upon them. Some countries still practice this upon repeated moral offenders.

THOSE WHO MADE THEMSELVES EUNUCHS FOR THE KINGDOM. Jesus also mentions those who devote themselves wholly to the Lord, abstaining from marriage by choice in order that they might more fully serve the Lord. These are assumed to be gifted people, who have been called by God into such service. Paul himself was such a person, and referred to his continence as a "*proper gift*" (1 Cor 7:7,32-34). He also adds that there are severe circumstances during which it is best not to marry – as a time of severe persecution or distress (1 Cor 7:26). Thus we have been exposed to the teaching of our Lord, and of its absolute superiority to the lifeless and routine teaching

of the scribes and Pharisees.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 110

“ Mark 10:13 And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-15; Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17)

INTRODUCTION

The uniqueness of Jesus is seen in this text. (1) In those who came to Him, (2) In what displeased Him, and, (3) in His forwardness to bless. One of the bitter herbs of institutionalized religion is that through it Jesus loses significance in the eyes of the people. This is serious beyond all imagination. If Jesus is the only way to God, the only means of appropriating the **truth**, and the exclusive means of obtaining **life**, He must be known (John 14:6)! To fail to perceive and apprehend Jesus Himself is to forfeit everything that He brings to men. Nothing from God can be obtained independently of Him – and the knowledge of, or acquaintance with, Him is the avenue through which all of His gifts come. Further, faith, not intellect, is the hand of the soul that takes hold of Jesus – believing the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). In view of these circumstances, Scripture must be seen as a needful revelation. It is not mere literature or impersonal history that is divorced from practical living – thought, word, and deed. In the Gospel record we are being exposed to the character of Jesus. The “*doctrine of Christ*” (Heb 6:1; 2 John 1:9) is the affirmation of Christ’s Person, mission, accomplishments, and current activities. The Gospels are the appointed record of the expression of those things in His words and deeds. What Jesus did when He went about preaching, teaching, and doing good, is in perfect consonance with His Person, mission, accomplishments, and present activity. That is why we cannot gloss the record of His life, or handle it with speculative hands and curious minds. This will be evident in our text.

“ Mark 10:13 And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them.”

THEY BROUGHT YOUNG CHILDREN TO HIM. The Jews were a nation cultured by God. He focused His attention on them, leading and teaching them. In His dealings with them He taught them how to think of their children. In His associations with Abraham, the father of the Israelites, God spoke frequently of his progeny. He promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his “*seed*” – descendants or offspring (Gen 13:15-16; 15:16). He established His covenant with Abraham and his seed (Gen 17:7,9-10). Later God instructed Israel not to cause any of their children to be offered to the idol Molech (Lev 18:21). Parents were promised that their devotion to God involved things going well for their children as well as themselves (Deut 4:40; 12:28). The words of God were to be diligently taught to their children (Deut 6:7). Before he died, Moses told the people that when they disobeyed God and were driven out of the land into other nations, they were to recall

the promises of God and return to Him with their children (Deut 30:2).

Additionally, as seen in the commitment of the babe Jesus (Lk 2:22), male children were dedicated to the Lord, accompanied by an appropriate sacrifice (Lk 2:23-24). Whether the child was male or female, the mother was to be cleansed and sanctified before the Lord with an appropriate sacrificial offering (Lev 12:2-6). In this an association of bearing children was made with the relationship of both the parents and the children with the Lord.

Thus we see how this nation was directed to regard children – as participants in the covenant and blessing of God. This kind of thinking moved the people to associate Divine blessing with their children as well as themselves. Mark says they brought “*young children*” to Jesus. Matthew says “*little children*” (Matt 19:13). Luke says “*infants*” (Lk 18:15). The idea is that they were immature children – in their formative years. These included infants (or nursing babes, or those who had to be carried), as well as half-grown, or developing children.

In this text we see that Jesus had been associated with God and spiritual matters. For those who brought their children Jesus, He was not perceived as a mere novelty of the times. It is obvious that no one connected Jesus with entertainment, having fun, or some other form of novel distraction. Those who introduce their children to Jesus in such a manner have only created obstacles for their children that will have to be overcome before they can be saved. Such approaches are knowing Jesus “*after they flesh*” – something no believer does (2 Cor 5:16).

THAT HE SHOULD TOUCH THEM. Matthew says, “*to put His hands on them, and pray*” (Matt 19:13). It is a day of spiritual jeopardy when such language has a strange sound to the professing church. Frequently we read of Jesus deliberately touching people. He “*touched*” a leper and healed him (Matt 8:3). He “*touched*” the hand of Peter’s mother-in-law, then healed her of a fever (Matt 8:15). Two different times Jesus “*touched*” the eyes of a pair of blind men and healed them (Matt 9:29; Matt 20:34). On the mount of transfiguration He “*touched*” His disciples who had fallen to the ground, telling them to rise (Matt 17:7). He “*touched*” the tongue of a man with an impediment of speech, and healed him (Mk 7:33).

The point to be seen here is that the people sensed there had to be contact with Jesus. It was not enough to see Him from a distance, or to hear a report of what He had done for others. In this we are being introduced to the manner of salvation, empowerment, and Divine direction. Now that Jesus is seated in the heavenly realms His “*touch*” is experienced by faith. That is, He personally identifies with those who “*receive Him, believing on His name*” (John 1:12). Paul referred to this kind of relationship when he spoke of his compelling quest for the blessing. “. . . *I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may win Christ, and be found in Him . . . having . . . the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*” (Phil 3:8-11). The absence of this kind of spirit is unspeakably serious. It is like parents who would not bring their children to Jesus, yet expected them to be blessed by Him. Such a thought did not enter the minds of those in our text.

HIS DISCIPLES REBUKED THEM. This quest to have the infants and little children touched and prayed for by Jesus seemed to the disciples to be inconsistent with what He was doing. It appears that they looked at it as a troublesome distraction. Up to this point there is no record of Jesus giving attention to little ones, other than including the children in the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand (Matt 14:21; 15:38). Perhaps they employed the fabled *law of exclusion*, reasoning that if Jesus had not done this before, He would never be inclined to do so. At any

rate, they sought to stop, what they conceived to be, an intrusion. No doubt they thought this was a favor to Jesus, and would free Him to do things that were more meaningful. This mentality still prevails in the Middle East countries.

“ 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”

WHEN JESUS SAW IT. Jesus lived out the doctrine concerning the omniscience of God. It is said of the Lord, *“The LORD looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men”* (Psa 33:13). Again, *“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”* (Prov 15:3). And again, *“all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* (Heb 4:13). When the sons of men sinned in the land of Shinar, conspiring to build a city and a tower to make themselves a name, God saw it (Gen 11:2-5). When Israel murmured against the Lord, He *“saw it”* (Deut 32:19). Knowing this aspect of the Lord’s nature, David said, *“Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me”* (Psa 139:7-10). A lively awareness of this can greatly assist us in avoiding unnecessary difficulties.

Although the disciples may not have been in the Lord’s presence when they rebuked the ones bringing the children, yet He *“saw it.”* He did not see their deed inadvertently, but intentionally. That is, seeing everything is a part of His character, and it is always intentional, or by choice. This is why we should not expect the Lord to be unaffected by what He sees. No individual can be purposeful and indifferent at the same time – and this is particularly true of the Lord, in whose image man has been made. Those who affirm that God *“can handle”* the sight of human indiscretions simply do not know what they are talking about. Their view confirms their inexcusable ignorance, even though they spout off as though they had knowledge.

HE WAS MUCH DISPLEASED. True doctrine is always confirmed by Divine expression. Here we have a case in point. Jesus saw the disciples rebuking those who brought their little ones to Him and *“He was much displeased,”* *“indignant,”* NASB *“angry,”* BBE or *“indignant and pained.”* AMPLIFIED The word used here is especially strong. It means *“to be moved with indignation,”* THAYER *“be angry, be displeased,”* FRIBERG and *“to be indignant with what is judged to be wrong.”* LOUW-NIDA This is a Divine reaction – a response of the Divine nature. This is the real Jesus, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity (Heb 1:9). As such, He cannot overlook the expressions of men, treating them as though they were of no consequence.

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN. *“Permit,”* NASB or *“Let,”* NIV *“the little children come to me.”* Remember, Jesus is indignant at the action of His disciples. It is as though He said to them, *“Stop standing in the way of these children. Let them go past you, and come to Me!”* This confirms that although children may not know how to ask for a blessing, they are not incapable of receiving one.

Technically, the children were not coming to Jesus of their own accord. They were being *“brought”* to Him. The disciples did not rebuke the children, but *“those who brought them.”* This passage should stir the hearts and consciences of every parent who is not bringing their children to Jesus. It should also convict those who do not want the children brought to a teaching Jesus – One who is expounding the things of God to those with understanding. Those who brought the children did not ask for a special session for them, but rather sought for them to be blessed while Jesus was ministering. And what shall we say of those who attempt to

keep people from coming to Jesus? Is it really innocent for people to say, “We do not want to spend so much time on these things.” Or, “Why are you so radical? Lighten up!” I understand that it is not appropriate to make laws on this matter. However, it seems to me that it is incumbent upon us to learn of the ways of God as made known in Jesus Christ. When His ways are made known to us, we dare not ignore them.

There is a sense in which this circumstance mirrors us coming to God. Jesus is said to save to the uttermost those who “*come unto God by Him*” (Heb 7:25). That is, we actually come into the proximity of God by being **brought there** by Jesus, for “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*” (1 Pet 3:18).

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM. Here is an unvarying trait of the Kingdom of God: those who are “*the children of the Kingdom*” (Matt 13:38) **always come to Jesus**. The Master said, “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me*” (John 6:37). Those who stand aloof from Him, entertaining no interest in Him, are not His people. Jesus affirmed, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*” (John 10:27).

In their uncluttered minds and moral innocence, those “*little children*” reminded Jesus of the glorious Kingdom over which He would preside. After He had been lifted up in His vicarious death, He would “*draw all men unto Him,*” and they would come. Behind the scenes every person coming to Jesus is being “*drawn*” – “*allured,*” as it were, so that the Lord can “*speak comfortably*” to them (Hos 2:14).

“ 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.”

VERILY. The word “*verily*” is a very potent word. Unfortunately, it is difficult to translate the original word into English. Lexically it means, “firm, faithful, surely, truly, most assuredly, so it is.” THAYER Because of the translation problem, the word is often transliterated, converting the Greek letters to English ones, making the word “*Amen.*” Other versions read, “*assuredly,*” NKJV “*truly,*” NASB “*I tell you the truth,*” NIV “*I assure you,*” CSB “*I can guarantee this truth,*” GWN “*I tell you as seriously as I know how,*” LIVING and “*in solemn truth.*” WEYMOUTH As you can see, men have been challenged in expressing this thought in English.

This is a word that is driven by the nature of God and His Kingdom. What God affirms stands, cannot waver, and cannot be successfully contradicted. This is why He has “*magnified*” His word above all His name (Psa 138:2), so that every aspect of faith and understanding rests upon what the Lord has said. When Jesus says “*Verily,*” He means that we are to take hold of what He says and cling firmly to it. If we entertain any ideas that conflict with what He says, or makes it difficult to receive His word, we are to thrust those ideas from us. They have come from the wicked one. There is no chance that the words that follow are not precisely and unchangingly true. They must not be questioned. Men must not philosophize about them, or speculate about varied meanings they may wish to assign to them.

RECEIVING THE KINGDOM AS A CHILD. Jesus has already said of the little ones, “*of such is the kingdom of God.*” Matthew reads, “*kingdom of heaven,*” confirming both terms are referring to the same kingdom. “*Kingdom of God*” emphasizes the Ruler. “*Kingdom of heaven*” accents the location of its seat of authority.

The “*little children*” are teachable, have no competing interests, and entertain no conflicting aims. Hold a little child in your arms. They are content to have your attention, and will listen carefully

to you, even though they may not understand all of your words. They have no difficulty with being dependent upon you. They are not prejudice or malicious.

That is the manner in which the Kingdom is received. Those who receive the kingdom as a little child desire the kingdom. They want what it offers, and desire to stay within its provinces. They want to be with Jesus, and be like Him as well.

SHALL NOT ENTER THEREIN. I have an intense interest in any word of Jesus concerning being excluded from the Kingdom! Here He affirms a word that can in no way be nullified, altered, or modified. A person who does not receive the Kingdom of God without question, out of preference, and with an earnest spirit, will not enter into it. God will shut the door to such an individual. Jesus died and rose again, but the power of His works will not be experienced by those who have other preferences. Saying it another way, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5). The emphasis there is on “*born.*” The “*water*” and “*the Spirit*” only have significance if a birth is realized through them.

Elsewhere we are told that “*flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*” (1 Cor 15:50). It is also written that “*no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*” (Eph 5:5). The Spirit also excludes all of “*the unrighteous*” from any inheritance in the Kingdom, specifying *fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners* (1 Cor 6:9-10). It is also written that those doing “*the works of the flesh*” are excluded from the Kingdom. These include *Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like* (Gal 5:19-21).

When “*preaching the Kingdom of God*” (Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:31), both the included and the excluded are to be declared. Receiving the Kingdom as a little child is way of affirming the absence of all excluding traits.

HE TOOK THEM, PUT HIS HANDS ON THEM, AND BLESSED THEM. A very tender scene, indeed! Jesus took the children in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. That is, He prayed, calling upon the Father to focus His attention upon the children, and work for their good. God once told Aaron to invoke a blessing upon the people. “*The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*” (Num 6:24-26). The apostles often blessed the churches in their letters, calling upon the Lord to work in them (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:10). It is still good to seek the blessing of the Lord upon our children – bringing them to Jesus so He may hold them, put His hand upon them, and bless them. Such blessing requires walking in the light so that the Lord will give heed to you.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 111

“ Mark 10:17 And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. 19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. 20 And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.”

(Mark 10:17-20; Matthew 19:16-20; Lk 18:18-21)

INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing a single day in the life of the Lord. Jesus has just instructed His disciples concerning the manner of the Kingdom. He has taken little children into His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them. Now He goes on His way, continuing His gradual trek to Jerusalem, where He will lay down His life as a *“ransom for many”* (Mk 10:45). There is something to behold of Jesus as we read of Him moving about among men. **He has never allowed Himself to be caught up in the affairs of this world.** When confronted with social issues, He never spent much time on them. Certain people asked Him about paying government taxes (Mk 12:14-17). Once a young man asked Him to settle a family issue of distributing an inheritance (Lk 12:13-14). Another time He was told of Pilate butchering some Jews, and offering their blood with their sacrifice (Lk 13:1-5). In each of those cases He gave a quick answer with little elaboration. In one of them, concerning the distribution of an inheritance, He refused to become involved. The fewness of such occurrences confirms that people did not generally associate Jesus with worldly issues. Nor, indeed, did He give Himself to elaborating upon such things. His teaching and preaching chiefly related to *“the Kingdom of God”* (Lk 8:1). He was noted for teaching in synagogues (Matt 13:54; Mk 1:21; Lk 4:15; John 18:20) and the Temple (Mk 12:35; Lk 19:47; Lk 20:1; John 18:20). This manner of Jesus teaching, and the places where He was ordinarily found, is not generally known.

“ Mark 10:17 And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

WHEN HE WAS GONE FORTH INTO THE WAY. Other versions say Jesus *“was going out into the road”* NKJV *“was setting out on a journey,”* NASB *“started on His way,”* NIV and *“went out to resume His journey.”* WEYMOUTH Matthew says that Jesus *“departed from there”* – where He had blessed the children (Matt 19:16). The idea is that Jesus left the place to resume His journey to Jerusalem, where He would lay down His life. Luke says of this period of time that *“when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”*

(Luke 9:51). En route, He passed through a village of the Samaritans, and “*sent messengers before His face*” to “*make ready for Him.*” However, even the Samaritans could see that “*His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem.*” Rather than taking advantage of the brief opportunity given to them “*they did not receive Him*” (Lk 9:51-53).

The thing to be seen here is that Jesus was driven by Divine purpose. He knew why He had come into the world, and He would not be deterred from it. One of the great deficiencies of the modern church is that it is too easily distracted to lesser things. Such distractions bleed away any spiritual energies they have, so that they cease to “*run with patience the race that is set*” before them (Heb 12:1). They allow their agenda to be changed, and it is not long before heaven is no longer in their eye, and they are consumed by worldly interests, fads, trends, and the likes. Real spiritual life was lived out before men in Jesus Christ. We see in Him that it is a **focused** life, characterized by holy intention and a resolve not to be moved away from the appointed goal. We all can learn from our Master, and come to acknowledge that “*The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above His lord*” (Matt 10:24). We really do not have the right to live in any other way.

THERE CAME ONE RUNNING. Luke tells us that this man was a “*certain ruler,*” which means magistrate or prince (Lk 18:18). Other versions read “*an official,*” GWN and “*a religious leader.*” NLT This was a man to whom the people ordinarily came, but now he is the one that comes to Jesus. He hastened to Jesus, coming without delay. Once “*all the people, when they beheld Him,*” came “*running*” to Jesus (Mk 9:15). Another time the people “*came running together*” to Him (Mk 9:25). This was a depiction of the manner of the Kingdom. People who see Jesus as He is come running to Him – come quickly, with haste, and without delay.

AND KNEELED TO HIM. This man “*knelt before*” Jesus NASB – a posture of insightful worship. Once a leper came to Jesus, “*and kneeling down to Him*” sought to be healed (Mk 1:40). Another time “*a certain man*” with a demon-oppressed son came “*kneeling down to Him,*” asking Jesus to have mercy on His son (Mk 17:14). Kneeling is a posture of submission, which is an integral part of worship. Today we are being introduced to a form of worship that has little submission in it – and this is not good.

GOOD MASTER. Other versions read “*Good Teacher,*” for the word “*Master*” means “*instructor, or teacher.*” STRONG’S The word “*Master*” is taken from a Greek word that means “*one who teaches concerning the things of God, and the duties of man.*” THAYER Over the years, I have observed the fewness of people who view Jesus as a “*Teacher.*” You may remember that Nicodemus referred to Jesus as “*a Teacher sent from God,*” even though he also said Jesus was noted for doing “*miracles*” (John 3:2). The man in our text felt he could learn something from Jesus, who, in his perception, was a “*good Master,*” or Teacher. While this incident will not conclude with a blessing for this man, he has done well to come to Jesus, and to perceive Him as One from whom he can learn. That, it appears to me, is a sort of beginning-understanding of Jesus.

WHAT SHALL I DO? What an arresting question: “*what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” Matthew says he asked, “*what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*” (Matt 19:16). Earlier, after the feeding of the five thousand, Peter responded to Jesus’ inquiry about whether or not they would go away, “*Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). Apart from these two instances, and the words of Jesus Himself, there is no record of any other person until Christ saying the words “*eternal life.*” In fact, the words “*eternal life*” do not occur a single time from Genesis through Malachi. In all standard versions of Scripture, “*Everlasting life*” occurs once in Daniel (Dan 12:2). “*Life for evermore*” occurs once in Psalm

133:3. “*Length of days for ever and ever*” is found in Psa 21:4). Isaiah prophesied of death being swallowed up “*in victory*” (Isa 25:8). Solomon did not make so much as one illusion to “*eternal life*,” and never used the words “*for ever*,” or “*eternal*.”

However, with the advent of Jesus such a stress was placed on eternal life, that it provoked this man to inquire about it (Mk 10:30; John 3:15,16,36; 4:14; 5:24,39; 6:27,40,47, 54; 10:28). In His prayer on the night of His betrayal Jesus said God had given Him “*power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many*” as was were given to Him (John 17:2). The real Jesus provokes a compelling interest in “*eternal life!*” Where there is little or no interest in eternal life, Jesus has not been seen.

“ 18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. 19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother.”

WHY CALLEST THOU ME GOOD? Why does Jesus take the ruler to task for calling Him “*good?*” He did not say the man was wrong for doing this, but asked him why he said it? This ruler had apparently not made a connection between Jesus and God the Father. He was thinking of Him as an excellent teacher, but not as the Son of God in whom the “*fulness of the Godhead*” dwells “*bodily*.” It is possible to have a view of Jesus that is technically correct, but is not lofty enough. For example, there are some who think of Him as their Friend, even though there is no such representation in all of scripture. Jesus called His disciples HIS “*friends*,” stipulating that they were so only if they did whatever He commanded (John 15:14). He added that the confirmation of them being HIS friends was that He had made known unto them “*all things*” that He had heard from His Father (John 15:15).

NONE GOOD BUT GOD. Jesus is not saying that He Himself is not good. Concerning Himself, He said, “*I am good*” (Matt 20:15). Although Jesus “*went about doing good*,” **He was not “good” because He did good things.** Rather, He did good things because he was inherently “*good*” – just as God is “*good*.” Saying “*there is none good but one, that is God*,” is similar to saying, “*There is none holy as the Lord*” (1 Sam 2:2). Man can be both “*good*” (Lk 6:45; 23:50; Acts 11:24) and “*holy*” (2 Kgs 4:9; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:15) – but he must be MADE so. God is of Himself “*good*,” and by virtue of His Deity, Jesus was also “*good*.”

It is not acceptable to know Jesus “*after the flesh*” (2 Cor 5:14), or apart from His Godhood. If the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily, and that according to God’s good pleasure (Col 1:19), then it is wrong to view Him as a mere man – even as an excellent and superior man! That is the point of Christ’s response. The outcome of this incident will confirm that this ruler had not seen Jesus as He really is. Like the blind man who required a second touch from Jesus, he could only see men “*as trees walking*” (Mk 8:24). He did see something, but it was not enough.

THOU KNOWEST THE COMMANDMENTS. Matthew reads, “*keep the commandments*” (Matt 19:17). Here is an answer that must be comprehended. The man had asked what he could DO to inherit eternal life. That was a question couched in the concepts of Law. Therefore, Jesus answered him in strict accord with the law. It is written, “*Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man DO , he shall live in them : I am the LORD*” (Lev 18:5). In his valedictory address, Moses reaffirmed this covenant: “*Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to DO them, that ye may live . . .*” (Deut 4:1). He states it again affirming observing to DO all of the commandments was “*that ye may live*” (Deut 8:1). This is the principle of Law – DO and you will live. The doing

had to be complete, with nothing lacking. Every commandment had to be obeyed all of the time, with not a solitary exception. That being done faithfully and without the smallest deviation, life was promised.

Jesus said much the same thing to a lawyer who asked Him concerning eternal life. The Lord asked him how he had read the Law, and what it said on the matter. After answering Jesus that it was, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself*” (Luke 10:27), Jesus responded, “*Thou hast answered right: **this DO , and thou shalt live***” (Luke 10:28).

Three times Ezekiel confirmed this principle of Law: “*And I gave them My statutes, and showed them My judgments, **which if a man DO , he shall even live in them***” (Ezek 20:11,13,20). Nehemiah did the same: “*which if a man DO, he shall live in them*” (Neh 9:29). Paul also takes up this refrain, affirming how the Law speaks concerning righteousness. “*For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, **That the man which DOETH those things shall live by them***” (Rom 10:5). Paul also wrote to the retrogressing Galatians, “*And the law is not of faith: but, **The man that DOETH them shall live in them***” (Gal 3:12). Life by DOING – that is what the Law promised. Yet not a single man experienced that promise. The whole of humanity has offended by breaking the Law. And, as James well says, “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*” (James 2:10).

Jesus then reminds the ruler of commandments from the second table of the Law – a sort of breakdown of loving ones neighbor as himself. Again, no deviation was permitted. Obedience had to be perfect and consistent throughout the entirety of one’s life – every minute of every day of every year, throughout the duration of life.

The Lord had answered the man according to the nature of His question. **Actually, eternal life is not conferred because of doing, but because of believing** (John 3:15,16). It is a gift, not a wage (Rom 6:23). It is given to those who are given to Jesus (John 17:2).

“ 20 And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.”

ALL THESE HAVE I OBSERVED. Matthew reads, “*All these things have I kept from my youth up*” (Matt 19:20). Luke reads basically the same (Lk 18:21). I do not doubt that the man thought his answer was satisfactory – but the level of his thought was too low. Luke lists five commandments, omitting “*defraud not*” (Lk 18:20). Matthew lists six, omitting “*defraud not,*’ and adding the summation commandment, “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” (Matt 19:18-19). Defrauding has to do with taking away a neighbor’s property, and is a practical way of speaking of covetousness, which is prohibited by the tenth commandment.

This ruler had not flawlessly kept these commandments, even though he said he had “*observed,*” or “*kept*” NKJV them since he was a boy. NIV Of course, Jesus had not even mentioned the weightier commandments that were summarized in the words, “*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul, and with **all** thy might*” (Deut 6:5). These commandments were: (1) Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. (2) Make no graven images or bow down to them. (3) Do not take the name of the Lord in vain. (4) Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Remember, the Law had to be kept perfectly and without a flaw: “*keep **all** My commandments **always***” (Deut 5:29). All the people who heard the Law spoken from Sinai had to keep it **all** the days of their lives, together with their sons and the grandsons (Deut 6:2). They were to be “*diligently*” kept **and** done, while walking in “*all his ways,*” and cleaving to Him (Deut 11:22). They had to **always** “*do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord*” (Deut 13:18),

walking “ *ever in His ways*” Deut 19:9). Further, His commandments could not be kept perfunctorily. The people were commanded to “*do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul*” (Deut 26:16). Moses solemnly reminded the people that they were to “*keep all the commandments*” (Deut 27:1). Several times they were told to “*keep*” the commandments **AND** “*do*” them (Lev 22:31; 26:3; Deut 7:11; 11:22; 13:18; 19:9). That is, they were to keep them in their hearts and minds, always meditating upon them. They were to “*talk of them*” in the house, when they walked by the way, when they layed down, and when they rose up (Deut 6:7).

That is a brief summation of life by means of the Law. If eternal life can be appropriated by doing, these things **all** had to be done **always** , in **every** circumstance, with **all** the heart, and **precisely** and **thoroughly** . That is all in the words, “*by which a man may live IF he does them*” NASB (Lev 18:5). No man of an “*honest and good heart*” (Lk 8:15) will affirm that he has fulfilled that inexorable requirement. It has always been true, “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*” (1 John 1:10).

Notwithstanding this circumstance there remains no small number of preachers and teachers that are offering people eternal life upon the basis of Law: **do** and live! This is a wholly erroneous approach to eternal life, as confirmed by the First Covenant. It did not confer life upon a single soul during its prominence – a period of 1,500 years. Under the Law you could not live until you had done everything God commanded – things relating to God primarily, and man secondarily. A better way had to be found!

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. Now we come to the matter of obtaining justification – which refers to the means by which one is made alive – by another principle. This “*new and living way*” (Heb 10:20) is declared to be “*by faith.*” This, the Spirit affirms, is entirely apart from the works of the Law – which offered life upon the basis of doing. As it is written, “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*” (Rom 3:28). This does not mean we are free to be lawbreakers. The point is that “*the righteousness of the law*” is now fulfilled in, **not** wrought by us. As it is written, “*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Rom 8:4). That is, we are “*made righteous*” (Rom 5:19) upon the basis of our faith in Christ. Therefore Paul writes, “*But to him that worketh not , but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted [reckoned NASB credited NIV] for righteousness*” (Rom 4:5).

To say it another way, through the new birth – and we are “*children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:26) – we are created with a character that perfectly fulfils the law. This new creation has no propensity to sin. In fact, it “*cannot sin*” (1 John 3:9), and Satan cannot even “*touch*” it (1 John 5:18). Although we still retain an “*old man,*” or “*the flesh,*” or “*the natural man,*” God has graciously provided for the situation. First, in being “*dead with Christ,*” this part of our human constitution is no longer part of our essential persons. It has been severed from our spirits by “*the circumcision of Christ*” (Col 2:11). Now we are under no obligation to sin, but have been freed from bondage to it (Rom 6:17,22). When the flesh, in which dwells “*no good thing*” (Rom 7:18), asserts itself, the regenerated ones can say, “*it is no more I that do it*” (Rom 7:17,20). That is, these are not expressions of the real “*I,*” the “*new creature*” (2 Cor 5:17). The Law would not allow for such an experience – tempting thoughts (Rom 7:7). However, we are now “*dead to the Law,*” and it cannot condemn us for having unwilling thoughts, which are temptations (Rom 7:4). Although this is a technical point, it is a valid and comforting one. The person that is dead “*is freed from the law*” (Rom 7:4-5), for it has no power over those who are dead – in this case, “*with Christ.*” How gloriously different from life offered, but never realized, by means of Law!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 112

“ Mark 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. 22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. 23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”

(Mark 10:21-23; Matthew 19:21-22; Lk 18: 22-23)

INTRODUCTION

Is it easy to obtain eternal life – like repeating a prayer, or going through a simple ceremony? We have an actual account before us that deals with a quest for eternal life. A certain ruler came to Jesus personally, not to His disciples, asking what he must do to “*inherit eternal life.*” The exceeding rarity of this inquiry ought to be noted. In the Gospels, one other man asked this question – “*a certain lawyer,*” or expert in the Law of Moses (Lk 10:25). This was not the man of our text, for Luke also records the account of the rich young ruler (Lk 18:18). The answers Jesus gave to these two men also differed (Lk 10:26-37 vs 18:19-23). These are the only two times in all of Scripture that this question was asked. That makes it all the more important for us to give heed to how the Lord answered it. Two different men: a rich man and an expert in the Law of Moses. We do not know if these men were among the five thousand that Jesus fed earlier. It was after that miraculous feeding that Jesus said, “*Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed*” (John 6:27). It ought to be noted that extended exposure to the real Jesus will bring the matter of eternal life to the minds of the people, and leave them with the impression that it is available and is to be pursued. Paul once admonished Timothy, “*lay hold on eternal life*” (1 Tim 6:12). He also told him to admonish those who are “*rich in this world*” to conduct their lives in such a manner as would allow them to “*lay hold on eternal life*” (1 Tim 6:19). Not only did the question of this man accent the substance of Jesus’ ministry, the Lord’s answer confirms that those seeking eternal life must make that quest an absolute priority. It appears to me that the modern church has not done well in placing the necessity of obtaining eternal life before the people. An absence of this kind of stress lends itself to being at home in this world.

“ Mark 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

JESUS BEHOLDING HIM. Other versions say Jesus was now “*looking at him,*” NKJV and “*looked steadily at him,*” NJB “*looked into his eyes.*” IE That is, He focused upon him, fixing his attention on him, and clearly discerning his person – for the word “*beholding*” has these connotations. His gaze was not a surface one, but one in which He beheld the whole of the man – his heart, his

intentions, and the degree of interest he really had in eternal life.

It is good for us to be conscious of this kind of Divine gaze. When we come to Jesus with inquiries – even valid ones – “*His eyelids try*” us (Psa 11:4). Those who ask the Lord for His attention, regardless of the nature of the inquiry, must know that He will peruse them, discerning the thoughts and intents of their heart, and how serious they are in their quest.

JESUS LOVED HIM. Only Mark mentions this response of the Lord – “*beholding him He loved him.*” Other versions read, “*felt a love for him,*” NASB “*was filled with love for him,*” NJB “*felt genuine love for him,*” NLT “*had a favor to him.*” TNT For those who are interested, this is, what is called “agap ā love,” for that is the word used here. Ordinarily, men associate this kind of love with God and His gracious blessing. That is not the case in this text.

What does this expression mean? It signifies that Jesus was attracted to this young man because of his inquiry. As He looked intently upon Him, he was no doubt looking for some comely quality, some qualifying trait. Jesus looked tenderly upon the man, unwilling to break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax. There was compassion in His look, as He pushed the door of acceptance wide open for the man to enter. He **wanted** this man to obtain eternal life.

However, there is more to Jesus than His love. There is also His righteousness, that will not allow a man to inherit eternal life while holding tightly to this world. Divine love must be mixed with Divine righteousness to be effective.

ONE THING LACKED. Here Jesus contradicts what the man said: “*Master, all these things have I observed from my youth up.*” However, he had not really observed, or done, “*all of these things,*” even though he thought he had, for Jesus says, “*You lack one thing.*” NRSV This “*one thing*” will prove to be a besetting sin – one that will disqualify him from inheriting eternal life. It is possible, therefore, for the lacking of a single thing to exclude one from laying hold of eternal life.

SELL AND GIVE. Jesus does not tell him what he lacks, but gives him a commandment that will discover that lack – something that he will not be able to do because of a single besetting sin. The command is twofold: 1 “*Sell all that you possess,*” NASB and 2 “*give to the poor*” – that is, give the proceeds obtained to the poor. The requirement is straight-forward. It is not parabolic, nor does it have some hidden meaning. This will address what this man lacked – what was stopping him from inheriting eternal life.

It is true that it is not necessary for everyone to do this. Nor, indeed, did Jesus require it of everyone. However, there ARE some people that must do this, for they have an inordinate appetite for “*things.*” This is a personalized command – one that addressed the one flaw this man possessed. It seems to me that the sin of any individual can be narrowed down to a single thing – a root from which all wayward expressions proceed. Jesus will discover that root! He will also demand that it be pulled up, for it was not planted by God (Matt 15:13).

TREASURE IN HEAVEN. It is Jesus Himself who made this association: “*sell all you have and give [the money] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.*” AMPLIFIED **The place where one’s treasure – what he considers to be most valuable – is located is critical!** Jesus flatly tells us not to lay up treasures on earth (Matt 6:19). “*Treasure*” does not mean money, silver, gold, and kindred valuables. “*Treasure*” has more to do it perspective than with substance. For a beggar, a treasure may be twenty dollars, while for a billionaire it is a trillion dollars. For some, a “*treasure*” is a house. For others it is a castle. A “*treasure*” is something one is not willing to give up for

something else. It is perceived as the pinnacle of value.

“Treasure in heaven” refers more to **where** the treasures are than **what** they are. The Spirit refers to *“the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* that are accessible now (Col 2:3). Moses considered *“the reproach of Christ **greater riches than the treasures in Egypt**”* (Heb 11:26). Regarding the world to come, the treasures are the *“inheritance incorruptible and undefiled”* (1 Pet 1:4). Treasures upon earth tend to obscure that inheritance.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME. Selling everything he had and giving the money to the poor was only a beginning. It would only bring the man to the starting line. At that line, he must pick up his cross – the cross of self-crucifixion – and follow Christ. That is the real requirement for inheriting eternal life, and this man’s riches was stopping him from meeting it. Christ’s demands would reveal that condition in the man, as the text affirms.

“ 22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”

HE WAS SAD AT THE SAYING. Other versions read, *“At this, the man’s face fell.”* NIV *“When he heard this, he was shocked,”* NRSV and *“But he was stunned at this command.”* CSB He had not expected such a word from Jesus. It was simply too demanding. He entertained a view of Jesus that did not allow for such a response from Him.

Jesus’ words are always gracious, but they are not always perceived to be so. For this young man, Christ’s words were like a stone that crushed him. They discovered the shallowness of his heart. Even Christ’s love did not cause him to overcome the love of money. Like the rich man who tore down his barns and built newer and greater ones (Lk 12:18), he never considered the fact that he was going to die.

His covetousness was so strong he never pondered having genuine treasure in heaven. To you the words may sound wonderful. To this man they were saddening. Like the Word of God does, these words discovered *“the thoughts and intents”* of his heart (Heb 4:12).

This text explodes the thought that we are to accommodate ourselves to the desires of sinful men, holding back the truth and toning it down, imagining this will draw them to Jesus. Our Lord discovered this man’s heart with a *“saying.”* It was what Jesus SAID that saddened this man, not what he did. The discovering sword proceeded out of Jesus’ mouth (Rev 19:15). Of course, if those who represent Christ do not SAY much, it reduces the possibility of discovering what is or is not hindering a quest for eternal life.

I have heard some of the media-ministers confess their sadness when the Lord, according to their own testimony, required them to give away a suit, or a car, or some other portion of their massive estate. Jesus, however, required that the man sell **everything** he owned and give to the poor. The saying caused him to be cast down as his countenance fell.

HE WENT AWAY GRIEVED. Matthew says he *“went away sorrowful”* (Matt 19:22). Luke says, *“he was very sorrowful”* (Lk 18:23). The reaction of the man was not momentary. As soon as He heard what Jesus said, he became sad – and his sadness grew greater until *“he went away in deep distress.”* WILLIAMS

Compare the response of this man with Matthew, or Levi, who instantly *“left all . . . and followed”* Jesus (Lk 5:28). Peter and Andrew immediately *“left their nets, and followed Jesus”* (Matt 4:20). James and John straightway *“left the ship and their father and followed”* Jesus (Matt

4:21). What was the difference between them and this rich man? They saw something in Jesus that was obviously more valuable than what they possessed. This man did not have such a view of the Christ. He saw Him as a Teacher, but not as the Son of God or a Savior.

There are still people, even in the church, who have a purely academic view of Jesus – an abstract, or detached view of Him that is merely theoretical. Somehow it has never come across to them that Jesus will not compete with other interests or priorities. Their Jesus is not too demanding – like insisting that you divest yourself of what is hindering you, pick up the cross of self-mortification, and follow Jesus, going where He goes, and staying where He stays.

HE HAD GREAT POSSESSIONS. Luke says, “*he was very rich*” (Lk 18:23). The expression “*great possessions*” means many tangible materials, from money to things. Other versions read “*owned much property*,” NASB “*had great wealth*,” NIV “*had many possessions*,” NRSV “*because he owned many things*,” IE and “*he was holding great possessions*.” AMPLIFIED As used in this text, the root meaning of “*possessions*” is “*property, lands, estates*.” THAYER These were things he owned, not things on which payments were being made.

A sophist (surface thinker), or a novice (beginner), might ask if it is right or wrong to have “*possessions*.” That is not a proper question, for it depends upon how those possessions are held – with an open hand, or a tightly clinched fist. No believer should spend time defending the right to own property, or even be rich. Anything that is a part of this world brings no advantage to the person in a quest of eternal life. The things that are owned are not of themselves “*defiled*.” As Paul stated, “*Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled*” (Titus 1:15). If a person is “*of the world*,” whether they have a dime or a million dollars, it is wrong.

Also, we must remember how Jesus spoke of worldly possessions in particular. He referred to them as “*unrighteous mammon*,” comparing them to “*the true riches*” (Lk 16:11). The word “*mammon*” literally means “*wealth*,” “*treasures*,” or “*riches*.” THAYER “*Unrighteous*” means something that is inherently corrupt, and will consequently pass away. All worldly wealth will pass away, and none of it transfers into the world to come. Paul referred to these as “*uncertain riches*,” and states that those possessing them are not to trust in them (1 Tim 6:17). Solomon wrote, “*riches are not forever*” (Prov 27:24). These sayings, and more, ought to move us to be most cautious in our approach to possessions, for “*they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*” (1 Tim 6:9).

“ 23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”

JESUS LOOKED AND SAID. Other versions read, “*Jesus, looking around, said*.” NASB It is as though, after seeing that young man leave, Jesus looked upon those disciples who remained with Him. He wanted them to glean from the event that had just occurred in their presence. He was seeking discernment in them, not what men call *school-learning*. Jesus is the kind of teacher that wants His disciples to discern, perceive – see beneath the surface. When the Scriptures speak of us being “*taught by Him*” – Jesus – it is not speaking of a mere acquaintance with the facts, as is accomplished in elementary school. In the Divine classroom, there is a certain orientation taking place. That is, the disciples are being suited to do the work of the kingdom, not sit in circles and theorize about it. Jesus’ teaching is much like an apprenticeship, where the ones being taught are equipped to actually perform the work, and navigate freely and profitably in areas with which they were formerly unacquainted.

Jesus will choose appropriate words – words “*fitly spoken*” (Prov 25:11), or that precisely fit into the occasion. They will be words that will lead His disciples into a profitable analysis of what has just happened before their eyes.

The reason this kind of teaching is necessary, as well as advantageous, is because many different factors are at work in every human circumstance. Now, in this present time, the devil and the Holy Spirit are at work simultaneously in the environment. The thoughts and intents of the heart are present, as well as the conscience and the will. This present evil world is calling, and the powers of the world to come are being exerted. Time is passing, and the day of the Lord is hastening toward us. Evil principalities and powers are at work, as well as a staggering number of holy angels. The flesh and the Spirit are both demanding to sit on the throne of the human heart. In a scenario like that, a person cannot afford to be ignorant.

THE DISADVANTAGE OF RICHES. “*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!*” Or, “*How hard it is,*” NKJV or “*How hard it will be,*” NASB “*How difficult it will be,*” ESV and “*it is almost impossible.*” LIVING Matthew reads, “*Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 19:23). That is what Jesus wanted His disciples to know! Not that they could be rich, but that there was a certain liability in being rich. It makes it extremely difficult to “*enter into the Kingdom of God.*” This saying cannot possibly be true if the New Covenant and abundant life have to do with being wealthy in this world. This saying clashes with the heretical teaching of many, making them liars. Thus it is written, “*let God be true, but every man a liar*” (Rom 3:4).

The disciples had just witnessed a wealthy man. He was not like other wealthy men, because came running to Jesus. He was also distinguished from other rich men because he asked about obtaining eternal life. Yet, with all of that distinction, he ended up no different from the wealthy people who did not come to Jesus or ask about obtaining eternal life. **He was essentially the same as the grasping wealthy people who thought only of themselves.**

If it is true that it is very difficult for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God, then those who preach and teach wealth and prosperity are making it more difficult for men to enter that Kingdom. They are throwing a stumbling block in men’s path, and causing them to stumble. They teach men to nurture the very lusts that are to be crucified.

In the Divine economy we are told, “*not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*” (1 Cor 1:26). However, if the New Covenant promises prosperity in this world, this saying cannot possibly be true. This is so because we have not yet fully entered into that Kingdom. There remains an “*abundant entrance*” that will be “*ministered*” to the saved (2 Pet 1:11). At that time, if there are many noble people who enter, the above text will be shown to be false, and the saints of all ages have been misled. Such a condition cannot possibly occur.

Those who have a desire to be rich tie their own hands and feet. That is why it is written, “*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*” (1 Tim 6:9). Those within the body of Christ who are “*rich in this world*” are strictly charged: 1 “*Be not high-minded.*” 2 Do not “*trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.*” 3 “*Do good,*” being “*rich in good works.*” 4 Be “*ready to distribute,*” or “*give,*” NKJV or “*be generous,*” NASB or “*liberal.*” 5 Be “*willing to communicate,*” or share. 6 By so doing, they will prepare for the time to come when they will face the Lord. 7 In so doing, they will also “*lay hold on eternal life*” (1 Tim 6:17-19).

With great sobriety we are told to “*lay aside every weight, and the sin*” which so “*easily*” besets us, running with patience the race Divinely set before us (Heb 12:1). If we do not take this admonition seriously, the Lord will discover our weights and sins by demanding us to do things that require putting them away – just as He did the rich young ruler. As our text confirms, there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so if those things have been nurtured.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 113

“ Mark 10:24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 24 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 25 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 26 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”

(Mark 10:24-27; Matthew 19:24-27; Lk 18: 25-27)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has confronted a wealthy young man who asked what to do to inherit eternal life. Striking at the root of the young man's problem, the Master told him to sell everything he had, give the proceeds to the poor, and take up his cross and follow Him. The young man left sorrowing, unwilling to give up his riches. The Lord then observed how difficult it was for those with riches to enter the Kingdom of God. This is particularly important text in our time, when wealth is the object of fervent quest. Some choose to think of it as a form of security. Others are quick to tell us it is not wrong to be wealthy. Still others are declaring that God desires for us to be wealthy. Now above the noise of these false teachers, the Head of the church, and the Governor of the nations, lifts his voice. He will tell us the truth of the matter! Riches, in their most favorable stance, are an obstacle to be overcome! God taught Israel this lesson by instructing them concerning the tithe. Whatever they had, from least to much, the firstfruits belonged to the Lord. Abraham and Jacob saw this before the Law (Gen 14:20; 28:22). Not only was this proper stewardship, acknowledging that their substance came from the Lord, it also assisted them in not becoming overly attached to riches. Notwithstanding that circumstance, and particularly in our country, there are many who still find it difficult to let go of wealth, even in the matter of giving their firstfruits to God. This condition confirms the truth of Jesus' words in this text. There is remarkable difficulty associated with letting go of wealth, whether the cause is a love for money, or a trust in it – and Jesus will address both cases.

“ Mark 10:24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!”

ASTONISHED DISCIPLES. There is a certain abrasiveness of the words of Jesus against the natural man or carnal mind. How often His words astonished His listeners. We read, *“the people were astonished at His doctrine”* (Matt 7:26). When He taught in their synagogue, *“they were astonished”*

(Matt 13:54). Now, His own disciples are “*astonished at His words*” – “*How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!*” NASB (10:23).

The word “*astonished*” is especially strong. It carries the meaning of “terrified, amazed, and frightened.” STRONG’S The root meaning of the word suggests they could not get this saying out of their minds. It was so arresting – so contrary to the natural way of thinking – that it brought a certain fear upon their souls.

This reaction is the opposite of hardened unbelief. It is not unusual to find worldly people thrusting the word of Christ from them when it proves too difficult for them – as the Jews in a certain Antioch synagogue did when Paul preached to them (Acts 13:46). But “*astonished*” means they dwelt upon the saying, keeping it in their minds.

The *astonishment factor* here is that what appears to be a kind of security blanket in this world, actually becomes a liability when it comes to entering the kingdom of God. Riches are like a magnet that draw men into the world order. Unless they see them properly, as “*uncertain riches*” (1 Tim 6:17), they will actually exclude them from the Kingdom of God.

HOW HARD IT IS! This is not a surface saying: “*how difficult it is,*” DARBY “*it is very hard,*” NLT “*how hard a struggle it is.*” WEYMOUTH That is, it takes extraordinary effort for the people of question to enter into the Kingdom of God. It involves a struggle that other people do not have, and an intensity of effort that is not ordinarily associated with entering the Kingdom – which, even **without** riches, involves intense endeavors.

TRUST IN RICHES. Now Jesus is more particular, getting down to the heart of the liability. It is those who “*trust in riches*” that are His particular focus. Other versions read, “*put faith in wealth,*” BBE and “*trust (place their confidence, their sense of safety) in riches.*” AMPLIFIED Newer versions read, “*how hard it is to enter the Kingdom,*” NASB/NIV leaving out the “*trust in riches.*” However, the balance of the text confirms that Jesus is delivering a word concerning rich people entering the Kingdom of God, and not of the entrance itself.

Job put into words what it means to trust in riches: “*If I have **made gold my hope***” (Job 31:24). David spoke of those who “*have their portion in this life*” (Psa 17:14), and those who “*trust in their wealth*” (Psa 49:6), or “*trusted in the abundance of his riches*” (Psa 52:7). Solomon said, “*He that trusteth in his riches shall fall*” (Prov 11:28). Jeremiah referred to the man who “*glories in his riches*” (Jer 9:23). Zephaniah said there were times when “*neither silver nor gold shall be able to deliver*” (Zeph 1:18). Paul told Timothy to command the rich not to “*trust in uncertain riches*” (1 Tim 6:17). James told wealthy backslidden Christians that their gold and silver was “*cankered,*” or corroded, and could no longer do them any good (James 5:3). Although it was a materially wealthy church, Jesus told the Laodiceans that in His sight they were “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (Rev 3:17). Their worldly status had actually become a hindrance to them.

Exactly what does it mean to “*trust in riches?*” It means to rely upon them, and depend on them in the place of God Himself. Those who “*trust in riches*” see no need to pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread*” (Matt 6:11). Given a choice between depending upon riches or trusting in the Lord, they will choose the riches for themselves, withholding them from the Lord. Through Malachi, God charged the people with robbing Him by withholding their tithes (Mal 3:8-10). They saw a certain disadvantage in giving their firstfruits to the Lord.

In our society, this is a particularly important perspective, for trust in riches is

aggressively promoted. Men plan their lives around riches, choosing occupations and involvements that will yield the most money to them. It all may sound quite innocent, but the words of our Lord in this text suggest a great need for sober thinking in this matter.

ENTERING THE KINGDOM. Entering into the Kingdom of God involves reconciliation to God and partaking of Christ. It is coming to a place where the benefits of that Kingdom can be realized – i.e., righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17). Even though men may say it is easy to enter this Kingdom, there is nothing in the Word of God that suggests such a thing. Even apart from riches, the gate is “*strait*” (difficult), and the way is “*narrow*” that leads to life (Matt 7:14). When there is an attachment to this world, the matter becomes even more complex. That is why it is sinful beyond imagination to attempt to lure people into an identity with God by entertainment, promises of a good life, as the world counts goodness, and light-hearted anecdotes.

“ 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

As though it was not enough to say those with riches can barely enter the Kingdom (“*how hardly shall they that have riches enter*”), the Lord adds, “*for hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter,*” Jesus adds a further statement on the matter. A threefold warning like this must not be allowed to pass by us. It is something that must be taught among us, and to our children. The church much keep this truth alive and within the reach of all its members.

IT IS EASIER. Jesus did not speak like other men – particularly those of this generation. In our culture, the word “*easier*” speaks of a more convenient way of doing this or that. It further refers to something that is very doable. **Jesus speaks of a camel going through the eye of a needle.** Some have imagined this refers to a narrow Jerusalem gate through which a camel could not pass without removing all of its baggage, and having it stoop down. This is nothing more than a fable, and contradicts the whole of the text. Using laser technology, a German organization fashioned a needle with a camel passing through its eye. The eye of the needle was 2mm high and .03 mm wide, and the whole display is microscopic. Even in those proportions, the matter was considered quite a feat. However, Jesus is not speaking in hyperbolic language, or of some man-made artifact. This was a real camel and a real needle.

How would you go about pushing a camel through a needle’s eye? – even if you used a small camel and a big needle? Those who would attempt such a thing would immediately be frustrated, because it would be very apparent that this was something that could not be done without creating something artificial. A real camel and a real needle could not be employed.

Yet Jesus states that this feat would be easy compared to a rich man entering into the Kingdom of God. A living camel, even of large size, going through a tiny needle’s eye would not even be a challenge, and would be very easy to do – that is, when compared to a rich man entering into the Kingdom of God.

It is quite true that there have been a few godly people who were rich. **Abram** was “*very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold*” (Gen 13:2). **Job** was a man of substance, described as “*the greatest of all men of the east*” (Job 1:3). **Joseph** of Arimathea was very rich, and a disciple of Jesus we well (Matt 27:57). **Zacchaeus** was “*rich,*” and yet sought after Jesus (Lk 19:2). These men are all trophies of God’s rich grace. Their association with the Lord was in spite of their riches, and not because of them. It was more difficult for them to enter the Kingdom than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle!

Solomon was noted for his riches (1 Kgs 10:23), although he was not noted for his faith or godliness. The phrase “*very rich*” appears two times in all of Scripture. Abram is the first man so described (Gen 13:2), and the rich man in this passage is the other (Lk 18:23). Other versions describe the wicked man Nabal as “*very rich*” NKJV (1 Sam 25:2). Barzilla, a certain Gileadite, is also said to have been “*very rich*” NKJV (2 Sam 19:32). He chose to return to his own country rather than finish out his days in Jerusalem.

Solomon said, “*The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit*” (Prov 18:11). That is a natural tendency. It is also why is it exceedingly difficult for a rich man to be saved, or enter into the Kingdom of God. Solomon also said, “*The rich man is wise in his own conceit*” (Prov 28:11); that is, he views his riches as his ultimate advantage and guarantee of security. On the other hand, David, Solomon’s father, said, “*The LORD is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Buckler, and the Horn of my salvation, and my high tower*” (Psa 18:2).

The Lord is noted for sending “*the rich . . . away empty*” (Lk 1:53). James said the Lord makes “*the rich*” low (James 1:10), and that the rich man “*shall fade away in his ways*” (James 1:11). The Spirit testifies that those who have a desire to be rich “*fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition,*” because “*the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil*” (1 Tim 6:9-10). Those with riches are solemnly admonished “*that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*” (1 Tim 6:17). They are to employ their riches to do good, so they will be “*rich in good works*” (6:18-19).

It is good for us to entertain the perspective of Moses, who at one time had access to great riches. Yet, the Scriptures describe him as “*Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*” (Heb 11:26). That is, in order to participate in the “*reproach of Christ,*” he had to be willing to forfeit “*the treasures of Egypt.*” Let no person doubt the words of the Lord Jesus! “*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*”

“ 23 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”

ASTONISHED OUT OF MEASURE. At this second saying concerning the camel and needle, the disciples were “*astonished out of measure,*” or “*even more amazed,*” NIV or “*greatly astounded.*” NRSV It was difficult enough to hear that the rich could barely be saved at all. But now they have heard that it is “*easier*” for a hump-backed camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED? To them, this has put the matter of salvation out of reach. They began talking among themselves, “*Then who can be saved?*” NASB Note that they equated entering the Kingdom with being “*saved.*” So far as they were concerned, this certainly did not sound like salvation was simplistic and easy. Jesus’ words did not lend themselves to that conclusion – even though such a concept is being regularly spouted out in the churches. People are being told to simply bow their heads, repeat a simple prayer, and thereby pass into the Kingdom of God. This can even be done in a group mode, making it all the more convenient. Such teaching only confirms that the ones saying it have **not** been listening to Jesus. They have given their ears and hearts to some imposter who is not speaking the truth.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. Jesus does not tell His disciples they have misunderstood Him. He “*looked upon them,*” capturing their attention,” and said “*With men it is impossible .*” Luke says Jesus put the matter of salvation in the category of “*things which are impossible with men*” (Lk 18:27). That is, this is not something men can do. It is beyond their capability.

There have been other men of God who have faced impossible things, and had to learn to reckon upon God. For example, God told aged Abraham that he was going to beget a son through Sarah, his aging and barren wife. At the time, Sarah laughed within herself, seeing the utter impossibility of such a thing from the human point of view. The Lord replied, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” (Gen 18:11-14). This was clearly something God could do!

More than five hundred years later, Moses was leading Israel through the wilderness when the people began to cry out for meat. Displeased with their murmuring, the Lord said He was going to give them flesh to eat for “*a whole month,*” until it came out of their nostrils, and they were tired of it. Moses looked at the situation and replied that the foot soldiers alone numbered 600,000. How could there possibly be enough meat found for them to gorge for thirty days? The Lord replied, “*Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not*” (Num 11:23). Again, in the days of Elisha, during a grievous famine, the Lord revealed “*To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria*” (2 Kgs 7:1). The king replied, “*Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?*” Elisha simply replied, “*Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof*” (2 Kgs 7:2).

In all of these things, the people were faced with a promise of something humanly impossible. Jesus is saying salvation is in the same category. If God is not in the matter, it is utterly impossible. Somehow, this notion has not gripped the souls the masses. No person who sees this will delay in doing what the Lord requires. No discerning person will unduly extol the one through whom they have believed, but will see that person as a messenger and servant of God.

WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. If it were not for God, there would be no need for even speaking about salvation! We are speaking of having a heart of stone removed, and being given a new heart of flesh (Ezek 11:19), and being “*born again*” (1 Pet 1:23). That is not reformation, but transformation (Rom 12:2) and regeneration (Tit 3:5). It is not a change of habit, but a change of character – a change that continues by increasing stages until we are conformed to the image of God’s Son (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29). It means the person ceases to be what he was, and begins to be someone new, where old things pass away and all things become new (2 Cor 5:17). We are talking about being “*begotten of God*” (1 John 5:18), “*born of God*” (1 John 3:9), “*born of the Spirit*” (John 3:6,8), being “*created in Christ Jesus*” (Eph 2:10), and raised up to sit “*in heavenly places*” (Eph 2:6). That is some of the involvements associated with entering the Kingdom of God.

As impossible and unlikely as they may appear, they are all possible with God. As was confirmed to Mary, “*with God nothing shall be impossible*” – not even a rich man entering the Kingdom of God. This does not guarantee that rich men will enter, for our text places before us a man who did **not** enter. Why was it He did not enter? It was because he had become entangled in his riches. The same thing happened to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). In view of these realities, what can be said of those who hold out wealth as a promised blessing from God? They are making it more difficult at the best, and impossible at the worst, for their listeners to enter the Kingdom of God. Judge for yourself the seriousness of such a thing.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 114

“ Mark 10:28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee. 29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. 31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first. ”

(Mark 10:28-31; Matthew 19:27-30; Lk 18:28-30)

INTRODUCTION

There are those who, like the rich young ruler, cannot forsake competing interests for Christ. They do not see in Him something worth the forfeiture of other things. Therefore, they never really commit themselves to Christ and the Gospel. Their full heart is never in the matter, but they maintain other interests that are related to this present evil world. They are easily distracted from Jesus, and often go their way sorrowing because they cannot let go of things that keep them from following Him. They sense that they are losing something, but the world seems worth it all. Temporal relationships and things are overestimated and embraced at the expense of the things of the Spirit of God. It all seems quite reasonable to them because they have been deceived. They do not see the world as passing away. They perceive time as a period in which to gather as much of this world as they can. They cannot see it as the time of testing and proving their worthiness to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Such souls appear to be in the vast majority of professing Christians. That is the reason for the prevailing spiritual ignorance that exists in the modern church. However, there are those who see in Jesus and the Gospel something worthy of all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength. They are quite willing to put themselves at an earthly disadvantage if it means they can follow Him, be taught by Him, and receive from his hand. Of all the passing interests in this world, the Gospel is seen as towering above them all.

“ Mark 10:28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.”

Peter now makes an association between Jesus' words and the fact that they have left everything to follow Him. The rich young man Jesus had just encountered was not willing to leave what he had, but Peter and the disciples had been willing to leave what they had. Peter was not speaking out of a sense of covetousness, for neither he nor the other disciples had followed Jesus for that reason.

In particular, Jesus had just spoken to a young man about having “ *treasure in heaven*”

(Mk 10:21). That appears to be the word that had captured Peter's attention. He knew well that the Master was not speaking about worldly riches, for Jesus had said the treasure would be "*in heaven.*" The young man that had went his way sorrowing did not see in Jesus something worth the loss of his worldly status and possessions. By way of comparison, Peter reminds Jesus that he and the eleven had, in fact, left everything to follow Jesus.

WE HAVE LEFT ALL. The text says "*Peter began to say . . . Lo, we have left all.*" That is, he had considerable to say on this subject. He was not boasting, for even at this time, they knew better than to boast in the presence of the Lord. He was telling the truth; they had "*left all,*" choosing to follow Jesus instead of remaining where they were. That meant staying with Jesus, living with Him, traveling with Him, and remaining with Him wherever He went. From one point of view, Jesus had "*called*" them (Simon and Andrew Matt 4:19, James and John 21; Matthew Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27; Philip John 1:43). They had, indeed, followed Jesus. He had summoned the rich young ruler to "*follow*" him also, but he did not (Mk 10:21-22).

THEY LEFT ALL. Matthew reads, "*we have forsaken all*" (Matt 19:27). The word "*left*" emphasizes the outward departing, while "*forsaken*" accents the heart, or attitude. In other words, they forfeited what they had in order to remain with Jesus.

The Gospels provide some detail on what the disciples did. Upon being called by Jesus to follow Him, Simon and Andrew "*forsook their nets and followed Him*" (Mk 1:18). When Jesus called James and John, "*they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him*" (Matt 4:22). Mark says "*they left their father Zebedee in the ship with his hired servants, and went after him*" (Mk 1:20). Luke says of the calling of Simon, Andrew, James, and John, "*they forsook all and followed Him*" (Lk 5:11). When Matthew was called, "*he left all, rose up, and followed him*" (Luke 5:28). When Philip was called, he found Nathanael and took him with him to Jesus (John 1:44-46).

Ponder what they had done. They left their means of subsistence. They discarded their old habits, or ways of living from day to day. They also walked away from their associations to devote themselves to the Lord Jesus. And how is it that these men made such a sacrifice? They did all of this before Jesus publicly laid down the requirements for discipleship (Matt 16:24; Lk 9:23-24). There was no moral law that compelled them to do this. They were certainly not outwardly coerced or forced into doing so.

They did this in response to two words: "*Follow Me!*" Their hopes were suspended on these words, and they were uttered at the threshold of Christ's ministry, not after His teaching and manners were fully known. Among other things, this confirms the compelling nature of the voice of Christ to those who have ears to hear. Jesus told His disciples of the era of the New Covenant during which His voice would be heard on a large scale. "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live*" (John 5:25). He was speaking of rising from death in trespasses and sins, for he later spoke of His voice raising all who are in the graves as well (John 5:28-29). Paul confirms the power of Christ's voice in his letter to the Ephesians. "*But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus*" (Eph 4:20-21).

WHAT SHALL WE HAVE? Matthew gives a fuller account of Peter's words: "*Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*" (Matt 19:27). Peter had taken hold of the words Jesus spoke to the young ruler: "*and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.*" Now, he asks what they will have, considering they have left everything. All of the implications of Peter's words are not clear. Some believe he was speaking of earthly prominence, such as was

suggested by the inquiry into Jesus restoring the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). However, I am not sure that is the most proper view of Peter in particular, and the twelve in general. Earlier, Peter is the one who said to Jesus, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). There really is no need for us to speculate about Peter’s meaning, or have a demeaning view of him. Jesus’ answer contains no rebuke, and that should be enough to convince us Peter’s motives were pure. The Lord did not answer him as he did the rich young ruler, but gave a very favorable reply.

“ 29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's.”

IN THE REGENERATION. Matthew provides the fuller answer of Jesus, identifying what he said directly to the apostles themselves. “*Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me , in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt 19:28). The expression “*the regeneration*” speaks of the time when death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:54). It is after the resurrection of the dead. It is the time when the whole creation will be “*delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*” (Rom 8:21). This is the environment to which Peter referred when he wrote, “*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*” (2 Pet 3:13). It is when the promise will be completely fulfilled, “*Behold, I make all things new*” (Rev 21:5). Then the ancient word of Isaiah will be fulfilled, “*For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth*” (Isa 65:17). Here is a word that will be fulfilled after the present heavens and earth have passed away, the dead are raised, and the destinies of all men have been announced. This is a word addressed to “*hope,*” which always extends beyond this world.

THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY. The time of reference is also when Jesus will sit “*upon the throne of His glory,*” or “*on His glorious throne.*” NASB This is when Jesus will be seen just as He is, with no separating veil between Him and the people. This is not an earthly throne, for it is not possible for such a throne to be a glorious one. “*Glory*” is the antithesis of this world, which cannot accommodate beholding it. No one will behold Christ enthroned in glory until that which is in part is done away. Only then will we “*see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:1-2). This is the time when the Father will unveil Jesus in all of his glory, and men will see Him as he is, even at this present time, enthroned and with all power (1 Tim 6:15).

TWELVE THRONES AND JUDGMENT. This has reference to reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12), and sitting with Him in His throne (Rev 3:21). It also relates to judging the world (1 Cor 6:2). All who are involved in these activities will not be at the same level. Because of the ranking of the apostles, they will have special privileges that will be in perfect accord with their choice by Jesus and ministry for Him. This does not refer to the apostles’ judgment and supervision in this world, for Jesus expressly states in “*the regeneration.*” Revelation depicts this as the names of the apostles being written on the twelve foundation stones of the glorified church (Rev 21:4). That is, they will hold a prominent place in glory, commensurate with their placement in the body (1 Cor 12:28). It is possible that “*the twelve tribes*” includes all of the church, for the believing Gentiles have been grafted into the Jewish tree – “*in among them*” (Rom 11:17). I am inclined to think it has more specific regard to the saved among the Jews, for in the world, the twelve were especially sent to the Jews, or “*the circumcision*” (Gal 2:7).

THERE IS NO MAN. What Jesus is going to say is not specifically tailored for a rich young ruler, or even for the disciples. This is an answer for all people. It is a principle by which the Kingdom

is governed, and is true wherever the conditions specified are found. By saying, “*There is no man,*” Jesus means that there are no exceptions to this rule.

THAT HATH LEFT. Other versions read, “*has given up,*” BBE “*hath forsaken,*” GENEVA “*gave up,*” GWN “*that leaveth,*” MRD and “*given up and left.*” AMPLIFIED The word “*left*” comes from a very strong Greek word which means, “to send from oneself, to send away, to bid depart . . . to let go, let alone, disregard, and to allow not to hinder.” THAYER This word speaks more of an attitude or posture of soul than of a physical action – although the outward action is involved. The idea is that where there is a clash between following Jesus and these things, the true disciple will let go of them, not attaching the value to them that the flesh suggests.

You will see at once that these words cannot fit into the modern concept of following Jesus or being a *Christian*. They are, however, spoken by the Lord, and are the unvarnished truth. His words assume that there is a distinct possibility of a sharp conflict between following Him and the things mentioned – that it is possible to have to make a choice between Him and them.

HOUSE and LANDS. Examples of this took place in the early church (Acts 2:45; 4:34,37).

BRETHREN, SISTERS, FATHER, MOTHER. Jesus left His parents, brothers, and sisters in the service of His Father (Matt 12:49). This is to be balanced with honoring one’s parents, but even in that matter, they will take a back seat to Jesus.

WIFE, CHILDREN. I gather that this refers specifically to abstaining from marriage, as Paul did, forfeiting his right to be married (1 Cor 7:7; 9:5).

FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL’S. This involved a choice to follow Jesus (“for My sake”), and doing His work (“and for the Gospel’s”). Luke says, “*for the kingdom of God’s sake*” (Lk 18:29). Such things are forsaken because, for some, they prove to be inhibitive.

“ 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. 31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.”

THE FORFEITURE. At some point, the individual must perceive that, by their very nature, property, relatives, and family are all secondary to Jesus, the Gospel, and the Kingdom of God. If that is not the case, these words have no meaning. This does not mean that in all cases they are to be forfeited. Peter was married (Mk 1:30). Elders are depicted as having a house and family (1 Tim 3:4). Godly men are admonished to care for their own households (1 Tim 5:8). However, some are called to high stations in the Kingdom – stations that do not allow for an ordinary life in this world. For them, in order to fulfill their calling, they must leave more than the common person. These are the kind of people to which Jesus refers.

RECEIVING AN HUNDREDFOLD. What God gives to the sacrificing one is vastly superior to what was sacrificed – “*an hundredfold,*” which is “*a hundred times as many.*” NLT It makes the person forget what was forfeited, and rather glory in what was received. This is not intended to mean a count – like one house being given up, and 100 houses given in return. It rather accents that what is given is **more valuable** than what was given up – like one large diamond for 10 worthless rocks.

NOW IN THIS TIME. That is, in this world the Lord will “*load*” the sacrificing one with “*benefits*” (Psa 68:19) – like “*days of heaven upon the earth*” (Deut 11:21). These are included in the expression “*all spiritual blessings*” (Eph 1:3). It cannot refer to earthly possessions such as those that were forfeited. How would it be possible for such to be forfeited because of their distracting and competing nature (which is the only reason to leave them), only to have them given back in the same

form and in abundance? The things that are given in abundance – an hundredfold – are included in the following classifications: winning Christ, being found in Him with a righteousness that comes from faith, knowing Christ, realizing the power of His resurrection, and participating in the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil 3:8-10). The overall description of this plentitude is “*life . . . more abundantly*” (John 10:10). It is another view of the “*first fruits*” from the homeland that are experienced while we are “*absent from the Lord*” (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 5:6).

HOUSES . . . etc. If things were forfeited for Jesus’ sake, the Gospel’s sake, and for the Kingdom of God, then the compensation for such sacrifice will be found in fellowship, with Christ, laboring in the Gospel, and participating in the Kingdom of God. Now, in the work of the Lord, the **houses** of the people of God are opened to us when needed, as Lydia’s house was to Paul (Acts 16:15). All of Christ’s **brothers and sisters** are made available to us for spiritual profit (Acts 11:29; 1 Tim 5:2). There are saintly “*mothers*” who minister to us, as Rufus’ mother did to Paul (Rom 16:13), or to whom we minister, as John did to Mary (John 19:27). There are children, begotten in the Gospel, like Timothy (2 Tim 2:1) and Onesimus (Phile 1:10) were to Paul, and Marcus to Peter (1 Pet 5:13). There are lands in which safety is realized from danger, like the Isle of Melita was to Paul when he was shipwrecked with 273 souls (Acts 27:44). No person engaged in Kingdom endeavors, out of a love for and devotion to Jesus and the Gospel, will be put to an ultimate disadvantage. Even the earth will “*help the woman,*” with people and circumstances being orchestrated from heaven for their benefit.

WITH PERSECUTIONS. Alas, there is a sense in which there is a price tag associated with the sacrificial life. This is the appointed means of sifting out the pretentious and hypocritical. The truth of the matter is that we have been delivered from the world (Gal 1:4), called out from among the people (Acts 15:14), and made a separated, or peculiar, people for the Lord (Tit 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9). That condition is what provokes the persecution. The world senses the separateness of those who have lost a love for it. Therefore, as it is written, “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Tim 3:12).

IN THE WORLD TO COME. This world is not the only world, and our experiences in it are not the only experiences. There is “*the world to come*” – after “*the heavens and earth which now are*” shall have passed away (2 Pet 3:7). It is what is experienced in that eternal order that is the fundamental issue. For those who sacrificed for Jesus and the Gospel, He affirms they will have “*eternal life.*” That is, eternal life in its fulness, of which we now experience the pledge. Then there will be nothing that will have the element of corruption or decay in it.

FIRST AND LAST. Jesus intends here to squelch the tendency to think primarily of life in this world. The “*first,*” or most prominent in this world, maybe be the least prominent in the world to come. The “*last*” in this world could be the most outstanding in the world to come. The general rule is that the more of this world one possesses, the least of the ages to come will be enjoyed. This is not an inflexible rule for everyone, for Jesus says “*many,*” not all. Those who are first in privilege in this world, are not necessarily the most favored of God. “*The world to come*” is the place where the measure of Divine favor will be fully revealed. Let us live with that in mind.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 115

“ Mark 10:32 *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, 33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: 34 And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.*” (Mark 10:32-34; Matt 20:17-19; Lk 18:31-34)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus has come into the coasts of Judea, and the people have resorted to Him. As He was accustomed to do, He *“taught them again”* (10:1). During that time, the Pharisees tempted Him, asking if a man could put away his wife for every cause (10:2-9). After answering the Pharisees, Jesus later enlarged on the matter to His disciples, who had asked Him again of the matter (10:10-12). Also, at that time, some people brought their children to Jesus that He might *“touch them.”* After His disciples had rebuked the people for, what they thought was an intrusion, Jesus was displeased, instructed them on the matter, and told them to bring the children to Him. He then took them in His arms and blessed them (10:13-16). At that point a rich young ruler came to him, knelt down, and asked what he should do to *“inherit eternal life.”* When Jesus finally told him to sell all that he had, give the poor, take up his cross, and follow Him, the young man went away sorrowing. He then elaborated on how difficult it was for a rich man to be saved, astounding the disciples with his teaching (10:17-31). In a sense, all of those events were incidental – almost like a distraction. Jesus had set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, preparing to lay down His life as a ransom for many (Lk 9:51; 12:50). Now Jesus resumes His intended journey, and will again tell his disciples what is going to happen to Him. He knows the intent behind what will occur. As yet His disciples do not know. From a higher view, Jesus was being tested – tempted to turn from His real mission in order to deal with the difficulties and questions of men. But He will not be diverted from His work!

“ Mark 10:32 *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.*”

IN THE WAY GOING UP. *“In the way”* means on the road that led up to Jerusalem. Jesus had set out from Galilee, resolutely heading for Jerusalem, a journey of 35-40 miles. He is going to the place where He will give *“Himself as a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”* (1 Tim 2:6). The phrase *“up to Jerusalem”* does not mean Northward. It rather refers to Jerusalem being located on high terrain, so you ascended in going to the city, which was set among the hills. The land of Israel is said to be higher than any other land. Jerusalem was the highest part of the land, and the Temple was the highest art of the city. JOHN GILL The Psalmist says the mountains were *“around*

Jerusalem” (Psa 125:2). Jerusalem itself is called God’s “*holy mountain*” (Isa 66:20; Dan 9:16), and is said to be “*beautiful for situation*” (Psa 48:2). By intention, Jerusalem was an outward depiction of the “*heavenly places*” in which we have been seated in Christ (Eph 2:6). It was afforded this dignity because salvation would be wrought out within it, and the knowledge of God would flow out from it.

HE WENT BEFORE THEM. By saying Jesus “*went before them,*” the text means He was “*walking on ahead of them,*” NASB or “*leading the way.*” NIV This would be our Lord’s last trip to the holy city, and He was intent upon going there, for this is why he came into the world. He did not go reluctantly, but led the way. The zeal with which Jesus addressed His mission is challenging to consider. At the beginning of His ministry, when Jesus cleansed the Temple, His disciples took note of His unparalleled zeal. “*And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten Me up*” (John 2:17; Psa 69:9). Now, they note the same zeal is associated with entering into apparent danger. It is written that the Messiah, in bringing salvation, would be “*clad with zeal as a cloak*” (Isa 59:17). The greatness of that salvation, coupled with the fierceness of the adversary, demanded that Jesus enter into his work in this manner. It simply could not be accomplished in any other way. Even though the Father sustained Him, holding His hand (Isa 42:6), yet it required the total commitment of Christ to do the Father’s will. The Father’s own righteousness, which included His zeal, would also sustain the Savior in this work (Isa 59:16). Therefore, Jesus led the way back to Jerusalem, where He knew death – a most difficult death – awaited Him.

In this, our Lord established the manner of true obedience, which is always with holy determination – heartfelt and focused. Casual disciples will never be able to do the will of the Lord, for that “*will*” necessitates the total involvement of those engaged in it. There is no such thing as half-hearted or partial obedience, and it is spiritually lethal to proceed in life as there that was not true. Here is an area where Jesus set the pace for all of His followers.

THEY WERE AMAZED. Other versions read, “*they were astonished.*” NIV “*full of wonder,*” BBE “*troubled,*” GENEVA “*shocked,*” GWN “*in a daze,*” NJB and “*filled with awe.*” NLT Ordinarily, others went before Jesus as He approached a city (Matt 14:22; 21:1; Mk 6:45; Lk 9:52). But this time, Jesus Himself led the way, which was not His ordinary manner. He sent no one to announce His coming, or to prepare a place for Him. This was a different kind of visit, and the disciples sensed it, though they had no understanding of the circumstance.

THEY FOLLOWED HIM, AFRAID. This is the multitude that was following Jesus, from which the twelve would be separated for special instruction. Following the raising of Lazarus in Bethany, close to Jerusalem, the chief priests and Pharisees had taken counsel, continuing to seek an occasion to put Jesus to death (John 11:53). Because of this circumstance, Jesus departed from the region of Judea, and “*walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness,*” continuing isolated with His disciples (John 11:54). But now, in spite of the increasing danger in the area of Jerusalem, Jesus zealously heads back to the city. Others, sensing the danger, follow Him in fear.

HE BEGAN TO TELL THEM. Now Jesus takes “*the twelve*” aside to reveal to them what is going to happen in Jerusalem. He must separate them from the larger number of disciples to make known things to them that other ears are not yet suited to hear. Remember, Judas is among them at this time. He will hear the details of what he himself will do, and yet will not be able to retain them his heart. There are things that many followers cannot receive. Only those more acquainted with Christ, and who have been given “*greater works*” (John 14:12) to do, can hear of such things. Godly men should be able to deduce from this that the masses of people cannot always hear the same things. If one chooses to accommodate the general disciples alone, the key disciples must be neglected, and

truth withheld from them.

“ 33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles.”

Some men are more interested in what is going to happen to **them** . Here is the Master opening up to “*the twelve*” what was going to happen to **Him** . It is true that there were times when Jesus revealed to the disciples what their own experiences would be (Matt 10:18-22; 24:9; 26:31; Mk 13:9; 13:13; Lk 21:16-17; John 16:20; 21:18). However, that was not the center of Jesus’ message, and does not even have a part in the Gospel of Christ. Jesus is the heart and core of the Gospel, and His experience is the apex of all experience. His experiences related to His mission, and have redemptive power in them. No other human experience possesses this quality. The church does well to accent the right Person and the greatest experience, which is Christ’s. It is only within the context of Christ’s Person, experience, and achievements, that our lives obtain any importance.

WE GO UP TO JERUSALEM. This would be the place where the Savior would tread the winepress of the wrath of God, being made a curse for us (Isa 63:3; Gal 3:13) – Jerusalem, “*the city of God!*” (Psa 46:4; 87:3). Joel prophesied that the promised “*deliverance*” from sin would take place in Jerusalem (Joel 2:32). Zechariah foretold, “*living waters shall go out from Jerusalem*” (Zech 14:8). Jesus Himself told His disciples that the remission of sins would be preached in His name “*beginning at Jerusalem*” (Lk 24:47). Now Jesus will again divulge to “*the twelve*” what was determined to take place as a foundation of that redemption.

This is now the fourth time Jesus has made a point of this to His disciples. **Following the good confession of Peter** , “*began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day*” (Matt 16:21). Shortly after that, and **following His transfiguration** , Jesus again “*began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again*” (Mark 8:31). A little later, **after He had cast the demon out of a young boy** , and instructed His disciples concerning their own unbelief, He “*taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day.* (Mark 9:31).” **Now, for the fourth time, He goes over these appointed epochal events again, thus underscoring their essential and pivotal role in redemption. Following His resurrection, when the women came to the tomb to anoint Christ’s body, an angel reminded them of what Jesus had said about His suffering, death, and resurrection.** “*Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words*” (Luke 24:5-8). One of the great tragedies of our time is that the modern church has not placed any stress on these redemptive provisions.

DELIVERED TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES. Judas, after he had communed with “*the chief priests and the scribes*” (Lk 22:2), betrayed Jesus to the militia who had come “*from the chief priests and the scribes and elders of the people*” (Mark 14:43). The “*chief priests*” were the experts in ordained religious ceremony and procedure, and the scribes were experts in the Scriptures. The ceremonies had been given to point to Christ, and the Scriptures provides a rational depiction of Him. Yet those who headed both of those branches of Jewish life proved to be the enemies of Jesus.

THEY WILL CONDEMN HIM TO DEATH. This refers to the initial trial of Jesus that

took place during the night. When Jesus was before the “*chief priests and all the council*,” He acknowledged that he was the Christ. Upon hearing that confession, “*they all condemned Him to death*,” just as Jesus said they would (Mark 14:61-64). Matthew reports them saying, “*He is guilty of death*,” or “*deserving of death*” NKJV (Matt 26:66). Years later, Paul said of those sinful leaders, “*they have fulfilled them*” (the Scriptures) “*in condemning Him*” (Acts 13:27).

This judgment did not come from the Romans, but from the Jews, among whom Jesus had ministered for over three years, declaring the Kingdom of God. Further, it was the supposedly most knowledgeable among them who declared Him condemned – unworthy to live.

DELIVERED TO THE GENTILES. In a grand display of hypocrisy, the leaders did not take it upon themselves to personally kill Jesus. After all, this was a holy time – the time of the Passover. Therefore they “*bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate*” (Mk 15:1). They delivered Jesus “*to the Gentiles*,” whom they personally despised, yet thought worthy to carry out their sentence of Jesus to death. John tells us they did this “*early*” in the morning, not entering Pilate’s judgment hall themselves, “*lest they be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover*” (John 18:28). This was a display of unparalleled hypocrisy.

“ 34 And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.”

The manner in which they treated the One who was “*meek and lowly in heart*” contradicts every aspect of sound thought. These deeds were the result of a judgment rendered by a people who had a covenant from God. They were the ones who had been cultured and prepared to receive the One they had condemned. A special prophet had been raised up to prepare the way for this Redeemer, and to turn the people toward Him. As if that was not enough, the Savior had spent more than three years among them, astounding them with both His words and works, while God publicly approved of Him by means of “*miracles and signs and wonders*” (Acts 2:22). This confirms what sin did to the human race, and how hostile the carnal mind is against the Lord. Now, there is no need to philosophize about the extent of human corruption.

THEY SHALL MOCK HIM. To “*mock*” is to deride, ridicule, and make fun of. They sported with Him as the Philistines did with Samson (Judges 16:25,27). In His report of the shameful treatment of Jesus, Mark says they covered His face, beat Him with their fists, and said, “*Prophecy!*” (Mk 14:65). Matthew reports they said, “*Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?*” (Matt 26:68). The Gentiles treated Him spitefully also, clothing “*Him with purple, and plating a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail king of the Jews!*” (Mk 15:17-18). While He still wore the purple robe, they struck Him on the head with a reed, “*and bowing their knees worshiped Him*” (Mk 15:19). Luke says that Herod and his men of war “*set him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe*” (Lk 23:11).

THEY SHALL SCOURGE HIM. To scourge a man is to flog or beat him with a lash or whip, deriding him in the process. It literally means to “*punish severely*.” FRIBERG It is said of Pilate that he “*scourged Jesus*” (Matt 27:26). John says, “*Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him*” (John 19:1). Luke refers to the process as Jesus being “*chastened*” (Lk 23:16). The Psalmist referred of this sort of beating when he wrote, “*The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows*” (Psa 129:3). Speaking of the Messiah, Isaiah wrote, “*I gave My back to the smiters*” (Isa 50:6). Such unspeakable cruelty attests to the depravity of men.

THEY WILL SPIT UPON HIM. “*They shall spit upon Him.*” Luke reads, “*spitted on*” (Lk 18:32). This was a sign of utter contempt. Job said of those who derided him, “*They abhor me,*

they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face” (Job 30:10). Isaiah said the Messiah would not hide His face “from shame and spitting” (Isa 50:6). Matthew says of Jewish leaders themselves, “they spit in His face” (Matt 26:67) . Mark says that “some began to spit on Him” (Mk 14:65). Under the Law, spitting in one’s face was a sign of rejection and cursing (Deut 25:9). Thus, both the Jewish leaders and the Gentiles treated Jesus as though He was worthy of contempt and shame, thinking nothing of spitting in His face. That is how hard a man’s heart can become!

THEY WILL KILL HIM. “ . . . *and shall kill Him.*” Matthew reads Jesus was delivered to the Gentiles “*to crucify Him*” (Matt 20:19). Luke reads, “*and put Him to death*” (Lk 18:33). Some philosophize about whether or not the Jews were responsible for Jesus’ death. The Scriptures, however, make the matter quite clear, tracing it to both the Jewish people and their leaders. As God sees things, the Jews “*by wicked hands . . . crucified*” and slew Jesus (Acts 2:24), and therefore. “*killed the Prince of life*” (Acts 3:15). Paul specifically said they “*killed the Lord Jesus*” (1 Thess 2:15). It is true that this was done in accordance with “*the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 4:2:23), and that they did what God’s “*counsel determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:28). It is also true, as Paul said, that in condemning Jesus, the Jews “*fulfilled*” the Scriptures (Acts 13:27). Yet, this did not relieve them of one mote of responsibility. Peter told the people they had to repent of their deed, ordained or not! No one can claim they sinned according to God’s will, and are therefore not responsible for their deed.

HE SHALL RISE AGAIN. Man does not have the last word! This is particularly true when it comes to Jesus. By rejecting and condemning Jesus, the people thought they were breaking loose from the restraints they felt in His presence (Psa 2:3). But nothing could be further from the truth! Jesus said He would “*rise again,*” and He did. He took back the life that He had laid down – which accounts for why they were able to “*kill Him.*” For those who are aligned with the living God, the worst is never the last! The resurrection of Christ confirms that. It also is the reason for Divine power being toward the redeemed (Eph 1:19-20), the effectiveness of our own baptism (1 Pet 3:21), and is a pledge of our own resurrection from the dead (1 Cor 6:14). His resurrection confirmed He is the Son of God with power (Rom 1:4), and is the appointed means through which we are born again (1 Pet 1:3). God had the last word!

THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND. Luke adds, “*And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken*” (Luke 18:34). These things would not become clear to them until Jesus was enthroned at the right hand of God, and opened their understanding. Academic knowledge was of no help here.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 116

“ Mark 10:35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. 36 And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? 37 They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory. 38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 39 And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: 40 But to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.” (Mark 10:35-40; Matthew 20:20-23)

INTRODUCTION

Primarily, the Gospels contain the record of the ministry of Jesus – a ministry that reveal both His Person and purpose. Secondly, they reveal the experience of the disciples, particularly the twelve, who were chosen to be with Him and be sent forth to preach. In that experience the complete sufficiency of Jesus can be seen. There is no record the disciples and Jesus attending an event where He was not the prominent One, and His ministry was not the fundamental work – including the wedding feast at Cana. There is no record of Jesus taking His disciples to a political event, athletic event, or something entertaining. Even when they were invited to someone’s home for a meal, Jesus was the center of attention. There is no record of them going on a sightseeing tour. It is apparent that in the presence of Jesus such things paled in significance. His words were always the main ones, and there was always a marked emphasis of the Kingdom in them. This is a Jesus to whom many professing Christians have never been subjected – an absolutely dominating One. Notwithstanding, this is the real Jesus. Everyone thinks, speaks, and acts differently when they are knowledgeably in His presence, whether they are righteous or wicked. That is a marvelous commentary on His Person, and His present exaltation. Our text will provide more evidence of these things, revealing the manner in which the disciples thought and spoke when they were our Lord’s presence. Even when their thinking was flawed, it was, in a sense, pointed in the right direction.

“ Mark 10:35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. 36 And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? 37 They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in Thy glory” (Mark 10:35-37).

JAMES AND JOHN. The very idea of asking Jesus for any personal benefit is intriguing to consider. It confirms that something was perceived in Him that caused believing men to have hope – to aspire to have something they could not otherwise possess. The scribes and

Pharisees never asked Him for such a benefit. When Jesus was in the house of “*Simon the leper*” (elsewhere identified as a Pharisee, Lk 7:36), he did not ask Jesus for a benefit, and even objected when a sinful woman poured precious ointment upon Him (Matt 26:6-13). The best His enemies could do was ask Jesus questions in an effort to snare Him in His words. But you will find no such action on the part of His disciples.

Matthew tells us that it was the mother of James and John who came to Jesus, accompanied by her sons – and she came “*worshiping Him*” (Matt 20:20). Judging from Christ’s response, her sons appear to have requested her to present this supplication, for even in Matthew, Jesus’ answer is directed to James and John, not their mother.

According to the Gospel accounts, their mother was named Salome (Matt 27:56 with Mk 15:40 and 16:1), and was among the women who traveled with Jesus “*when He was in Galilee,*” ministering to Him, as stated in (Mark 15:41). She was also present when Jesus gave up his life on the cross (Mk 15:40), and was among the women who came to the tomb with spices to anoint Christ’s body (Mk 16:1). Some have concluded from John’s account of Jesus death, that she was the sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord (John 19:25). However we view the matter, this was certainly no ordinary woman, for she had a great devotion to Jesus.

WHATSOEVER WE SHALL DESIRE. A lot may be known of a person by where they direct their petitions. Who do they feel is competent to fulfill their desires? Mark says Jesus said to James and John, “*What would ye that I should do for you?*” Matthew represents Him as answering their mother: “*And He said unto her, What wilt thou?*” There is no contradiction here, for the desire was representative of how all three of them were thinking. From another point of view, the mother was presenting the expressed desire of her sons.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO? However we view the technicalities of the matter, the answer of Jesus tells us much about Himself. Primarily, He IS inclined to grant the desires of those who follow Him. It only remains for those desires to be in harmony with His own will and agenda. It ought to be apparent that this is an aspect of Jesus that is most comforting to those who possess honest and good hearts.

The answer of Jesus also confirms the nature of James and John, together with their mother. These were people with pure hearts, and they ought not to be considered in any other way, even though their petition lacked wisdom. Jesus never asked one of His enemies what they wanted Him to do for them – not a single one of them.

SITTING ON THE RIGHT AND LEFT HANDS. What kind of request will be made? Whatever it is, it will reveal much of these brothers and their mother. Will they ask for financial security? Perhaps even extended well-being and health? How about exemption from taxes, or a prominent role in Temple activities?

Both Mark and Matthew use the word “*Grant*” in the petition (Matt 10:21). This is a request for something to be given that can only come from the Lord Jesus. However strong this desire may have been, the petitioners knew that if Jesus did not give this privilege, it simply could not be possessed.

Mark tells us that the request was to sit on the right and left hands of Jesus “*in Thy glory.*” Matthew says, “*in Thy kingdom.*” It appears evident that Jesus’ answer to the twelve concerning their role in His Kingdom had sparked this request: “*Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt 19:28). For many,

that would have sufficed, but James and John want to sit next to Jesus. I do not think it is proper to think of this as an expression of a lust for power. Jesus had already promised them power – they would sit upon thrones. Even though Jesus had already revealed the keys of the Kingdom would be given to Peter (Matt 16:19), His words concerning Peter had not apparently registered with them.

It appears clear that this petition was prompted by a misconception of the nature of Christ's glory and Kingdom – a view they had after Jesus' resurrection, when He was among them (Acts 1:6). At this time, they could not think in terms of Divine glory, but only of an illustrious worldly kingdom – a sort of revival of Israel's ancient splendor, as during the times of David and Solomon. As long as Jesus was among them in the flesh, they had this view.

“ 38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

YE KNOW NOT WHAT YE ASK. How gentle the Master is with those who are among His flock! Think of the answers Jesus gave to some of His questioners. *“Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites”* (Matt 22:18). *“Man, who made Me a judge or divider over you?”* (Lk 12:14). *“A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it”* (Matt 16:4). The difference in His answers is traced to the hearts of those who asked the questions. In this case, the motives were not wrong, but the question rather proceeded from a state of ignorance. If James and John were engaged in a selfish quest for power, they would not have asked to sit next to Jesus, but to have their own independent thrones. Jesus tells them they did not realize what they were asking. They had a misconception of His rule, and of the one that He had promised they would have.

Among other things, this blasts the notion that Jesus understands our foolish expressions, and tolerates them lovingly. He did not do this with the disciples, and He will not do it with you. He corrected their thinking by telling them what they would be able to bear. He confirms that places of exaltation are associated with certain preparations. We should learn from this occasion to strive to make spiritually sensitive requests of the Lord.

CAN YOU DRINK OF THE CUP? The reign of Jesus was, by Divine intention, preceded by a bitter experience. He would be given a cup to drink that could appropriately be called *“the cup of trembling,”* or *“the cup of His fury,”* NKJV or *“cup of His anger,”* NASB or *“cup of His wrath”* NIV (Isa 51:17,22; Zech 12:2). In drinking from this cup, Jesus would absorb the shock of the curse of God (Gal 3:13). He would *“taste death”* (Heb 2:9) in a sense impossible to any one else in the flesh. The cup was so dreadful that Jesus thrice petitioned the Father, *“O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me”* (Mat 26:39,42,44). Even though the cup was bitter beyond description, and too dreadful to fully express, yet Jesus resolutely determined to drink it, knowing that it was the appointed prelude to glory. Therefore, when Peter sought to defend Him in the garden, Jesus said to him, *“Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”* (John 18:11).

The cup Jesus was given to drink was associated with Divine wrath – with the judgment of sin and the cursing of the reprehensible. It was a cup from which all of the wicked shall eventually drink, and was described by the Psalmist. *“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and He poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them”* (Psa 75:8). Jeremiah referred to such a cup as *“the wine cup of this fury”* (Jer 25:15).

Now Jesus asks the petitioners if they are able to drink *“of the cup”* that He will drink of.

Note, He does not ask them if they will be able to drink of a cup **like** His cup, but from **His** cup itself. He is speaking of the portion of sufferings that He will leave behind (Col 1:24). These are sufferings that have no redeeming value, as did the sufferings of Jesus. Nevertheless, they will be difficult to bear for His followers. Can the disciples do it?

CAN YOU BE BAPTIZED WITH THE BAPTISM? This refers to the baptism of suffering – that is, when the individual is immersed into suffering, which plunging results in death. Jesus referred to this “*baptism*” elsewhere in most arresting words. “*But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*” (Luke 12:50). Other versions translate the word “*straightened*” as *distressed*, NKJV *what stress*, NRSV *constrained*, RSV *grieved* GENEVA *great is my anguish*, NAB *and under a heavy burden.*” NLT This “*baptism*,” the contemplation of which constituted a heavy burden, is what consummated in Christ’s death. While it is true that Jesus died “*by wicked hands*” (Acts 2:23), the death of reference had more to do with God’s cursing of Christ (Gal 3:13), when He withdrew from the Son (Mk 15:34).

In referring to this “*baptism*” of suffering, Jesus is referring more to what led to His death, than to the death itself, for no one else will be able to die the death He died. Now Jesus asks James and John if they are able to experience such a baptism. Can they endure what precedes being exalted? Can they pass through what is required to be close to Him?

Behind this answer is the fact that the cross necessarily precedes the crown, and suffering must come before glory. That is the manner of the Kingdom. Thus it is written, “*If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him*” (2 Tim 2:12). And again, we read that being “*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*” is associated with an IF-clause: “*if so be that we suffer with Him*” (Rom 8:17). It is not possible to be accepted by God without being rejected by the world! No person will be able to live unto God without dying to the world and sin. Divine approbation is necessarily preceded by the rejection of the world. If one desires closeness to the Lord, there is also a corresponding distance from the world that is necessary. It is that distance that induces suffering, for the world does not take kindly to those who refuse to be wed to it.

“ 39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: 40 But to sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.”

WE CAN! Matthew says the disciples responded, “*We are able*” (Matt 20:22). The quick answer of James and John was driven by a lack of awareness of their own weaknesses as well as the magnitude of the experience to which Jesus referred. On the night of His betrayal, “*all the disciples forsook Him and fled,*” including James and John (Matt 26:56; Mk 14:50). This fulfilled the word Jesus said to them at the last supper. He told them all, “*All ye shall be offended because of Me this night*” (Matt 26:31). Some believe John was the young man who sought to follow Jesus that night, then fled when a member of the arresting group took hold of Him (Mk 14:50-51). Since only Christ’s disciples were with Him in the garden, this is probably true.

The point to be seen here is that the disciples were not yet aware of the magnitude of things that were associated with the kingdom and glory of Christ. Both their petition and their answer were clothed with ignorance – with a lack of familiarity with the nature of both Christ and His Kingdom. Following Jesus’ enthronement, their perspectives changed dramatically. But for the time being, they are speaking as infants, just as everyone does who lacks a mature acquaintance with the Master and His Kingdom.

There are still people, like those of old, who assert their willingness to follow Jesus, yet are wholly lacking in their understanding of who He is and what He is doing. On one occasion, when Jesus was ministering, a certain scribe boldly affirmed, “*Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.*” What a noble intention. Yet, he lacked in his understanding, for Jesus responded that there was an element of uncertainty involved in following Him. “*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head*” (Matt 8:20). Another one of Christ’s disciples, seeing that wholehearted devotion was required, responded, requesting permission to wrap up his responsibilities at home “*Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*” Jesus told him, “*Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead*” (Matt 8:21-22). The point is that it is easy to boast of allegiance to Jesus and declare a willingness to follow Him when you remain unaware of what is involved in doing so. As “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15), it is imperative that the church be faithful in making known the essentials of discipleship, and what is involved in following Jesus.

YOU SHALL INDEED. Knowing that a lofty position had been reserved for these disciples, Jesus announced that they would, indeed, drink the cup of suffering, and be plunged into the bitter experience of persecution and opposition. But it would be **His** cup and **His** baptism, and not their own private cups. They would have a share in **His** sufferings, but would not bear the brunt of them. That is, they would not be cursed by God, but would share in the sorrows associated with being identified with Christ in this present evil world.

Prior to this, Jesus did not speak much concerning the appointed sufferings of His disciples. He alluded to their future endure distresses in Luke 11:49, although it was with some ambiguity: “*Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute*” (Luke 11:49). Following the occasion of our text, however, the Lord made frequent mention of His disciples drinking the cup of suffering. He spoke of them being scourged in the synagogues, persecuted from city to city, delivered up, afflicted, killed, and put into prison (Matt 23:34; Matt 24:9; Luke 21:12; John 15:20; John 16:2). They would, indeed, drink from His cup and participate in His baptism. That was the appointed path to glory, and if they followed Jesus, it could not be successfully avoided. Those who imagine that following Jesus is always comfortable and convenient are simply wrong.

IT IS NOT MINE TO GIVE. Even though James and John would suffer with Christ, that would not qualify them to sit at His right and left hand in the glory. That privilege was one of appointment, not reward. Jesus announces that He had no right to make such an appointment. It belonged to another, even his Father. Here is an aspect of His “*everlasting kingdom*” (2 Pet 1:11) that must be known. Jesus did not come to earth to make assignments, but to fulfill them, working in strict accord with the Father’s established will.

FOR WHOM IT IS PREPARED. The truth of the matter is that such assignments had already been made, for “*the works were finished from the foundation of the world*” (Heb 4:3). Notice that Jesus does not say the people would be prepared for the position, but that the position was prepared for the people: i.e. “*for whom it is prepared.*” This is included in the phrase, “*the things which God has prepared for them that love Him*” (1 Cor 2:9). It is also involved in the expression, “*the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matt 25:34). This excludes the idea of developing religious careers, and confirms that God has placed the members in the body “*where it hath pleased Him*” (1 Cor 12:18). As with all Kingdom understanding, the awareness of Divine appointments, as well as the preparation for them, is found within the framework of “*the knowledge of God*” – fellowship with Him.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 117

“Mark 10:41 *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. 42 But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. 43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: 44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. 45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* (Mark 10:41-45; Matthew 20:24-28; Lk 22:25-26)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus never became embroiled in the discussions of His disciples. You can sense that His desire was not to become a part of their lives, but for them to become a part of His life and work. He would often use their discussions as a time to open up some facet of the Kingdom that was, at the time, obscure to them. In matters relating to life and godliness, understanding is pivotal, and opinion has no point. In fact, the only place opinion can make an entrance is where understanding is **not** possessed. Wherever theologically variant views or opinions are valued, the truth is **not** known. Truth is not determined by judgment, but by knowledge: i.e., *“Ye shall **know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). This is central to spiritual life. Truth is never unveiled through a consensus – or many different people coming to a state of agreement. That was the basis for the condemnation of Jesus by the Jewish counsel – they all agreed. It was the basis for the stoning of Stephen – they all agreed. Valid agreement must be the result of knowing – truly knowing, or being acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus. James and John had made a request of Jesus because of something they did **not** understand. Now the other disciples are displeased with James and John because of something they do **not** understand. In both cases, the Lord will bring understanding to them, clarifying things that were obscure to them at the time. As we consider this text, it is good to determine that we will spend less time talking about what we do not understand, and more time listening to Him who is speaking from heaven. In so doing, mere talk will be transformed to edification.

“Mark 10:41 *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. 42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.”*

WHEN THE TEN HEARD IT. Notice with what precision the Holy Spirit speaks when referring to the apostles. When all of them are referenced, they are called *“the twelve”* (Mk 4:10; 9:35; 11:11; 14:17). Now that two of them are being addressed by Jesus, He refers to the others as *“the ten”* (Matt 20:24; Mk 10:41). After Judas had fallen, they are referred to as *“the eleven”* (Matt 28:16; Mk 16:14; Lk 24:9,33). When Matthias was added to their number, it is said he

was “*numbered with the eleven*” (Acts 1:26). After the office of Judas has been filled by Matthias, they are again referred to as “*the twelve*” (Acts 6:2). On Pentecost, when Peter stood up with the other apostles, it is said that he was “*standing up with the eleven*” (Acts 2:14). When John was shown the glorified church, the apostles are referred to as “*the twelve apostles of the Lamb*” (Rev 21:14). **There was never, then, as addition to this number of men.** Paul’s apostleship was unique, him being “*born out of due time*” (1 Cor 15:8), being “*separated*” by God from his “*mother’s womb*” to be “*the apostle of the Gentiles*” (Gal 1:15; Rom 11:13). These men were those chosen and sent by Jesus to lay down the foundation: “*the twelve*” to the Jews, or “*circumcision,*” and Paul to the Gentiles, or “*uncircumcision*” (Gal 2:8). No other men were referred to as “*apostles*” **in this sense**, and it is improper to do so today. Barnabas is referred to as an apostle because he was “*separated*” and sent forth by the Spirit with Paul (Acts 13:2; 14:14). We dare not view the apostles as mere men.

THEY BEGAN TO BE MUCH DISPLEASED. Other versions read “*began to feel indignant,*” NASB “*became indignant,*” NIV and “*began to be angry.*” NRSV Matthew says they were “*moved with indignation against the two brethren*” (Matt 20:24). This confirms that James and John, together with their mother, had not pulled Jesus aside, and requested Him privately to seat them at His right and left hands in His glory. It was not a request to have dominion over the other apostles, or to displace them, else they would have asked it in total isolation from the other apostles. They were ignorant of the nature of the Kingdom, and questions asked out of such ignorance cannot be stated in a proper manner. The whole matter angered the other apostles because they could see no good in it. It had a competitive appearance about it, and thus incensed them.

JESUS CALLED THEM TO HIM. There is a certain necessity of being in proximity to Jesus if learning is to be experienced. Now, Jesus will address them all, for the misunderstanding of the nature of the Kingdom was common to them all.

THE GENTILES AND LORDSHIP. Jesus affirms that the recognized rulers among the Gentiles “*exercise lordship over them,*” and the “*high officials*” NIV even “*exercise authority over*” those rulers. Luke adds the ones exercising authority are “*called benefactors,*” or those who have done good to the people (Lk 22:25). These two texts are the only places in the Bible where the word “*Lordship*” is used. The meaning of the word is “to bring under one’s power, to subject to oneself, to subdue, or master.” THAYER The idea is that they bind, or impose, their will upon the people. There is a hierarchy of power, or authority, with the greater authorities ruling over the lesser ones, who exercise rule over the people. Among the Gentiles, the supreme rulers raise up men according to their own good pleasure and give them authority over others. They make laws, and enforce them upon the people, lording it over them, or imposing their will upon them. This is the principle of worldly government, or authority.

As long as this kind of power operates within the boundaries of Divine intent, it is of itself right. Those boundaries are defined in Scripture. “*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good . But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*” (Rom 13:4). Briefly summarized, the Divinely ordained purpose of civil rulers is the encouragement of doing good, and the punishment of evil doers.

The exercising of “*lordship*” is the strict enforcement of these objectives, which are done for the good of the people. Law, by its very nature, must be enforced, and “*lordship*” is the means by which that is done.

It ought to be noted that the word “*lordship*” is nowhere applied to Christ Jesus – even

though He is “*Lord over all*” (Rom 10:12). There is a different manner of authority in His kingdom. I fear it is as little known today as it was during the time of our text. Jesus will now show His apostles that sitting at His right and left hand does not have to do with enforcing the rules after the manner of Gentile dignities. That is not the fashion of His Kingdom.

“ 43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: 44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”

IT SHALL NOT BE AMONG YOU! Other versions read, “*It is not so,*” NIV “*That’s not the way it is going to be,*” GWN and “*But this is not to be so.*” AMPLIFIED Luke reads, “*ye shall not be so*” (Lk 22:26). The language is very strong, and is not intended to be a suggestion, or a goal which the disciples are to endeavor to reach. The idea is that there is no place for this kind of rule within the Kingdom of God. **Within Christ, there is no position that exercises dominion over another.** Solemnly, those who are leaders are told, “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof . . . neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*” (1 Pet 5:2-3). Those who “*lord*” it over God’s heritage are seeking to impose their own will upon the people. Those who “*feed*” the flock, taking the “*oversight*” allotted to them by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) are seeking the **advantage** of the flock of God, not their own. They are delivering to the people what God has given to be dispensed.

Speaking to the premier person among “*the twelve*” – Peter, to whom the keys of the Kingdom were given (Matt 16:19) – Jesus said, “*Feed My lambs . . . Feed My sheep . . . Feed My sheep*” (John 21:16-17). It is not possible to have more Kingdom authority than Peter had, for he was given “*the keys of the Kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 16:19). Yet, this was not in order to the imposition of Peter’s own will. He was not made a ruler after the manner of the Gentiles.

No provision is made for that. If it is found, men have imposed it upon the people of God. Not, “*It ought not be,*” but “*shall not be.*” That is, there is no way such conduct will be approved.

I have already mentioned that the term “*lordship*” is never applied to Jesus, even though He is “*Lord over all.*” Strictly speaking, He is not implementing His own will, but the will of the Father. His atoning death and its effects were “*according to the will of God and our Father*” (Gal 1:4). From another point of view, God is working His will in us “*through Jesus Christ*” (Heb 13:21). Even the Holy Spirit, who Himself is Divine and referred to as “*God*” (Acts 5:3-4) makes intercession within the believers “*according to the will of God*” (Rom 8:27).

To be sure, Jesus will subdue all of His enemies – but it will be done by the display of His magnificent glory, not by forceful means as ordinarily perceived. That is, Jesus is really over His enemies – over them by his very nature, and they are under Him by their very nature. As soon as His enemies see Him as He is, they will bow before Him, and will resist no more. The rulers of the Gentiles are not of such an order.

Anyone who has labored in the Lord’s vineyard for any period of time knows that church leaders impose their own will upon the people – whether it is firing a faithful preacher, or directing the focus of the congregation into questionable areas. However, their job is not to manage the flock, but to feed it. God has made absolutely no provision for any other kind of leader. Even in the gift of “*governments*” (1 Cor 12:28), it is not after the manner of the Gentiles. If this is true, then those who are exercising dominion over God’s people are imposters, imposing their wills upon “*the flock of God.*” They will not be judged as duly appointed representative of God, but as imposters. Their future is very bleak.

WHOSOEVER WILL BE GREAT. “*Whosoever will*” means “*whoever wishes*,” NASB or “*whoever wants to become*.” NIV If anyone has the desire to be prominent, or be a leader, or occupy a high position, Jesus tells them how they are to think about the matter. His words will be in keeping with what He has said about the different manner of His Kingdom.

SHALL BE YOUR MINISTER. Other versions read, “*shall be your servant*,” NKJV and “*must be your servant*.” AMPLIFIED Matthew reads, “*let him be your servant*” (Matt 20:27). This does **not** mean serve the people’s interests! It rather means that what God has provided for the people is served to them – like the disciples distributed the bread at the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 (Mk 6:41; 8:6-7). This is not speaking of serving tables – i.e., meeting the temporal needs of the people. The apostles, who were actually leaders in the household of faith, refused to “*leave the word of God*” for such things (Acts 6:2). It is not that such service was wrong, it is that is not the proper use of Kingdom power and authority.

The remarkable **absence** of spiritual service, as here defined, being rendered by the professional ministry, and other forms of church leadership, is staggering.

THE SERVANT IS THE CHIEF! Like Joseph was in Egypt, the “*chief*” is the one who has access to the corn, and has been given the right to distribute it. Stated in Scriptural terms, it is the one who labors “*in the Word and doctrine*” – that is, in ingesting the Word, and teaching it. Such persons are described as “*elders that rule well*.” That is, they are “*chief*,” and that position is confirmed by the fact that they are properly dispensing food to the flock.

There is no place for a career-minded thrust in Christ’s kingdom. That is more of a Gentile mind-set, and has no place in the work of Christ. Of course, adhering to this principle would dissolve the decided majority of professional Christian training.

“ 45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

FOR EVEN. Other versions read, “*For also*,” DARBY “*For truly*,” BBE “*For verily*,” ESV “*It’s the same way*,” GWN and “*because*.” IE That is, this principle is perceived most clearly in the Savior Himself. Here is the One to whom “*all power in heaven and earth*” has been given (Matt 28:18). He has been exalted “*above all*” (Eph 1:21), and given a name “*that is above every name*” (Phil 2:9). Every knee will bow to Him, and every tongue will confess Him to God (Rom 14:11). There is no doubt about who He IS! He is “*the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Tim 6:15).

Here is the premier example of one who is Chief! He is the “*CHIEF Cornerstone*” (Eph 2:20), and “*the CHIEF Shepherd*” (1 Pet 5:4). It is not possible for there to be a legitimate “*chief*” among the saints who contradicts the nature of the Head of the church. If the predestinated purpose of God is to confirm the justified ones to “*the image of His Son*” (Rom 8:29), then how is it possible that any leaders among them could be fundamentally unlike the Son? It is not that such a thing is not right. It is that it cannot possibly happen!

CAME NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO. Although it was right for men to serve Christ, that is not why He came into the world. He did not come because He wanted to be served! Myriads of angels already served Him! Following His temptation in the wilderness, angels ministered to Jesus (Matt 4:11). After Jesus had healed Peter’s mother-in-law, she arose and “*ministered*” to Him and His disciples (Matt 8:15). There was also a cluster of holy women who “*ministered unto Him*” when He was in Galilee (Mk 15:40-41). Joanna, wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, with Susanna and others, also ministered to Jesus “*of their substance*” (Lk 8:3). None of them were rebuked for

their service, and it was right that they should minister to Jesus. But that is not why He came! That is not what he sought! That is not why He humbled Himself and became obedient! **For that reason alone, it is wrong for anyone bearing His name to seek to be served, for that is putting oneself ahead of the Master.** There is no place for believers being offended because they are not noticed or served! Those who refuse to serve unless they are lauded, are to be eliminated from leadership, for no place has been made for them.

BUT TO MINISTER. Here we have it from the Savior's own mouth. Rather than coming into the world to be ministered to, He came *"to minister,"* or *"to serve,"* NKJV or *"to be a servant,"* BBE or *"help others,"* LIVING or *"to wait on others."* WEYMOUTH The emphasis here is not on giving people what they want, but what they need: that is, bring **true benefits** to the people.

In our day, the word *"minister"* has come to be a title, and speaks of an official position within an organized church. However, this is not its meaning in Scripture. A *"minister"* is one who serves the best and appointed interests of the people. It is a person who distributes needed resources. One of the great contradictions of our time is that of fallen church leaders – particularly in the area of morality. Such men, regardless of their claims, have served their own interests and not that of the people. They have come to be served, and service is what they seek. Such a person is a damning paradox. Whatever you may think of such a circumstance, there is no place in the Kingdom of God for such a self-serving person – none at all.

TO GIVE HIS LIFE. Jesus is not speaking in a generic or unspecific manner. He precisely defines **how** He serves his people, and what He came to do. Both Matthew and Mark say the same words: *"to give His life a ransom for many,"* or *"to give His life AS a ransom for many"* NIV (Matt 20:28). Here *"many"* stands for *"all,"* as in Romans 5:15,16,19). The *"many"* are set in comparison to the solitary life of Jesus, and are not meant to be mathematical in nature.

The word *"ransom"* means *"the price for redeeming,"* or the cost for liberating a soul from a state of misery and futility. Under the Law, when the people were counted, every man was to *"give a ransom for his soul unto the Lord"* (Ex 30:12). When God delivered Israel from bondage, He said *"I gave Egypt for thy ransom"* (Isa 43:3). Part of the Gospel is that Jesus *"gave Himself a ransom for all"* – *confirming that "many" stands for "all"* (1 Tim 2:6). That is, the price for rescuing humanity was Jesus Himself – the willing forfeiture of His life.

If this is the proper explanation for *"minister"* – and it is – then we must blot from our minds the notion that Jesus came to minister temporal benefits to us. As popular and seemingly reasonable as that may seem, it could not possibly be more wrong. The death of Christ was not required to ransom you from poverty – or enable God to give you a lot of this world's goods. Jesus did not have to die so you could be free from illness. Houses and lands are not promised to you because Jesus gave His life, for that is not why He gave it.

But let us get to the point of this text. The real *"chief"* among God's people is the one who, through personal forfeiture, and the investment of his time, provides needed spiritual resources to the people. It is the one who, in a sense, gives His life for the life of the people, denying personal interests so that other might obtain Kingdom advantages.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 118

“ Mark 10:46 And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

(Mark 10:46-52; Matthew 20:29-34; Lk 18:35-43)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is en route to Jerusalem, where He will lay down His life a ransom for many. Along the way, He ministers in such a way as to accent the salvation He came effect. He has revealed the ignorance of the Pharisees (10:2-9), blessed little children (10:16), taught the disciples more perfectly (10:10-15, 23-31), unveiled the condition of a rich young ruler (10:17-22), revealed His coming death (10:32-34), corrected James and John (10:35-40), and taught the disciples the manner of the Kingdom (10:41-45). He lived out the requirement to set ones's affection on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2). Those who followed Jesus – really followed Him – never got wrapped up in politics, social issues, and the accumulation of worldly wealth. His thoughts, words, and deeds were consistently in the realm of the Spirit. However men may choose to interpret life and its involvements, the Son of God “*always*” did the things that pleased God (John 8:29) – always! When it comes to focus or direction, His life is like a spiritual template. He would not be deterred or turned from the goal, and neither will those who truly follow Him. His life was wrapped up in the will of the Lord. Both the direction and manner of His life was determined by the commission given to Him – to lay down His life and take it up again. He never allowed Himself to be turned from that objective. In doing this He established the only valid way to live unto the Lord. To live in any other way is wholly unacceptable. Today He is calling men to live in this manner.

“ Mark 10:46 And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.”

HE CAME AND WENT. *“And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho.”* Remember, Jesus, is en route to Jerusalem, which was around seventeen miles from Jericho. Matthew says, *“He departed from Jericho”* (Matt 20:29). Luke says, *“as He was come nigh unto Jericho”* (Lk 18:35). Immediately following Luke’s record of this incident, he wrote, *“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho”* (19:1). After this, Luke gives the account of Jesus going to the house of Zacchaeus. No other Gospel writer includes this account. The reconciliation between the accounts is not specifically provided. However, there is no contradiction here. All three accounts have Jesus confronting Bartimaeus **outside** of the city. Luke does not say Jesus was entering the city, but that He was near it – or not within it. He provides the account of Zacchaeus, something that occurred while He was in Jericho (Lk 19:2-10). Jesus, then, came to Jericho, spent time with Zacchaeus when there, then left the city. On His way out of the city, this incident with Bartimaeus took place.

BLIND BARTIMAEUS. The name *“Bartimaeus”* identified this man. The first part of the name, “Bar,” means “son.” The last part of the name “timaeus,” identifies his father, who is specified by name: *“the son of Timaeus.”* Another name compounded in this way is *“Barjona”* (son of Jonah, Matt 16:17). It is possible that Timaeus was someone of note in this area, and that, consequently, Bartimaeus was also better known. Additionally, he was industrious to do what he could to obtain the necessities of life.

Bartimaeus had positioned himself outside of the city by the highway, and was begging. In this way, both those who were entering and those who were leaving would see him. It is a sad thing to read of anyone reduced to the state of a beggar. A well known “*beggar*” was Lazarus, who, when he died, was *“carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom”* (Lk 16:20). Jesus once healed a blind man who was also a beggar (John 9:8). David once said, *“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread”* (Psa 37:25). Some have taken this to mean that the righteous will never beg. However, that would cast reproach upon Lazarus. The meaning of David’s words is that God’s people will never beg more than one generation – their **“seed”** will not be seen begging bread. The whole church in Jerusalem went through a period of abject poverty, when other brethren had to supply their needs (Rom 15:26). James referred to a *“brother or sister”* who was *“naked, and destitute of daily food”* (James 2:15). John referred to a *“brother”* who had need of the essentials of life (1 John 3:17). All who do not need to beg have good reason to give thanks!

Matthew says there were two blind men – *“behold there were two men sitting by the way side”* (Matt 20:29). Bartimaeus, however, appears to have either been the most prominent of the two, or to have spoken for them – as Peter did for the apostles (Acts 2:14)..

HE HEARD THAT IT WAS JESUS. Luke provides a more detailed account. When Bartimaeus sensed that a multitude of people was passing by, he *“asked what it meant”* – note, he did not ask who it was, but *“what it meant .”* He was told, *“Jesus of Nazareth passeth by”* – that is why there was a multitude of people (Lk 18:36-37). At the time He was not visiting Jericho, but leaving it. Mark says it was *“Jesus with His disciples and a great number of people.”* Matthew says that as Jesus departed out of Jericho, *“a great multitude followed Him”* (Matt 20:29). While He was in Jericho, He had apparently stirred up considerable interest. Yet, even though there was a large crowd, Jesus was preeminent – the one mentioned by name.

HE BEGAN TO CRY OUT. Bartimaeus had some knowledge of Jesus. We do not know how he obtained it, but he must have been around the right people. As soon as he heard, he began to cry out. There were two critical things he knew about Jesus. (1) He had mercy on people. (2) He was the son of David. There are twelve accounts of people asking Jesus for

mercy (Matt 9:13; 9:27; 15:22; Matt 17:15; Matt 20:30,31; Mk 10:47,48; Lk 17:13; Lk 18:38-39) – two other blind men, the woman from Canaan, the father of a vexed child, ten lepers, and the men of this text. “*Mercy*” is having compassion or pity on someone in dire straits – **doing** something that helps their condition. Bartimaeus associated this kind of response with “*the son of David*” – that is, the promised offspring of David (Matt 1:1). Although that Offspring was to be a King with an unending kingdom (Lk 1:32-33), yet those with faith associated His reign with having mercy on the people.

If you would have interrogated Bartimaeus, you probably would not have encountered a lot of profound wisdom. Yet, his faith enabled him to take hold of **who** Jesus was and **what** he could do, as prophetically defined. He had an inner vision that transcended what the people all around him were seeing, and it moved him into an aggressive quest for mercy.

“ 48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee. 50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus”

MANY CHARGED HIM. “*Many charged him that he should hold his peace.*” Matthew says “*the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace*” (Matt 20:31). Luke says, “*they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace*” (Lk 18:37). The picture is of Jesus probably surrounded by a great crowd, and certain of them going ahead, clearing the way for Him. The ones at the head of the entourage confront Bartimaeus, and order him to be quiet. His cry for mercy was seen as a distraction. Perhaps Jesus was speaking to the multitude, and they felt He should not be distracted. Possibly some thought the blind man was asking for alms, and felt such a thing to be out of order. **For whatever reason, the people traveling with Jesus were not thinking of Him as One who showed mercy to the needy.** They had grown so accustomed to the cries of the destitute that they were not impacted by them. They were, in fact, a kind of irritation to the people, and thus they felt they were out of order.

HE CRIED THE MORE. “. . . *he cried the more a great deal,*” or “*all the more.*” NKJV The Amplified Bible reads, “*but he kept on shouting out all the more.*” Luke says, “*so much the more*” (Lk 18:39). Here we confront the tenacious nature of faith. It aggressively seeks the blessing, and will not be turned from it, even though surrounded by all manner of discouragement and hindrance. We know this is the expression of faith because of Jesus’ words to him (verse 52). This is real faith, not faith that is feigned or pretentious. When confronting Jesus, faith becomes all the more aggressive. It is unbelief that draws back, not faith (Heb 10:38-39). In a sense, the faith of Bartimaeus was being tried, or tested. Jesus did not appear to be listening to him, and now the people with him tell him to cease crying out for mercy. It is evidently not the right time. Perhaps a more convenient time will come later.

Speaking parabolically, Jesus referred to such occasions as being like a woman repeatedly asking a seemingly uninterested judge to avenge her, or give her legal protection from her adversary (Lk 18:3). In another place, he likened it to a man who sought for three loaves for a friend who was on a long journey and needed to be fed, yet the man had nothing to give him. He asked a neighbor to help him, only to be met with rejection, because it was midnight, and the man and his whole family were in bed. Yet, because the man persisted in his request, he obtained what he needed (Lk 11:5-8). That is the nature of faith! It is the same characteristic made known in Jacob when he said to an angel that demanded that he let him go, “*I will not let thee go except thou bless me*” (Gen 32:26). Many poor souls never obtain what

they need because they are too easily discouraged, and cannot pass the test of Divine silence.

JESUS STOOD STILL AND COMMANDED HIM TO BE CALLED. One version reads, “*Tell him to come to Me.*” LIVING Luke says “*Jesus commanded him to be **brought** to Him*” (Lk 18:40). He perceived that this was a work on the Father’s agenda, and so He “*stopped*” His journey to do the will of God. This work was perfectly harmonious with the death He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. While the people traveling with Jesus were trying to quiet Bartimaeus, Jesus stopped walking. The words of this man’s faith had fallen upon His ears, and He was moved with compassion. **That is His nature.** I do not doubt that the very ones who were telling Bartimaeus to be quiet were now ordered to have him come to Jesus.

BE OF GOOD COMFORT. “*Be of good comfort,*” or “*Be of good cheer,*” NKJV “*Take courage,*” NASB or “*Take heart!*” NRSV **They knew that when Jesus calls someone, a blessing is in store for those who come!** They do not tell Bartimaeus to wait there while they go and get Jesus, bringing “*the son of David*” to him. No! When Jesus calls, that call is attended by grace that will enable the person to come – even if he is blind! Some people are afraid to stand before Jesus. Bartimaeus is told to be cheerful, courageous, and expectant as he comes. O, that such a mind will be found in you – to come expecting to receive what you need from Christ.

HE CAST AWAY HIS GARMENT AND CAME. Bartimaeus does not hesitate! He had an over-garment on, adapted for sitting by the road and begging. He now throws that garment aside “*and came to Jesus.*” Do not imagine that it is easy for a blind man to come to Jesus – any more than it is for one to make his way to the pool of Siloam (John 9:7). Notwithstanding, it is still true that men “*can do all things through Christ,*” who strengthens us (Phil 4:13). Unlike the words of law, Christ’s words are accompanied by grace and mercy. His words are **enabling** words. That is why Jesus Himself said His words “*are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). When believed, they produce an immediate response, as seen in Bartimaeus.

The extraordinary power of faith is seen in the fact that there is not a single record of it ever failing. Jesus affirmed, “*If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*” (Mark 9:23). Those words are still true, and worthy of our undivided attention.

“ 51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

WHAT SHOULD I DO UNTO THEE? Solomon once observed, “*The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD*” (Prov 16:33). That is, it may appear as though we are dealing with chance, random workings, or a kind of haphazard approach to things – like “*What do you want?*” Ordinarily, expressing our desires is by no means a guarantee that we will have them. However, when Jesus asks this question, it is no longer an ordinary matter. Furthermore, Jesus does not ask this of everyone. Jesus put this question to James and John, then told them He could not grant their request (Mk 10:36-40). So far as the record goes, this is the only other time that Jesus asked this question. I suppose James and John, who were there, could have told Bartimaeus there was a distinct chance he would not receive what he wanted.

Later, after He had died and risen from the dead, Jesus did speak to His disciples about asking for what they desired. “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do . . . Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, Me may give it*”

you . . .” (John 14:13; 15:16,23). However, all of this is unknown to Bartimaeus. What will his request be? Will he ask for a sizeable gift of money so he will not have to beg? Perhaps some new garments, so he can be more comfortable while he begs. How will he think? How extensive is his faith? Will he ask something worthy of the “*Son of David?*” With what will he associate the mercy for which he has asked? It is possible to think too small. Will he do so?

THAT I MIGHT RECEIVE MY SIGHT. Matthew reads, “*Lord, that our eyes may be opened*” (Matt 20:33). This was a remarkable request! There is no record of a blind man being healed in all of Jewish history— no historic precedent prior to Jesus that would warrant such a request. Isaiah hinted that such things would take place when the Messiah came, but even that was not attended with an degree of clarity (Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). David affirmed “*the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind*” (Psa 146:8). Once, when a man born blind had been healed by the Lord, he was challenged by Jesus’ enemies concerning the legitimacy of his healing. The man cited what appears to have been general knowledge: “*Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind*” (John 9:32). A Bible and history scholar could probably have made a good case for the folly of asking Jesus to give Bartimaeus sight. After all, statistically speaking, how likely was it that such a request would be honored?

See, the very fact that Bartimaeus made this request attests to his faith. He rose higher than the border of history, and went beyond the religious convention of the day. He sensed who he was addressing, and therefore formed a petition worthy of the occasion.

THY FAITH HATH MADE THEE WHOLE. “*Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole,*” or “*well.*” NASB Matthew reads, “*So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight*” (Matt 20:34). Luke reads, “*Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee*” (Luke 18:42). Mark emphasizes **the means** – “*thy faith.*” Matthew stresses **the One** who did the work – “*Jesus had compassion.*” Luke accents the **enabling power** of faith – “*Receive thy sight.*” Faith, then, was the means through which Bartimaeus received the benefit.

This is the manner of the Kingdom. What we receive from the Lord is by means of our faith – “*by faith*” (Acts 15:9; 26:18; Rom 1:17; 3:22,28; 5:1,2; Eph 3:17), or “*through faith*” (Rom 3:25; Gal 3:14; Eph 2:82 Tim 3:15; Heb 6:121 Pet 1:5). That is what is involved in living by faith (Heb 10:38), walking by faith (2 Cor 5:7), and standing by faith (2 Cor 1:24).

HE RECEIVED HIS SIGHT. Bartimaeus “*received*” his sight “*immediately.*” Matthew says “*their eyes*” immediately received sight (Matt 20:34). Faith – “*the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen*” – was the hand that received the benefit. In other words, there was no question in Bartimaeus’ mind concerning the nature of Jesus, or His ability to do what he requested. The only issue was whether or not He wanted to do it. His persuasion was not that he could be healed, but that Jesus was fully able to do it – and there is a vast difference between those two views. The first centers in self, and the second focuses on Christ. The first says, “I can be,” the second says, “He is able to!”

AND FOLLOWED JESUS. What does a person **do** who has been blessed by Jesus? There were nine lepers who, after being healed, went their own ways (Lk 17:17). Jesus told Bartimaeus, “*Go your way.*” NKJV Which way will he go? Back to the vicinity of Jericho? To his home, wherever that may have been? This man’s “*way*” had been changed! He “*followed Jesus in the way,*” choosing to take the path Jesus was taking. Matthew reads, “*they followed Him*” (Matt 20:34). Luke says that he “*followed Him, glorifying God*” (Lk 18:43). That is the only fitting response for those who remember the pit from which they have been lifted!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 119

“Mark 11:1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples, 2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. 4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.”

(Mark 11:1-6; Matthew 21:1-3; Lk 19:28-34)

INTRODUCTION

We are now entering into the last two weeks of Jesus' ministry among the people. Within seventeen days, He will have been raised from the dead, and His last forty days of ministry among His disciples will commence. That means 38% of Mark's Gospel is devoted 4% of His presence among men – including His death, burial, resurrection, and 40 days with the disciples. In Matthew it is 29%, in Luke 19%, and in John 48%. There is an obvious accent on this period of time. We should expect our Lord's words at this time to be weighty, and the events to be of great significance. He is focused on the commandment He had received from the Father to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17-18). Although Jesus has commenced speaking at length to His disciples about His impending death, the weight of it all has not yet registered upon their hearts. Simultaneous with their obtuseness, the opposition of the Jewish leaders is growing, and coming to a boiling point. Yet, in this kind of environment, that would be utterly distracting to anyone else, Jesus is a picture of perfect spiritual composure. In Him we have the premier example of peace ruling the heart and keeping the mind (Phil 4:7; Col 3:15). We must learn from this that faith sustains the soul in its most trying times, and Divine enablement is given to those who live unto the Lord, to address and complete the most difficult assignments. This is all being lived out in the final days of our blessed Savior among men.

“Mark 11:1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, He sendeth forth two of His disciples.”

NIGH TO JERUSALEM. The previous events of record took place in and just outside Jericho – Jesus' going to the house of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:2-27), and then healing blind Bartimaeus just outside the city (Mk 10:46-52). Luke states that Jesus then *“went before, ascending up to Jerusalem”* (Lk 19:28). This was a journey of approximately seventeen miles, a journey estimated to have required a traveling time of about seven hours. According to those

familiar with the lay of the land, the terrain between Jericho and Jerusalem was hilly, rugged, and desolate. Notwithstanding, the arduous nature of the journey, and the time required to make it, Matthew, Mark, and Luke leap forward to when Jesus was in the vicinity of the holy city. This will introduce us to the last week of Jesus' life prior to the evening of His betrayal.

The words "*nigh to Jerusalem*" mean they were approaching the city – the place where Jesus would lay down His life, a ransom for many. Jerusalem is an example of a city "*set on a hill*," being situated on mountains, requiring that anyone approaching it be ascending, or going up. However, Jesus is going there to address His mission in a state of weakness, for that will be required in order for Him to lay down His life. He in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt "*bodily*" (Col 2:9) will be "*crucified through weakness*" (2 Cor 13:4).

From the standpoint of experience, Jesus was **descending** into a valley, and would walk through it with poise and determination, fulfilling the 23rd Psalm. However, from the standpoint of purpose, He was **ascending** into the holy city to "*accomplish*" a death that would make it "*just*" and righteous for God to be the Justifier of sinners, and impute His righteousness to them (Rom 3:26). It is the latter view that is compelling Him to go forward. At this time, He is no doubt beginning to consider the joy that had been set before Him. This consideration would also enable Him to endure the cross, even despising the shame (Heb 12:1-2).

In all of this we are given a glimpse of the manner of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is declared to be "*the Forerunner*" – the One who has gone before us, entering into heaven itself. The running part of His mission commenced here on earth, as He made His way to the place of sacrifice, like Abraham made His way to the mountains of Moriah to offer Isaac. Just as with Abraham, this required resolve, and a refusal to be turned from the mission. Just as with Abraham, the experience into which he would enter was not a pleasant one, and joy would only come **after** due obedience had been rendered. This is the manner in which heavenly commissions are fulfilled. Whether it is Moses leading Israel out of Egypt to Canaan, Jesus offering His life, Paul fulfilling His apostleship, or believers running the race that has been set before them, it is the path of Jesus that must be followed. That includes the requirement for determination and perseverance, encountering some form of resistance, and suffering. No kingdom-person will be excluded from these requirements, for "*The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord*" (Matt 10:24).

BETHPHAGE. This city is only mentioned in relation to this journey of Jesus to Jerusalem. Historians describe it as a "village on the Mount of Olives along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and situated in a fork of the road." McCLINTOK-STRONG Traditionally it is viewed as a city in which the priests dwelt. However, in Scripture, the city can claim no distinction other than the fact that Jesus passed by it en route to Jerusalem, sanctifying thereby it.

BETHANY. This was a city "*less than two miles from Jerusalem*" NIV (John 11:18), of which several things are said. Simon the leper, who once had Jesus in his home (in which the woman with the alabaster box anointed Jesus), was in Bethany (Matt 26:6). This is where Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus resided (John 11:1). It is also where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:20-45). It is also the place where a special supper was made for Jesus (John 12:2). Coincidentally, with the exception of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, every one of these accounts occurred during this trip to Jerusalem. The time when Lazarus was raised from the dead was the last time Jesus had spent time in that area (John 11:18).

The supper prepared for Jesus in Bethany apparently took place during the time of our text. John provides the details of that time, although the other Gospel writers omit them. That was the occasion when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with some “*very costly*” ointment, and dried them with her hair (John 12:1-8). At that time, many people heard Jesus was there, and came to see Him, “*not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead*” (John 12:9). Also, at that time, the chief priests consulted how they might “*put Lazarus also to death,*” for he was a walking testimonial to the power of Jesus (John 12:10-11). Jesus spends the night there, resuming His journey in the morning (John 12:12).

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. This is the place – “*at the mount called the mount of olives*” (Lk 19:28) – where Jesus stops, and makes arrangements for His entrance into Jerusalem. This mount is mentioned several times (John 8:1; Matt 24:3; 26:30; Lk 19:37; 21:37; 22:39). With the exception of John 8:1, these all had to do with the time of our text and forward.

“ 2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.”

TWO DISCIPLES SENT. Our text says that from the mount of Olives Jesus sent forth “*two of His disciples.*” We do not know the identity of these two disciples. Later, Jesus will send Peter and John to prepare the Passover for Him and the disciples (Lk 22:8). Here, however, we are entering an event in which the Lord Jesus Himself is the focus, and the disciples are incidental – even though they were “*chosen*” and “*ordained*” (John 15:16).

This is a Kingdom perspective that needs to be more fully developed in our time. There comes a time when people – even believing people – are not longer the focus. This is a time when what the Lord is doing is the point, and everything and everyone else must recede into the background. A Savior who is not the focus is really no Savior at all. A Lord who is not the dominant consideration is no Lord at all. As simplistic as this may appear, our salvation, from beginning to end, hinges on the discernment of Christ’s absolute priority.

THE COMMISSION. All three Gospels say the same thing. The two disciples were to go “*into the village over against you.*” Other versions read, “*the village opposite you,*” NKJV “*ahead of you,*” NIV “*in front of you,*” AMPLIFIED and “*facing you.*” NJB The “*village*” was no doubt Bethphage, which was between Bethany, where Jesus spent the night, and Jerusalem. As the men came down from the mountain, and were pointing in the direction of Jerusalem, this small and relatively unknown town was situated. However, the fulfillment of a prophecy will come to pass because of a resource supplied by that small town.

“*As soon*” as the disciples entered into the city, they would find a colt tied. It would be a colt that had never before been ridden. They were to loose the colt and bring it to Jesus. Matthew says they would find “*an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them and bring them to Me*” (Matt 21:2). The Lord did not explain what was going to be done with the colt, for “*He giveth not account of any of His matters*” (Job 33:13). It is true that Jesus later told His disciples, “*all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you*” (John 15:15). However, this was done with holy discretion, and in a timely manner. At this point, it was not necessary for the disciples to know anything other than what they were to do.

There are times – and they are more frequent than some imagine – when we are simply to do what we are told, trusting the Lord that it is right and needful. In a way, such times are a test of our faith. How thoroughly do we trust the Lord? Can we do what He commands when

there is no apparent reason for it? When it comes down to the bottom line of human reasoning, *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deut 29:29). In this case, the will of the Lord was made known, but the purpose that drove that will remained *“secret,”* or hidden. However, what had been revealed belonged to them, and therefore they could act confidently upon the word of their Lord. They were to, (1) Go into the city that was ahead of them. (2) Find a colt that was tied up, and which had never been ridden. (3) They were to untie and loose the colt. (4) they were to bring the colt to Jesus. How did they know no one had ever ridden this colt? Were there physical indications of this? Did they have expert judgment in such matters? Was it the first colt they saw? Did they have to ask someone? I do not know the answer to this, and it is not necessary that it be known – although Matthew’s account suggests that the colt being tied with its mother indicated it was probably still being nursed, and therefore had not been ridden . The point is, when they returned to Jesus they had to have a colt that had never before been ridden. It was their business to ensure that this was precisely fulfilled. In a way, that is characteristic of all obedience, whether it is Naaman dipping seven times in the Jordan, or Saul of Tarsus arising and being baptized, washing away his sins. Jesus is to be obeyed!

WHAT TO TELL AN INQUIRER. Being a small village, it would probably be apparent that the two disciples were not from there. If someone saw them untying the colt, they might suppose they were stealing it, and would ask them, *“Why are you doing this?”* NKJV The answer they were instructed to give was straightforward: *“The Lord has need of it; and immediately He will send it back here.”* NASB That is, *“The Lord is going to briefly borrow this colt, and as soon as He is finished will return it to this exact place.”*

Oh, the blessedness of the person who can yield to the will of the Lord. It may be Moses giving God his rod (Ex 4:20), David loaning his sling (1 Sam 17:50), Peter letting Jesus use his boat (Lk 5:3), or a lad giving Him his lunch (John 6:9-11). It may even be Hannah lending her son Samuel to the Lord for as long as he lived (1 Sam 1:28). When, as the Psalmist said, people are *“willing in the day of His power”* (Psa 110:3), they will not question the need or correctness of anything the Lord tells them to do.

“ 4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.”

THEY WENT THEIR WAY. Technically, the *“way”* they went was the Lord’s way. He is the One who was going to Jerusalem to lay down His life. He is the One who gave the commandment. He is the One who told them what to do and say. Yet, the disciples had received and embraced what He said, so the way became their way, or path, as well. You might say they hid His word in their heart, keeping it prominent in their thinking (Psa 119:11). From another vantage point, they ran the race that was *“set before”* them (Heb 12:1). This is another way of saying they ran *“the way”* of His commandments (Psa 119:32).

THEY FOUND THE COLT. Just as Jesus said they would, they found the colt tied. Of course, they had to look for the colt, for only those who *“seek”* find (Matt 7:7-8). All of this assumes that what is being sought has been identified, and the people know what they are looking for.

The Lord does not tell us to seek aimlessly – looking for something, for example, that will satisfy our cravings. This is what men do by nature, seeking here and there for something that has not been identified. They are looking for something that will meet their perceived needs, but are not able to give it a name. Paul refers to such quests as beating the air – like a

fighter who has no real opponent (1 Cor 9:27). The Psalmist also referred to laboring “*in vain*” (Psa 127:1), engaging in pointless activities (Psa 127:1).

The Lord still identifies what men are to seek, and if they seek such things, they will find them, just as surely as these two disciples did. Ponder some of the things we are told to seek. **1** – The kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). **2** – Glory, honor, and immortality (Rom 2:7). **3** – Excelling to the edifying of the church (1 Cor 14:12). **4** – Those things which are above (Col 3:1). **5** – God Himself (Heb 11:6). **6** – Peace (1 Pet 3:11). We can learn from this text that when we look for what Jesus says in the place where He sends us, we will find it.

A PLACE WHERE TWO WAYS MET. We should not consider it a strange thing that the colt they were seeking was found “*where two ways meet.*” Most other versions read that the colt was found “*on the street*” or “*in the [winding] open street.*” AMPLIFIED The idea here is that, from the standpoint of the colt, it stood where all points converged, or “*met.*” That is, this was the most important place in the town at that time – where the colt was! The citizens of the town were not the point, nor were the structures located there. When the two disciples entered the city, whatever attractions might have been there, all roads, so to speak, led to the colt.

This is characteristic of everything we are told to seek. At some point, Divinely appointed quests are to dominate our attention, else we will never find the object of those quests.

THEY WERE ASKED WHAT THEY WERE DOING. As the Lord said, someone asked the disciples, “*What are you doing, untying the colt?*” NASB In fact, more than one asked the question, for it is said to have been asked by “*them.*” These were certain dwellers in the village who were standing there. Luke says they were “*the owners*” of the colt (Lk 19:33). Matthew omits all of these details. You can imagine how the whole matter looked to them. Two men, who were obviously from another place, come walking into town, go straight to a colt, and loose it right before the owners. How will all of this play out?

First, the disciples have already been alerted to the possibilities, so they are not surprised by the question. Jesus has prepared them for the occasion. The Lord told them what to answer, but did not tell them how the inquirers would respond. Here is where faith must be found.

THEY LET THEM GO. The disciples told the men precisely what Jesus had told them to say. “*The Lord needs it, and He will send it back here presently.*” AMPLIFIED Now, the Lord is managing this whole situation from afar. He can, as the Scriptures affirm, “*turn*” men’s hearts (Prov 21:1). He can make enemies be at peace with the man whose ways please Him (Prov 16:7). But what of owners whose property, according to appearance, is being taken from them Does the Lord have any control over them? Our text reads, “*and they let them go,*” or “*they gave them permission.*” NASB

This kind of response contradicts human nature. From one point of view, the “*owners*” may have heard of, or even seen, the Lord Jesus at some previous time. If that was the case, the words, “*The Lord hath need of him,*” would certainly be reason enough to let the colt be taken. Or, the Lord simply could have stopped them from interfering like He did not allow Abimelech to touch Sarah (Gen 20:6), or gave the disciples favor in the eyes of the owners as he did Joseph in the eyes of the prison keeper (Gen 39:21). The thing to be seen is that **the Lord is active in the work He gives His disciples to do.** He not only gives them power to do His will, but, when it is appropriate, he inclines potential adversaries to be amiable toward them.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 120

“Mark 11:7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and He sat upon him. 8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strowed them in the way. 9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”

(Mark 11:7-10; Matthew 21:4-9; Lk 19:35-38; John 12:12-16)

INTRODUCTION

We are now entering into the last few days of Jesus' life prior to His death. The events now focus more specifically on that death, and the atonement that would be effected by it. There is only one Person in all of the world who knows what is actually being wrought at this time, and it is Jesus Himself. Not even His disciples – the ones who have been consistently with Him – are aware of the events that are going to take place. One might suppose that Jesus would now withdraw from the multitudes in order to fulfill this work. Instead, He still walks among them, doing good and healing those who are oppressed by the devil, teaching and engaging the hearing of the people. It will not be until the very night of His betrayal that He will withdraw from everyone and pray with *“strong cryings and tears”* about His death.

Here we are being exposed to how the Spirit works within. In Jesus we see an unrelenting focus, and yet there is an awareness of all that is about Him. He answers His critics, instructs His disciples, blesses little children, deals with a rich man seeking eternal life, expounds the nature of true leadership to His disciples, heals a blind man, and now sends His disciples to bring a colt to Him that has never been ridden – **and all without losing His focus!** This is how real life is lived out – in possession of insight and peace, wisdom and mercy. Oh, that men were able to more fully perceive the wondrous things that are being revealed in the life of Jesus. Those who truly beheld Him confessed, *“the Life was manifested, and we have seen it . . . that eternal life, which was with the Father”* (1 John 1:1-2). By grace, we can see it also!

“Mark 11:7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and He sat upon him. 8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strowed them in the way.”

THE TIME PRECISELY DEFINED. John precisely defines the time during which this event took place. It was the day after they prepared a feast for Jesus in Bethany, at which Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, anointing Him for His burial. At that time the chief priests *“consulted that they might put Lazarus to death.”* However, there were also many of the Jews

that “*believed on Jesus*” (John 12:1-11). Although no one else knew the significance these things, they were instrumental in preparing Jesus to lay down His life. His body was sanctified for burial, and His presence caused many to believe on Him. “*On the next day,*” with holy memories and a resolute spirit, Jesus came into Jerusalem (John 12:12). It is that event to which our text refers. In the series of events that follow, the primary ministry will be to Jesus Himself.

THIS WAS ALL DELIBERATELY DONE. We are not reading of the mere spontaneous acts of people, although it has every appearance of being precisely that. Matthew is very specific about **the cause** of the events that follow. “*All this was done , that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass*” (Matt 21:4-5). Men were not seeking to fulfill the Scripture. This is something that God did! God is moving men, drawing them to Jesus, and compelling them to honor Him. They have not done anything like this before. As the appointed hour approaches, the heavens orchestrate what is happening in Jerusalem. They were aware of Jesus before, but never were they more aware of His presence than they will be on this day! This is the “*Lord’s doing,*” and is indicative of how men will be drawn to Him following His resurrection and enthronement in heaven.

THEY BROUGHT THE COLT TO JESUS. Matthew reads they “*brought the ass, and the colt*” to Jesus. Here is a simple, yet profound, description of obedience. They simply did what they were told to do. The obedience itself involved going into a nearby village, identifying a particular colt, loosing it and its mother, and giving an answer to the owners who inquired what they were doing. However, the details were not the point. It was the obedience that must be seen. Men are prone to get wrapped up in procedures – things that God has said must be done. *However, it is the aim of the procedures that must be grasped, and not the procedures themselves.* “*They brought the colt to Jesus!*” If that had not happened, it would have made no difference what else they may have done.

THEY CAST THEIR GARMENTS ON HIM. Matthew says they “*put their clothes*” on the colt (Matt 21:7). The meaning is that the two disciples that brought the colt put their own garments on it, forming a kind of saddle for the Lord. I understand these to be their outer garments, which were more heavy, and suitable for the occasion. Thus they displayed a preference for the Master above their own interests and comfort – also a manner of the Kingdom.

HE SAT ON THE COLT. Matthew says “*and they set Him thereon*” (Matt 21:7), apparently lifting him to the place where He could be seated. Remember, this is a colt that had never been ridden, and the disciples knew it. What thoughts must have coursed through their minds as they placed Jesus on that untamed colt, beholding the docility and submission of an animal that is generally noted for stubbornness and being unable to be turned (Jer 2:24).

OTHERS PREPARE THE WAY. Notice how all of the attention has been drawn to the Person of Jesus. Now “*many spread their garments in the way,*” created a sort of carpet for the entry of the King. Luke says “*as He went , spread their clothes in the way,*” placing their clothes in the path that He was taking, and not throwing them down randomly. Matthew says “*a very great multitude*” did this, working in harmony and with focus. That is the effect Jesus has upon people when even a measure of His greatness is perceived. All ordinary notions of convenience and self-interest are suspended, and Jesus becomes the center of attention. Their conduct reminds us of the respect that was afforded Jehu after Elisha had anointed him king: “*Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs [on the bare steps NASB] , and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king*” (2 Kgs 9:13).

THEY STROWED THE WAY. Others, perceiving the dignity of the moment, cut down and spread “leafy branches,” NASB and “spread them on the road.” NKJV John says they “took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him” (John 12:13). In other words, they came prepared to enter into the occasion. In their minds this was a significant event. However, they had no idea of the magnitude of that significance or of its ministry to Jesus Himself. There is no doubt that this was intended to strengthen the hand of the Savior as He prepared to lay down His life. First God sends Mary to anoint Him for His burial. Then He brings a wild colt who humbly submits to Him. Now the multitudes will prepare the way for Him and laud Him in language that will minister to His soul. All of this is the work of God.

“9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

THE FEAST. John tells us that “much people” had “come to the feast” in Jerusalem. He also defines that time as “the Jew’s Passover,” stating that prior to this “many went out of the country up to Jerusalem to purify themselves” (John 11:55). He also says that they had Jesus on their minds when they arrived in the city: “Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?” (John 11:56). Following the raising of Lazarus, they knew that the Pharisees had begun to counsel how they might put Jesus to death. As a result “Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples” (John 11:47-54). Now, they are wondering if He will return for the Passover. He had attended the Passover when He was twelve years of age (Luke 2:41-41-43). The first time He cleansed the Temple, it was close to the Passover, which He also attended (John 2:13,23). When He fed the 5,000, it was close to the time of the Passover (John 6:4). Now, when the multitude was in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast, they wondered if He would come. It is important to seek the Lord in the right place, and at the right time. As it is written, “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isa 55:6). Let me once again underscore the fact, so far as the present moment is concerned, that this is more for Jesus than for the others.

COMING DOWN FROM THE MOUNT. Luke says that as Jesus and His disciples approached the road that “goes down from the Mount of Olives,” NIV “the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen” (Luke 19:37). The sight of Jesus stirred their recollection of the mighty deeds He had done among them. That is what an awareness of the real Jesus does for those who have tasted of Him – it brings forth insightful praise for what he has already done.

Their words, as recorded by Luke, are most arresting: “Blessed be the **King** that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:38). It is the Lord speaking through them, testifying to the effects of the death Jesus would accomplish: “peace in heaven!” When Jesus entered the world, angels shouted “peace on **earth** !” Now that He was going to die, men cry out “peace in **heaven** !” Just as surely as God had spoken of the effectiveness of Christ’s death earlier through Caiaphas (John 11:50-51), now He speaks through the multitude, announcing the effects of reconciliation in heaven itself.

THEY WENT BEFORE HIM AND AFTER HIM. Both Matthew and Mark affirm that those who were going before Jesus and those who were following Him were shouting His praise: “multitudes that went before, and that followed” (Matt 21:8); “they that went before and they that followed” (Mk 11:9). Thus Jesus is surrounded by praise. It is a foreshadowing of the praise that would attend Him when He ascended into heaven, accompanied by angelic hosts (Psa 24:7-10). Daniel’s prophecy of Jesus returning to heaven is also seen in this event (Dan

7:13-14). It also fulfills the Psalm, “*God is gone up with a shout*” (Psa 47:5). While men were not able to make these correlations, you may be sure the Lord was able to do so.

HOSANNA! The multitude is united in its expression, for the Lord is worthy of consistent and harmonious praise. Matthew, Mark, and John represent the multitude saying “Hosanna!” Matthew records, “*Hosanna to the Son of David*” (Matt 21:9). Mark records them saying “*Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,*” and “*Hosanna in the highest*” (Mk 11:9-10). John records, “*Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord*” (John 12:13).

The word “*Hosanna*” means “save, I pray . . . be propitious” THAYER and “save! Help, we pray,” FRIBERG In the English language this word speaks of adoration and applause. Here, however, the lauding is associated with Jesus being Savior. The multitude, no doubt, associated *saving* with various forms of temporal deliverance – like Israel being delivered from Egypt, or when the disciples cried out “*Lord, save us, we perish,*” during a storm (Matt 8:25). The concept of being saved from sin was not at all common prior to the declaration of the Gospel of Christ. The announcement concerning Jesus’ birth was, “*He shall save His people from their sins*” (Matt 1:21). Now, the people’s cry exceeds their understanding, yet speaks volumes to Jesus.

BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH. The multitude associated Jesus with a reign: “*Son of David . . . the King of Israel.*” However, they were thinking of a political kingdom, and a king like unto David, as well as coming from the lineage of David. They felt He was being sent to them like Moses was sent to Israel, to free them from political tyranny, and enable them to regain their national sovereignty. Of course, they were not the last people who viewed Jesus in such a manner, associating Him exclusively with their status in this world, and thinking very little about their relationship to God Himself, and readiness for eternity.

“ 10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”

BLESSED BE THE KINGDOM. Other versions read, “*Blessed is the coming kingdom.*” NASB The people felt the Kingdom, as they perceived it, was about to be launched. Indeed, both John the Baptist and Jesus had announced the Kingdom was “*at hand*” (Matt 3:2; 4:17). Jesus had also sent out His disciples to preach, telling them to say, “*The Kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt 10:7). Yet, this the kind of Kingdom envisioned by the people was different kind of kingdom.

The prophets had spoken of this Kingdom, although it’s manner was not clearly identified. “*Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it . . .*” (Isa 9:7). “*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom . . .*” (Dan 2:44). “*And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom . . .*” (Dan 7:14). These are the only clear associations of the coming Messiah with a Kingdom, even though there were several other allusions to it. Now, in a moment of insight, orchestrated from heaven, the people have associated Jesus of Nazareth with that Kingdom, even though their perception of it is somewhat faulty. They call for a blessing to be upon it.

These people were further along in their familiarity with Scriptural affirmations than the church of our day. With such a few clear references to this Kingdom and its association with the Christ, the people had formed a view that appeared to them to be on the verge of being fulfilled. How wonderful it would be if we were in a generation that could associate the

Lord Jesus Christ with what is said of Him in Scripture! Such abilities are exceedingly rare!

OUR FATHER DAVID. Matthew reads that people said, “*Hosanna to the Son of David*” (Matt 21:9). Mark has the people referring to “*the kingdom of our father David.*” There is no variance in the view. One is accenting the lineage Jesus, and the other His ministry. Both are traced back to David. Other than those directly related to David, no Israelite of old ever referred to David as their “*father.*” Prophetically, the Messiah was spoken of as being “*the Son of David*” (Matt 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22), and He was declared to be appointed by God to be given “*the throne of His father David*” (Lk 1:32). However, notwithstanding that vagueness, there was a sensitivity among the people that the Messiah was coming to them to fulfill the promise that had been made to David of a Son to whom the throne and kingdom would be given (2 Sam 7:12-16). Although not characterized by much clarity, and appearing to refer to Solomon, David knew it had much larger implications. He referred to it in the 89 th (verses 3-4) and 132 rd (v 11) Psalms. Jeremiah also referred to “*my covenant*” which he had made with David (Jeremiah 33:20-21).

COMING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. Luke records the people said, “*Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord*” (Lk 19:38). To come in the name of the Lord is to come because God sent Him to do a work God gave Him to do. They saw Jesus as representing God, fulfilling the promises of God, speaking the words of God, and doing the work of God. The extent to which they saw this is not clear, but the events that will take place in the next few days will confirm they were generally ignorant of what they were really saying. God was speaking through them to Jesus. In less than a week, these very people will cry out “*Crucify Him!*” (Lk 23:21).

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST. Other versions present varying views of this challenging saying. “*Hail to the King of the universe*” LIVING – i.e. Praising Him who has come to save from on High. “*Hosanna to God*” IE – i.e. praising God in heaven who has sent Him to save. “*God in the highest heavens save Him*” WEYMOUTH – i.e. May God in heaven preserve and bless the One He sent to save. “*Welcome Him from on high*” WILLIAMS – i.e. Receive the One who is sent from heaven to save. There is an element of truth in all of these. Briefly summarized, the saying is recognizing that the One who comes to save is sent from heaven by God Himself.

THE RESPONSE OF THE PHARISEES. “*And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples*” (Luke 19:39). The Pharisees had made no association of Jesus with salvation or the God of heaven. Therefore, they were offended by the cries of the people, yet they could do nothing about it. Thus, they ask Jesus to silent them. The Master replied by telling them, “*I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out*” (Luke 19:40). This was a God-ordained hour, and the Lord knew it.

THE DISCIPLES DID NOT UNDERSTAND. At the time, these significant events were not understood by the disciples. John writes, “*These things understood not His disciples at the first : but when Jesus was glorified , then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him*” (John 12:16). The glorification of Jesus, therefore, is directly related to the understanding of Him and His Gospel. That removes spiritual understanding from the realm of academics, for they do not depend upon a glorified Christ. There are two senses in which Jesus is glorified, **and both must be in place if a proper understanding is to be obtained** . First, God Himself must glorify Christ – and He has already done that (Acts 3:13). Second, men must be brought to the point where they glorify God in their lives (1 Cor 6:20).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 121

“ Mark 11:11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. 12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: 13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.”

(Mark 11:11-14; Matthew 21:17-20; John 12:17-19)

INTRODUCTION

Amidst praises and Hosannas, Jesus is riding into Jerusalem on a colt that has never before been ridden. That colt did not have to be broken, but was instantly submissive to a Master who was totally new to it. In this Jesus portrayed the nature of the rule He is inducting. His is a kind of power, or authority, that deals with the nature of men. For those He is saving – for He is meek and lowly, and bringing salvation – He does not pummel them into subjection. That is not the manner of His salvation. Those who have seen Him for whom He is instantly submit to Him – like the sinners on Pentecost, the city of Samaria, the Ethiopian eunuch, Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius, Lydia, and the Philippian jailor. Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem on a bucking bronc, and He does not lead people to glory who are resisting and kicking all the way. The only reason people resist Him is because they do not see Him as He really is – their Lord. It is particularly in this regard that, what is called, the Triumphal entry into Jerusalem was an event that was, at the time, largely for Jesus' sake. We know this is the case because those who were closest to Him, His disciples, did not understand what was happening. It was not until later, when Jesus was glorified, that they would understand these things (John 12:16). Now, as Jesus comes into the holy city, a series of events commence that will consummate in His appointed death. The events themselves will be remarkably diverse. From one point of view, they will appear to be very distracting. Yet, in a veiled glory that was unparalleled in power and majesty, Jesus will address each situation effectively, yet without being turned from His mission to lesser things. Herein is revealed the nature of the *“eternal life”* that He will give to men. It will enable men to face life squarely, honestly and intently, without being turned from the main thing – the joy set before them. As we will see, Jesus Himself was a perfect depiction of the salvation He came to bring. He lived the life of faith, and Himself was the perfect expression of the eternal life He came to bring (1 John 1:2).

“ Mark 11:11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve.”

Mark provides a very brief summary of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the Temple, then has Him leaving the city and taking His disciples into Bethany. Matthew, Luke, and John provide some other details regarding His time in Jerusalem and the temple. Because they assist in providing us a remarkable glimpse of the character of Jesus, I want to briefly touch on those other Gospel accounts.

ALL THE CITY WAS MOVED. Matthew tells us of the temperament of the city as Jesus entered into it. *“And when He was come into Jerusalem, **all the city was moved**, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee”* (Matt 21:10-11). Although Jesus appeared to the people to be quite ordinary during His first thirty years, that is **not** how He appeared after He started His ministry. Those who had not been witness to His work thought of Him as *“the carpenter”* (Mk 6:3), *“the son of Joseph”* (John 1:45; 6:42), *“the carpenter’s son”* (Matt 13:55a), and the brother of *“James, Joses, Simon, and Judas”* (Matt 13:55b). However, after He began to preaching *“the Gospel of the Kingdom”* (Matt 4:23), *“doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil”* (Acts 10:38), there was a certain invisible majesty that people sensed in Him. Even His enemies were provoked by His presence. Of course, where Jesus is not made known through Gospel preaching and transformed lives, it is not possible to be attracted to Him, or be moved by Him.

HE WEPT OVER THE CITY. Luke tells us how Jesus was moved when He got a kind of panoramic view of the city. *“And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, **the things which belong unto thy peace!** but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation”* (Luke 19:41-44).

He knew that in just a few days He was going to lay down His life in this city. Yet, He also knew that they had absolutely failed to respond properly to Him – Triumphal entry or not. He cried when He saw the city, because the people had not recognized what *“belonged”* to them. What is more, now they would be blinded, so they would not be able to see the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, which had been brought within their grasp. God would pour out the spirit of deep sleep upon them (Isa 29:10), because they did not know *“the time”* of their *“visitation”* – the time when their Savior was coming to them.

Luke provides some remarkable details concerning the coming destruction of Jerusalem. The enemy would dig a trench around the city, building *“an embankment”* against it. NIV This would allow them to simply walk over the high walls that surrounded Jerusalem. By surrounding the city, they would *“hem”* NASB them in on every side, making any escape unlikely. They would level the city, leaving no stone on top of another. Later Jesus referred to this judgment as *“the desolation”* (Lk 21:20). The Temple itself would be utterly destroyed in this judgment (Matt 24:2). Matthew records Jesus saying that the condition would continue until the Jews would say, *“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Matt 23:37).

Behold how rejection affects the Savior! He weeps! Yet, that is not the end of the matter. A fierce judgment would come upon Jerusalem because they rejected their Messiah. In a little less than forty years, Roman armies would encompass the city, and in due time would utterly destroy it. Let those who linger, hesitating to yield to Jesus, consider this word.

WITNESSES OF LAZARUS' RESURRECTION BARE RECORD. John provides another detail that took place at this time. *“The people therefore that was with Him when He*

called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. **For this cause the people also met Him**, for that they heard that He had done this miracle” (John 12:18). Much of the interest in Jesus was sparked by the testimony of those who witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead – an event that took place not long before this. Notice that the witness was not of what they themselves thought of Jesus, but of what He had done. This is the sanctifying element in all valid testimony.

THE PHARISEES RESPOND. Everyone was not glad to see Jesus come to Jerusalem – even if He made an entrance in a lowly and humbly manner. John reports, “*The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him*” (John 12:19). All of their efforts to suppress an interest in Jesus had failed. He was greater than their opposition. His works dwarfed both their claims and their efforts. It is good for the people of God to reckon on this still being the impact of Jesus. When He is actually at work among His people, He will attract the attention of others – both friends and foes.

“ 11 And Jesus entered . . . into the temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come . . . 12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry: 13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any thing thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. ” (Mark 11:12-13).

JESUS WENT INTO THE TEMPLE OF GOD Upon entering into Jerusalem, Jesus went into the Temple. He did not go to the market place, or where the common people congregated. Instead, he went to what He called, “*My Father’s house*” (John 2:16). Matthew says of this occasion, “*And Jesus went into the temple of God . . .*” (Matt 21:12a). The despot Herod had built this Temple, taking forty-six years to do so (John 2:20). Yet, it was a place identified with God Almighty. It was the place where Jesus was dedicated as an infant (Lk 2:27). It was the place where He was about His Father’s business when but twelve years old (Lk 2:46). The gold that adorned this Temple did not make it what it was, but the Temple “*sanctified the gold*” (Matt 23:17). Jesus had taught in the Temple (John 7:14), even on a daily basis (Matt 26:55; Lk 19:47). Now He returns to the Temple again.

It is stated that Jesus “*looked round about on all things,*” perusing the Temple, those who were there at the time, and the activities going on. This is the Divine manner, to begin judgment with the house of God (1 Pet 4:17). In His action we also see the principle revealed to John being lived out. “*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein*” (Rev 11:1). The events that will follow the next day confirm that this is exactly what Jesus was doing – measuring the Temple and the worshipers. This is not the kind of Jesus that is being proclaimed today. It is, however, the Jesus who saves and with whom men must be acquainted.

ON THE MORROW, HE WAS HUNGRY. The next day, “*in the morning,*” Jesus and His disciples left Bethany and “*returned to the city.*” On the way back Jesus “*was hungry.*” Matthew says, “*He hungered*” (Matt 21:18). One might wonder why Jesus was “*hungry*” on this occasion, yet not during the forty days during which He fasted at the beginning of His ministry. Of that occasion, it is written, “*afterward He was hungry*” NKJV (Matt 4:2). Again, when He spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, His returning disciples marveled that He was not hungry. At that time He told them, “*I have meat to eat that ye know not of*” (John 4:32). How is it that He is hungry now?

Although the answer to this question is not told, it seems to confirm that He did not spend the night with Mary and Martha, who were accustomed to feeding Him. He probably

had spend the night in prayer and fasting, readying Himself for what He would do on this day. At any rate, however one chooses to view this text, it does accent the humanity of Jesus. This was part of Him humbling Himself and becoming a servant. We also learn that the diminishment of His appetite was in direct proportion His immediate involvement in necessary and ordained tasks. All of His activities did not have equal weight. None of them allowed for sin or foolishness.

THE SIGHT OF THE FIG TREE. Being hungry, Jesus was quick to see a fig tree “*afar off*” that was “*in the way,*” or “*by the road*” on which they were traveling. One version reads “*a lone fig tree,*” indicating that it was not one of many, but was standing by itself. He came to the tree “*if perhaps He would find something on it.*” NKJV

Having arrived at the tree, Jesus “*found nothing but leaves*” – only appearance, no fruit. From a distance, all leafed out, the tree looked as though it would have some fruit, but it did not. Matthew says He found “*leaves only,*” perhaps lifting branches here and there in quest of some sweet morsel (Matt 21:19).

Mark then adds, “*for the time of figs was not yet.*” This does not necessarily mean that this was not the time for figs to be expected – that they were out of season, or that it was not possible for them to grow at this time. That ought to be clear from the expectation of the Savior. He is not austere, and does not expect fruit unless it is possible. There are three more plausible explanations, and any or all of them can be true. First, the “*time of figs*” could mean the time of gathering, or harvesting, the figs. In that case, there should have been **more** figs than usual on the tree, for none of them would have been reaped. The second is that there was some kind of circumstance at that time during which not many figs were growing any place. Yet, because this tree was all leafed out, it looked as though it would have some figs even under such dire circumstances. Third, there was such a thing as “*untimely figs*” (Rev 6:13) – figs that lingered from the winter and could have been eaten even though it was not the normal time for figs. In any case, Jesus was in order expecting figs to be on the tree, else He would not have expected them. There are some who have never seen Jesus as One who expects anything. They see Him only as a sort of glorified servant, to give them their desires.

“ 14 *And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And His disciples heard it*” (Mark 11:14).

Jesus has just encountered a fig tree that was not what it appeared to be. How does Jesus respond to such a circumstance? Is He willing to accept the tree just as it is. Will He settle for the fact that, under normal circumstances it might not have been in order to gather figs at this time? If this is the idea one has of the Savior, this account will be especially helpful.

THE WITHERING OF THE FIG TREE. Think of the sobering words Jesus spoke: “*Let no one eat fruit from you ever again!*” NKJV Here was a single occasion taking place at a single point in time, and, for that tree, it impacted all of the rest of time. At this precise point, when Jesus inspected the tree for fruit and found none, He judged the tree, making it impossible for any person ever to eat a fig from it again. If He could not eat fruit from it, **no** other man would ever do so. Matthew has Jesus saying that the tree would never **grow** another fig: “*and [He] said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever* ” (Matt 21:19a). That very moment, for all practical purposes, it stopped being a fig tree. This tree had been created by Jesus, yet had nothing to satisfy His hunger. It stands as a mighty parable in nature.

HIS DISCIPLES HEARD IT. Here was a lesson that was necessary for the disciples to

learn, and Jesus will have considerable to say about this event later. Suffice it to say, this was not an accidental hearing. It was deliberate, for the disciples had an intense interest in what Jesus said. They had learned by experience that Jesus never babbled or uttered pointless words.

There is a form of *Christianity* in our land that lulls people into a kind of spiritual sleep. They are not alert, and do not pick up on what Jesus is both saying and doing. Some have been swept into a domain of entertainment, where their minds shut out anything and everything that is not directed specifically at them. That is a most dangerous position to be in, for it renders the individual unteachable. Like Jerusalem, such people will miss their visitation.

THE MIND OF CHRIST. Here we see Jesus' attitude toward appearances that are deceptive, and do not yield what is expected. Whether it is a person or a church, when the appearance of significant advancement is there, it is serious beyond measure for that advancement to be lacking. That fig tree was like the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple within it. It was also like many professing Christians and seemingly successful churches – *“nothing but leaves.”* Nothing of substance is found. There is nothing that is satisfying to the Lord Himself – no gratification of seeing something *“well done.”*

In Christ Jesus, we have been created to *“bring forth fruit unto God”* (Rom 7:4). Do men think that when the Lord scans the inhabitants of the earth, he is not looking for someone who will please Him? In Noah's day, there was only one fig on earth's social tree, and God found it: *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* There were also the *“untimely figs”* of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David – and the Lord reaped them all. They also were pleasing to the Lord, and therefore He has given us much information about them.

There have also been whole generations that, like this fig tree, were *“nothing but leaves.”* Jesus spoke of a generation that would be judged by the Queen of Sheba and Nineveh, because they bore no fruit to Him (Matt 12:41-42). Serious people ponder our own time, and what Jesus is or is not finding within it. Is it a leafy generation or a fruitful one? Is it a generation that yields pleasing fruit to God, Or is it a useless one? The inspection of Jesus will reveal it all.

THE TREE BEGAN TO WITHER IMMEDIATELY. **Matthew tells us that the words of Jesus began to take place immediately** *“And presently the fig tree withered away”* (Mat 21:19). The withering process was not accomplished immediately. Mark will tell us that it was not thoroughly dried up until the next morning (Mk 11:20) – but the process started instantly.

At this point, it was not possible to revive that fig tree. It was in a state of dying, and could not be retrieved. It was to trees what reprobates are to people – irretrievable. It had come to a state where there could be no digging and dunging. Its potential usefulness was terminated immediately.

Peter says there are men who are likened to *“natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed”* – *“born only to be caught and destroyed”* NIV (2 Pet 2:12). We are not able to identify such souls, and we ought not exhaust ourselves trying to do so. However, they do exist, and Jesus will destroy them, just as surely as He did this fig tree. It is our business to see to it that we do not fall into the category of having *“nothing but leaves.”* If it seems as though these things are too hard, then we must lean close to Jesus and hear Him speak with clarity. *“He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me,*

he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:5-6).

Just as surely as that fig tree was in the path on which Jesus was journeying, so every man will eventually confront the Christ. When that day comes, the Lord will be looking for fruit, just as He was that day as He returned to Jerusalem. May He find fruit in you!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 122

“ Mark 11:15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. 17 And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine.” (Mark 11:15-19; Matthew 21:12-14; Lk 19:45-46)

INTRODUCTION

On the previous day, Jesus had ridden into the Jerusalem amidst the cries of Hosanna, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah (9:9). At that time, after entering the Temple, He looked round about on the affairs taking place there, then left, returning to Bethany, cursing a barren fig tree on the way. Now, in this text, He is returning to the Temple, and will react to what He had apparently witnessed the previous day. At this point we are again exposed to the real Jesus – not a philosophical One who only looks for ways in which He can meet the self-diagnosed needs of the people. How does Jesus react to religious exploitation, or to business being conducted in His name – where there is an exchange of money, and profit-making associated with things dedicated to the Lord? How do opportunists affect the Lord? What of those who associate common things with holy events and remembrances? Our text will provide us some insights into these matters. Here we will see the Divine nature reacting to flesh and its ways, particularly when they are exhibited in a place associated with the name of the Lord. Keep in mind that Jesus is entering into the appointed hour, when He will lay down His life a ransom for many. Along the path that leads to the cross many hindering obstacles are strewn – cast there to impede His predestined journey. He does not walk around these obstacles, but confronts them in wisdom and without in any way delaying being *“obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* In Him the nature of spiritual life is revealed. It is determined, yet versatile. It is consistent, yet deals with circumstances without any form of compromise. Truth and those who embrace it are unwavering, uncompromising, and in strict harmony with ultimate reality.

“ Mark 11:15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.”

HE BEGAN TO CAST THEM OUT. Matthew says Jesus *“went into the Temple of God”*

(Matt 21:12) – a place set apart for God and the activities pertaining to Him. Now Jesus is acting upon what He had seen on the previous day, when He “*looked round about on all things*” (verse 11). Jesus does judge, for the Father has “*committed all judgment unto the Son*” (John 5:22). That judgment is not confined to the day of judgment, but started the moment Jesus began His ministry. Judgment will be finalized on the last day, but Divine assessment is going on until then. Our text is a case in point. Jesus once said, “*as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just*” (John 5:30). Therefore, when Jesus entered the Temple and found it polluted with both people and things, He immediately began cleansing it.

He started His ministry by cleansing the Temple. That cleansing was also at the time of the Passover. Of that occasion it is written that He “*found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables*” (John 2:14-15). Now, at the close of His ministry, He again cleanses the Temple, purging defiling influences from it.

WHAT WAS INVOLVED. This cleansing was thorough. **Those who were selling** were “*cast out,*” driven out, or expelled – an act of violence. He would not allow them to sell any longer in the Temple, but forcibly drove them out.

Those who were buying were also driven from the Temple. The sacrifices they offered were to be selected from their own possessions, not conveniently purchased when they arrived at the Temple. There was no doubt dishonesty among the merchants, whose prices were out of order. There may well have been dishonesty among the buyers also. Doves, for example, were acceptable sacrifices for those who were poor (Lev 5:7). The convenience of the occasion may very well have tempted some to offer doves when they should have offered a lamb. At any rate, those who were buying were driven out with those who were selling.

The moneychangers were also driven out. These were also offering a convenience to the people, and no doubt robbing them in the process. Every Israelite was required to give a half-shekel to the Temple – “*the shekel of the sanctuary*” (Ex 30:12; Lev 27:25; Num 3:47). The “*moneychangers*” would conveniently convert regular currency to this coinage. It all looked very convenient – but Jesus drove them out of the Temple, and overthrew their tables, spilling their money on the floor. He did the same the first time He purged the Temple. It is written that He “*poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables*” (John 2:15). The “*moneychangers*” also could convert the coins of those who were there from other parts of the world. Later, on the day of Pentecost, some of these very people would be described as “*Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5). On this occasion, however, they would find out that the Temple of God was not the place to do such business.

Those who sold doves were also driven out. Jesus not only drove the dove-sellers out of the Temple, but overthrew their “*seats,*” or benches NIV as well. Keep in mind, this did not take place in the Temple proper, but in some of its outer courts. Yet, Jesus will clarify that what was around the Temple was actually a part of it, and was to be so regarded.

In my opinion, were an event of this type to take place today, it would be highly criticized. Imagine, for example, the reaction of Jesus to the selling of entertainment materials within a structure devoted the service of God.

HE WOULD NOT LET THEM. Mark is the only writer who informs us of one other action of Jesus at this time. “*And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through*

the temple” (11:16). Referring to the word “*vessel*,” other versions read “*wares*,” NKJV “*goods*,” NASB “*merchandise*,” NIV “*anything*,” NRSV “*package*,” DARBY “*a jar*,” IE and “*household equipment*.” AMPLIFIED The word used here is a general word, and can refer to a jar, utensil, implement, or some other tool. In general, here it refers to anything unrelated to the things for which the Temple was intended. In other words, people were using the Temple for a thoroughfare, milling about just as though it was nothing more than a common meeting place. Jesus would not allow it.

Is it remotely possible that Jesus was merely honoring a Jewish custom, or some tradition of the elders? Who would be foolish enough to affirm such nonsense! This was a reaction of the spirit of Jesus, and the words attending His action will confirm this is the case. This is the Jesus that is largely unknown in an entertainment crazed church – but it is the real Jesus, and He is the One who is going to judge the world in righteousness. This text can greatly assist us in assessing our own conduct in more focused environments.

“ 17 And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

HE TAUGHT. Matthew and Luke record that Jesus spoke – “*and said unto them*,” and “*saying unto them*” (Matt 21:13; Lk 19:46). Mark says he “*taught*” – i.e. imparted knowledge and instilled doctrine, for that is what it means to teach. Teaching includes the idea of expounding or explaining. That is, there was something to be learned from this incident. It could be correlated with the revelation of God. There had actually been a violation of the will of the Lord. Something was done that was in contradiction of the Divine nature.

Amidst what probably appeared to be a rather disruptive environment, Jesus took occasion to teach. These words were not spoken after he had driven the offenders out, for the words He now speaks are addressed to them in particular, and the others in general.

IT IS WRITTEN. Jesus takes the people to the Scriptures, which are the articulation of the mind and purpose of the Lord. He does not refer to the writings of Grecian philosophers, Roman emperors, or other worldly writings. It is taken for granted that He is referring to the Scriptures – Moses and the Prophets. Jesus referred to what was “*written*” four times When He was tempted by the devil for forty days (Matt 4:4,6,7,10). In His teaching, He repeatedly referred to what was “*written*” (Matt 11:10; 26:24,31; Mk 7:6; 9:12,13; 14:21,27; Lk 10:26; 18:31; 20:17; 21:22; 22:37; 24:44,46; John 6:45; 8:17; 10:34; 15:25). Jesus never appealed to statistics, trends, or the observations of worldly men to make His words more firm. He rather appealed to the Word of God – what was written. In so doing, He fulfilled the word of Isaiah, “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Isa 8:20). Those who would be preachers and teachers must follow the Master in this regard. What they affirm must be supported by some specific word of Scripture.

MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED. Matthew records, “*My house shall be called the house of prayer*” (Matt 21:13). Luke reads, “*My house is the house of prayer*” (Lk 19:46). Here Jesus quotes from the prophet Isaiah: “*Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer : their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people* ” (Isa 56:7). That word was spoken to certain eunuchs who kept God’s sabbaths, chose the things that pleased Him, and took hold of His covenant (56:4). Because of this, God said He would give them a place and a name in His house. He would bring them to His holy mountain and “*make them joyful*” in His “*house of prayer*” (Isa 56:5-7). As you can see, the prophecy includes the idea of “*IS the house of prayer*” as well as “*SHALL*

BE called the house of prayer.” the present tense (“is”) is seen in the words “*My house of prayer.*” The future tense (“shall”) is seen in the fact that it would become the house of prayer “*for all people.*”

It is not coincidence that Jesus related what the people were doing with Isaiah’s prophecy, for the prophet continued, “*Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter*” (Isa 56:11). Thus, in the context of a house devoted to prayer, the rulers of the people were seeking their own personal and worldly gain!

It should not be difficult to see that this is also happening in our time. Men are profiting from religion, just as surely as those ancient merchants were capitalizing on the events associated with the Passover. What is more, a religious culture has been spawned by a lack of the love of the truth that lends itself to making such men wealthy. Let no one doubt that Jesus remains “*the same yesterday, and today, and for ever*” (Heb 13:8).

A DEN OF THIEVES. All of the synoptic gospels use this phrase: “*ye have made it a den of thieves*” (Mk 11:17; Matt 21:13; Lk 19:46). Other versions read, “*a robber’s den,*” NASB “*a den of robbers,*” NIV “*a hole of thieves,*” BBE “*a gathering place for thieves,*” GWN “*a bandit’s den,*” NJB “*a hiding place for thieves,*” IE and “*a hideout for bandits.*” ISV What normally was done in sequestered and hidden places was now being done in the Temple. That area had become known as a gathering place for the exploiters. It is written, “*holiness becometh Thine house*” (Psa 93:5). However, amidst Jewish leaders who drew nigh to the Lord with their mouths, yet whose hearts were far from Him (Matt 15:8), religion had become the context for money-making and exploitation. Jesus said, however, that they were robbers, not merchants! They were taking from the people, and doing so in the very house where God Himself was the preeminent One.

It does **not** require an unusual amount of discernment to see that this very situation has been reproduced in our day. Christianity has become the seed-bed for merchandising and making money. Careers, institutions, financial empires, and the massing of great wealth is now associated with *Christian ministries*. If anyone wonders how all of this is viewed by the exalted Christ, this text should clarify the issue. Anything that is a citadel for robbers cannot be good.

“ 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine. 19 And when even was come, He went out of the city.”

THE SCRIBES AND THE CHIEF PRIESTS. Here we have the chief men in the Jewish community. The scribes were the handlers of Scripture, and were noted for teaching the people (Mk 1:22). The chief priests were the experts in approaching the Lord and carrying out His will. Yet, with all of their seeming expertise, this practice had arisen, and they had not opposed it. Now, they have witnessed the reaction of “*God manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16) to a practice to which they had grown accustomed. They had allowed this merchandising to go on in the Temple courts, and had done so with their Bibles in their hands while engaging in the ceremonies it commanded. How will they respond to this display of Divine indignation?

THEY SOUGHT TO DESTROY HIM. These men viewed Jesus as disruptive, undesirable, and to be removed. They were not thinking in terms of merely getting Him out of the Temple, but were seeking a way to kill Him. This was not the first time they had such notions. At the very beginning of Christ’s ministry, the Pharisees had joined with the Herodians, seeking to do the same

thing (Mk 3:6). Now, the scribes and chief priests join the opposition, also seeking to kill Him.

Remember, it is just four days until Jesus will actually be delivered up to be crucified. That is precisely why all of these ideas are flooding the minds of His enemies. Unknown to them, they will be carrying out the “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23), and will be condemned for doing so. Until this time, every effort to get rid of Jesus, change His focus, or neutralize His influence has utterly failed. This was because His hour had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:6,30; 8:20). However, before this visitation to Jerusalem has concluded, Jesus will confess, “*The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified*” (John 12:23).

What is happening is that God is so orchestrating the events that Christ’s enemies will become more bold and aggressive. Their hatred will boil over and become uncontrollable in order that God’s determined purpose may be fulfilled.

THEY FEARED HIM. These men were actually afraid of Jesus. His presence threatened their careers, and they knew it. John said they reasoned, “*If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both **our place and nation***” (John 11:48). That is how the real Jesus influences those who attempt to turn religion to their own personal gain. They sense that their position is in danger when Jesus is at hand.

ALL THE PEOPLE WERE ASTONISHED. Their fear of Jesus was also “*because*” of the people. That is, the people were hanging on His words, and were flocking out to hear Him. They would no doubt defend Jesus if their leaders attempted to forcibly remove Him from their presence. From the very first of His ministry the people were “*astonished at His doctrine*” (Mk 1:22; Matt 7:28; Lk 4:22; John 7:46). Once the people had heard Jesus, they could not view the scribes as superior teachers. The excellence of the Master revealed the mediocrity of the scribes. His light revealed how ignorant they were, knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Mk 12:24).

In view of these hindering circumstances, Luke records that Christ’s enemies “*could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to Him*” (Lk 19:48). Their designs were utterly frustrated at this time. They were like a man trying to fight with broken arms and puny weapons. They could not fulfill their will because it was not a time when that could be done. All of this will change in just three days. It will appear as though circumstances will be so altered that they will be able to kill Jesus, and do so with no resistance from the people. Of course, that was only because they would be doing what God’s “*hand*” and “*counsel determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:28).

The same principle that is at work here applies to the sons of God. When they are doing the will of the Lord, what they have been given to do cannot be stopped by men. On one occasion, when certain enemies appeared to be gaining the upper hand against Paul, Jesus appeared to him with a word of comfort. “*Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city*” (Acts 18:9-10). The Lord Jesus was protecting Paul “*in the presence of His enemies.*”

HE WENT OUT OF THE CITY. Jesus remained in the Temple all day, and did so without any interruption by His enemies. In fact, Matthew records, “*And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them*” (Mat 21:14). When the evening arrived He simply “*went out of the city.*” No enemies were lying in wait for Him. No attempt was made to arrest Him. He was in control of the situation, and no man was able to restrain Him or challenge Him by saying “*What doest thou?*” (Dan 4:35). This was nothing less than a revelation of the God of heaven, before whom all

men are utterly powerless.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 123

“Mark 11:20 *And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away. 22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”*

(Mark 11:20-24; Matthew 21:20-22)

INTRODUCTION

En route to His appointment with the death He would “*accomplish,*” Jesus has confronted several things that could have proved to be distractions. The disciples had disputed among themselves by the way (9:33-37). Then John told Him they had seen a man casting out demons, and told him to stop (9:38-50). Then there were the Pharisees who tried to trap Him in a question (10:2-12). The disciples had tried to discourage mothers from bringing their children to Jesus (10:12-16). Then He confronted a rich young ruler who wanted eternal life, but not enough to forsake all (10:17-31). James and John had asked to be seated at His right and left hands in His Kingdom (10:35-45). Then He found an impressive fig tree that had nothing but leaves (11:12-14). Finally, He had cleansed the Temple of defiling influences (11:15-17). In each of these Jesus took time to instruct His disciples, opening to them the manner of the Kingdom. Some of the teaching was rather extensive. View these confrontations as hindrances thrown in His path, to turn Him from His mission. He did not ignore any of these incidents, even making special observations to His disciples concerning each of them. All of this was done on the way to lay down His life as a ransom for many. Now He will teach the disciples, following their observation of the withering of the fig tree He had cursed. Behold the versatility, wisdom, and eagerness of the Savior! Let them testify to you how eager He is to save and bring you to glory. God has given us a gracious and aggressive Savior!

“Mark 11:20 *And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away.”*

IN THE MORNING. Jesus and His disciples are now returning from Bethany to Jerusalem. He had entered into Jerusalem in the triumphal entry (11:7-10). He entered into the Temple and looked around (v 11a). He took His disciples back to Bethany (v 11b). He returned the next day to Jerusalem, cursing the fig tree on the way (v 12-14). Upon entering

the Temple, He cleansed it of those who bought and sold, together with animals and doves (v 15-17). When evening came, He went out of the city, returning to Bethany (v 19; Matt 21:17). Now, Jesus is coming back to Jerusalem, and will enter the Temple again. Thus, we have covered a three day period, with two nights being spent in Bethany. Following the accounts of Matthew (Matt 21:1-46), Mark (Mk 11:1-33), and Luke (Lk 19:28-48), you will find each day was filled with intense activity.

Thus, we are again introduced to an active, aggressive, and determined Savior. He is always moving forward toward His objective. He deals with anything and everything He encounters. He is totally intolerant of sin. He is intent upon His disciples learning. He will not be diverted from His purpose. This is the real Jesus, and He brings all of these qualities to bear upon our salvation. That is, salvation will be worked out within the context of these Divine characteristics. If, in our participation, we are slothful, undetermined, not moving forward, not handling what confronts us, tolerant of sin, not eager to learn, or easily turned away from God's great salvation, **to some extent we are not abiding in Christ, and He is not dwelling within us.** I do not know how a person could support the idea that the Christ revealed in the Gospel is at work in a person who himself has pervasive and unchecked tendencies that are at a sharp variance with the very nature of Christ. This is why believers are admonished to examine themselves to see if they **are** in the faith (2 Cor 13:5).

THEY SAW THE FIG TREE. On the way back to Jerusalem, Jesus takes His disciples past the fig tree that He had cursed. It is His manner to give people an occasion to reconsider what He has done, and to think upon its implications. When Jesus cursed the fig tree, He did not uproot it, removing it from sight. He left it there in a withered and dead condition so all could see – a tree that was all leafed out the previous day.

Similarly, the landscape of humanity is cluttered with spiritual carcasses – people who once had some interest in the Lord, and “*believed for a while*” (Lk 8:13). Yet, in due time, they “*departed from the faith*” (1 Tim 4:1), or returned like a “*sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*” (2 Pet 2:22). What has happened in such cases? Looking behind the scenes we will find that such people were not abiding in Christ, and thus were not bearing fruit. As Jesus said He would, God has cast them forth and they withered (John 15:6). Their perpetually fruitless condition, even though they had religious leaves, brought judgment upon them, just as surely as the fig tree was cursed. The life of God will not remain in lethargic souls. It is not our business to judge whether certain individuals have been removed or not, for we cannot see if some “*little faith*” may be found in them. However, it is our business to know that this is a Divine manner, taught in doctrine, and exhibited in our text.

DRIED UP FROM THE ROOTS. Because the life-giving sap of that fig tree did not produce fruit, the source of the life was cut off – “*from the roots.*” **The tree could not survive with dead roots!** It could not even produce leaves when its roots dried up.

This is also the manner of spiritual life. Considered as a plant, its roots must be living and productive. Viewed from the standpoint of a building, the foundation must be sure. This consideration caused the Psalmist to say, “*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” (Psa 11:3). A destroyed foundation is like dried roots. It makes productivity and fulfillment impossible. One of the great weaknesses of contemporary religion is its lack of foundation or roots. Generally speaking, the people are not being “*rooted and grounded*” (Eph 3:17). Unless that condition is satisfactorily addressed, it is only a matter of time until their roots will be dried up, and fruitfulness will become an impossibility – just as with the fig tree. As tragic as it is,

there appear to be very few people who realize the gravity of this condition.

BEHOLD! The disciples see the fig tree in its withered condition. Matthew says “*they marveled*” at “*how soon*” it withered (Matt 21:20). Mark reveals that Peter spoke for them all, telling Jesus that the fig tree He cursed had, in fact, withered. Now, when Jesus spoke to the tree, He did not say He was cursing it. He did not say it would wither. He rather said no man would ever eat fruit from it. **Being consigned to fruitlessness is a curse.** Peter was alert to hear what Jesus said, and was quickly aware of the tree. A lot of significant lessons are missed by simply being dull, slow of heart, and not beholding what is happening around us. If the whole earth is full of God’s glory (Isa 6:3), we cannot afford to be “*slow of heart*” (Lk 24:25).

“ 22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”

JESUS SAID TO THEM. Peter did not ask a question, he made an observation. Jesus, however, answered his observation. Peter made the statement, but Jesus answered, delivering a word to all of them. We learn from this that Jesus is not passive about our remarks. Our words are duly noted, and will bring a response from Him. We must never think of Jesus as a mere listening post to hear us spout our opinions and observations. We also learn that what Jesus says is not limited to the individual. While Jesus does deal with us personally, it is always within the greater context of His body – the church – and His “*eternal purpose.*”

HAVE FAITH IN GOD. Other versions read, “*have the faith of God,*” DOUAY/GENEVA/LITX/MKJV “*have confides in God,*” TNT “*have faith of God,*” YLT “*Take hold of God’s faithfulness,*” MONTGOMERY and “*have faith in God [constantly].*” AMPLIFIED The literal translation is “*have faith God*” – or “*faith toward God*” (Heb 6:1). There is more in this phrase than meets the eye. For example, the word “*have*” comes from a word meaning “*hold, keep, seize, have as one’s own, possess.*” THAYER “*Faith*” is a noun, not a verb. It is **not** synonymous with the word “*believe.*” Technically, a person can only believe if they have faith – and faith is “*obtained*” (2 Pet 1:1). In this case, “*the faith of God,*” that is, the faith that is toward God, is the faith that is authored by God. That is the faith – the only faith – that is supported by His omnipotence. If this is not the case, then you have omnipotence devoted to something of human origin. The possibility of such an imagination will be most difficult to support because “*no good thing*” can come from “*the flesh,*” or the “*natural man.*”

It seems to me that Jesus is preparing His disciples for the coming events. Like the fig tree withered, so Israel and Jerusalem would wither under the judgment of God, for they were barren like that useless fig tree. When that time came, the disciples would have to trust that God was in charge of things, and rely upon His wisdom and sustaining grace.

Also, “*without faith it is impossible to please God*” (Heb 11:6) – either in fruitbearing itself, standing firm in the time of trouble, or launching out upon the sea of God’s perceived will. Here is a requirement that has no value in a purely institutional setting. That is because men cannot capitalize upon faith for their own gain. They must always have a self-conceived procedure to do that. That is why false preachers and teachers major on methods.

SAY TO THIS MOUNTAIN. This was no doubt the Mount of Olives, which was close at hand. Here Jesus establishes the invincibility of faith. He describes faith as being exhibited when one “*shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass.*” That is certainly not an exhibit of the human will – like making up your mind. There is no arena in

which faith is not triumphant. This is because faith is discerning as well as powerful, and in strict accord with the will of God.

If the disciples have true faith, they will not only “*do this which is done to this fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be DONE*” (Matt 21:21). This text **cannot** be blended with Proverbs 18:21, as some present preachers are affirming: “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*” (Prov 18:21). Here the power is not in what is said, or in the tongue, **but in the faith** – a faith that does not doubt. That, and that alone, is why “*those things which he saith shall come to pass.*”

Witches and those who embrace the occult often boast of being able to move objects about with their inner power. And, indeed, there have been impressive displays of such things from time to time – like the Egyptian magicians turning their rods into serpents (Ex 7:12), turning water into blood (Ex 7:22-22), and bringing frogs upon the land (Ex 8:7). Their power ran out, however, as they could not duplicate the plague of the lice (Ex 8:18). Divine power is not merely for display, or making fleshly impressions. It is always driven by purpose, for the glory of God. Should God’s “*will*” require casting the Mount of Olives into the sea, and the disciples had faith in God,” He would have accomplished that will through them.

HE SHALL HAVE WHAT HE SAYS. He will have what he says because he “*did not doubt in his heart,*” but believed that the things he said would “*come to pass.*” Matthew says they would be “*done.*” “*Done*” by whom? Such a work must be perceived in the same way Jesus perceived His own marvelous works. “*the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works*” (John 14:10). Faith put the person in harmony with the Lord.

There is no ceiling to faith – the faith that was “*delivered to the saints*” (Jude 1:3). It is invincible because it comes from and is associated with the Living God. It brings to the individual the mind of Christ as well as the power of God, thus enabling them to please God in what they think, say, and do. Faith has a pervasive quality that purifies the heart (Acts 15:9).

“**24** *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*” Matthew reads, “*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive*” (Matt 21:22).

Jesus now associates faith with prayer – not merely speaking: “*when ye pray .*” Matthew reads, “*whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer .*” The authority, then, is **not** invested in the believer himself, as some allege. Otherwise, there would be no need to pray. This should not be difficult to receive, because, so far as man is concerned, “*we see not yet all things put under him*” (Heb 2:8). Lest anyone question that the power of faith is, in this case, primarily associated with prayer, Jesus says, “**THEREFORE** *I say unto you.*” That is, in view of what He had said concerning the power of faith, He proceeds with this instruction.

DESIRING. Notice that Jesus does **not** say, “*Whatsoever you say .*” He speaks first of “*desire.*” This is not speaking of a mere inward thought, but of an EXPRESSED desire – one put into words that are addressed to the Father. Other versions clarify this thought by using the word “*ask in prayer.*” The idea is not that of desiring, or wanting, something to happen, but of desiring something from God. Thus the Psalmist wrote, “*All my desire is before Thee*” (Psa 38:9), and “*One thing have I desired of the Lord*” (Psa 27:4). A “*desire*” without God at the heart of it is nothing more than lust or covetousness. It is further written, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart*” (Psa 37:4).

Desires must be purified before they are recognized by “*the God of all flesh*” (Jer 32:27). It would be exceedingly difficult to establish that God is interested in the dreams and wishes of people who are not wholly devoted to Him. That may sound good to some, but it is not true.

PRAYING. Thus, the “*desire*” is expressed in prayer to God. This means there is a lively sense of personal impotence in the one framing the prayer – else he would simply speak or do the thing that is desired. There is no aspect of salvation that does not require faith. Likewise, there is no valid quest or desire that can be legitimately sought apart from dependency upon and faith in the Lord. There are even needs of which we are not cognitively aware – when we “*know not what we should pray for as we ought*” (Rom 8:26). It is then that the Holy Spirit “*maketh intercession for us*” in “*groanings too deep for words.*” NASB What does all of that mean? Simply that there is no sense in which we are independent of the Lord. All of the resources are **not** deposited in us, else we would not need to desire or pray. Both desire and prayer confirms that there are needs that are not presently met, and benefits that are not presently possessed. That is just a fact of spiritual life, and it will remain as long as we are in the body.

BELIEVING. Praying is not a mechanical exercise in which something like magical words or formulae are uttered. In order for prayer to be effective, believing is essential. Our text says, “*when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them*” – i.e. the things you desire. Is this nothing more than an exercise of the human will? Your very experience will confirm that is emphatically not the case. This is not the power of positive thought. It is not a strong desire that brings the answer, but a strong faith.

By its very nature, believing must be based upon some word from God. As used in this text, for example, it is not possible to believe God for a newer and bigger car, for God has made no commitment to grant such things. Nor, indeed, can you simply believe God for perfect health, for God has made no promise pertaining to the health of those in Christ. However, that does not mean faith cannot be associated with such requests. They must be approached indirectly. Believing in the sense of this text will make an association between the thing asked for and what God has revealed. In some way it must connect with the good, and acceptable, perfect will of God. Your “*cause*” must be produced before God, building it upon sound reasoning concerning the promises of God. Your desire must have some association with what God is doing in Christ Jesus. If you can make that association, then “*believing*” can be associated with your prayer.

It is to be understood that there are some prayers that are confined to the category of “*requests.*” In these, there a clear association with the will of God cannot be seen. Yet, if your ways please the Lord, and He takes delight in you, He may grant your request – like Lot being able to go to a nearby city (Gen 19:20-22). There is a promise associated with such petitions: “*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*” (Phil 4:6-7). In this case, believing has to do with obtaining the peace that will stabilize the heart, rather than the request that is desired.

It seems to me that it is on the part of wisdom to so culture our appetites and desires that we do not have a lot of this category of wants. To be sure, when care, or undue concern begins to enter our hearts, we must take the matter to the Lord, knowing that He will keep us from being unduly distracted. In due time, however, we will find ourselves less troubled by life.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 124

“ Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

(Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:12,14-15)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus and His disciples are on their way back to Jerusalem the day following the cleansing of the Temple - the day on which He had also cursed a fig tree that only had leaves. From the standpoint of the fig tree, it was a critical time, for the Creator of the tree had come to it expecting to find fruit. There is an obvious parallel between this circumstance and the city of Jerusalem. Jesus had come to it also – a city that had been cultured for His appearing. The Temple pointed to him as a dwelling. The offerings spoke of His sacrifice. The high priestly order introduced the people to the concept of an Intercessor. The Prophets had foretold Him, and John the Baptist had prepared His way. Yet, when He came, He found “*nothing but leaves.*” Now, on their way back into the city, when Peter remarked about how quickly the fig tree had withered, Jesus took occasion to instruct His disciples concerning faith and prayer. As though warning them of the danger of being found without faith, which is the fundamental fruit, He told them “*Have faith in God!*” Our Lord quickly moved His disciples from marveling at what they saw to a consideration of themselves, for observation without participation has no lasting value. When, for example, the Lord Jesus comes, every eye will see Him, just as the eyes of the disciples saw the fig tree. His coming will be even more apparent than that memorable occasion. However, if there is no corresponding conformity to His likeness, no benefit will be gained from that glorious appearing. The experience of such people will be much like that of the fig tree. Therefore, Jesus takes this occasion to speak to His disciples concerning the matter of readiness. They were like tender young fig sprouts, and He is nurturing them to ensure their fruitfulness. Confirming that faith is not a mere duty, Jesus also linked it with prayer, and spoke of its potency within those possessing it. When faith and prayer are linked together, they are joined with Omnipotence.

“ Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

Jesus now elaborates on the subject of the effectiveness of prayer. That is a matter that is not to be taken for granted. The subject of prayer cannot be addressed as though God always hears our prayers, for this is not the case. There are numerous examples of prayers the Lord said He would not hear. Samuel told wayward Israel, “*And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day*” (1 Sam

8:18). Elihu testified in the book of Job, “Surely **God will not hear vanity** , neither will the Almighty regard it” (Job 35:13). David confessed to God Himself, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, **the Lord will not hear me** ” (Psa 66:18). Speaking through Isaiah, God testified to Israel concerning their impoverished spiritual state, “ **when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood**” (Isa 1:15). Again, Isaiah prophesied, “**But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear** ” (Isa 59:2). The Lord also spoke to Jeremiah concerning the condition of Israel. “**Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble** ” (Jer 11:14). And again, “**When they fast, I will not hear their cry ; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them** ” (Jer 14:12). Later speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, God said of Israel, “**and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them**” (Ezek 8:18). Micah spoke in the same manner: “**Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but He will not hear them : He will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings**” (Micah 3:4). Jesus said of the religious elite of His day, “**But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men**” (Matt 15:9). He also warned His disciples that the value of prayer is not measured by the amount of words found in it. “**But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking**” (Matt 6:7).

These are all examples of spiritual barrenness, and of the impact it has upon a holy God. They perfectly correlate with Jesus cursing the fig tree, confirming that man can be in a state where there is only an outward show of religion. In such a case, the person becomes worthless, because there is nothing within that is satisfying or pleasing to the Lord.

It is clear, therefore that the moral and spiritual condition of the people who pray has a direct bearing upon their prayers. If their condition is not acceptable, it must be addressed in the prayer, as confirmed in Christ’s reference to a certain publican who prayed, “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” Jesus said of that man, “*this man went down to His house justified*” (Lk 18:13-14). This is an aspect of God that is often neglected by those who say they represent Him. There is an representation of the Living God that leaves the people imagining He is gently tolerant of every condition, and will go to any length to receive and bless the people. This passage confirms that nothing could be further from the truth.

WHEN YOU STAND PRAYING, FORGIVE! Behold the versatility of the human spirit. While in the act of praying to God, there is a simultaneous profound consideration of oneself. Rather than detracting from the prayer, Jesus will teach His disciples that it will bear directly upon te effectiveness of the prayer. This is also the manner in which “*faith in God*” will reason.

IF YE HAVE OUGHT AGAINST ANY. Or, “*If you have anything against anyone.*” This is a grievance against someone – someone who has wronged you, or treated you unjustly. Here is a hindrance to faith, for the subject is praying coupled with believing and not doubting. If, while praying, such on offense is recalled, Jesus tells His disciples to immediately let go of any notion of retaliation. The person is not to be viewed as one indebted to the offended one, but in the heart is to be forgiven. This attitude parallels that of the Lord, who is “*ready to forgive*” (Psa 86:5). That is, the clearing of the matter will not be hindered by the attitude of the one against whom the offender has sinned. This does not preclude the necessity of repentance on the part of the wrongdoer, but rather makes way for his recovery. This is the attitude that Stephen had when he prayed as he was being stoned, “*Lord, lay not this sin their charge*” (Acts 7:60). That was preceded by the words of the Savior Himself, uttered from His cross: “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Lk 23:34).

THAT YOUR FATHER MAY FORGIVE YOU. The purpose for the required forgiveness is not that the transgressor may be freed from his guilt, but that we may be freed from ours! – *“that your Father . . . may forgive your trespasses.”* **It is vain, therefore, to speculate on whether or not we are guilty of sin.** It is taken for granted that each disciple needs to be forgiven. That is why Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness (Matt 6:12). The subject of this section is not interpersonal relationships, but having faith in God. Here Jesus is going to deal with something that directly bears upon that faith – faith that can move mountains.

“ 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Are there any repercussions when men entertain improper attitudes? Or, is God so gracious that He will, overlook it when men ignore what is required of them? Is it possible that Jesus requires fruit from a fig tree, but none from us? If an impersonal tree is required to produce fruit, what of a personality who is made in the image of God, and has even been purchased with a price? What of those who have been redeemed, and have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son?

It is important to note the strain of this teaching. A religious opportunist might imagine that forgiveness would be conditioned upon doing some great exploit. Perhaps the requirement will be the winning of souls, or keeping the commandments, or simply being a good neighbor. In this teaching, Jesus goes into the inner recesses of the heart. He deals with things that cannot be seen. These are accomplishments that cannot be exploited. You cannot build a religious empire upon them. The world will not exalt those who actually forgive those who trespass against them.

NOT A MERE FORMAL FORGIVENESS. This is not a mere formal forgiveness, or one that is in word only. Elsewhere Jesus likened this kind of forgiveness to a person who had himself been forgiven, yet did not forgive his fellow servant. *“O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? . . . So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses ”* (Mat 18:33-35).

This text is not dealing with a formal law, after the manner of the Ten Commandments, or the covenant made at Sinai. Here the Lord is dealing with a person who has received mercy being himself merciful. It is speaking of one who is eager to be as considerate of others as God has been of him. This does not countermand the word of Jesus to His disciples concerning one who had sinned against them: *“and if he repent, forgive him”* (Lk 17:3). That is speaking of the offended individual and the offending party. **This is speaking of the offended party and the living God!** How will God react when we come to Him seeking forgiveness, but are determined to withhold the forgiveness of those who have offended us? Is it that we are can see **the** need of **our** forgiveness, but do not behold the need of the same in our peers?

This is a forgiveness that turns the matter over to the Lord. We thus relinquish any right to retaliation or vengeance, casting all of our care upon the Lord. In such a case, the offender will not remain unforgiven because we have refused to grant it!

IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE. This statement means that spiritual life is calculated to produce the required action. If people will not quench or grieve the Spirit, they **will** forgive those who trespass against them. This confirms that failing to forgive is the result of sinning

against God, for His salvation cannot possibly produce a heart that is not “*ready to forgive.*” Also, by saying “*IF,*” Jesus indicates that this is an unusual circumstance among His disciples. It indicates a departure from the norm, and a straying from the path.

NEITHER WILL YOUR FATHER FORGIVE YOU. The result of failing to forgive the one who has sinned against us has fearful consequences. After all conjecture has been set forth, and men have presented their strong reasons, Jesus powerfully affirms, “*neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*” Immediately following what men refer to as The Lord’s Prayer, Jesus said this: “*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*” (Matt 6:14-15). James encapsulated this truth in a strong saying: “*For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment*” (James 2:13). Thus the person reaps what he has sown, for “*God is not mocked*” (Gal 6:7). Again, the saying of Jesus is also fulfilled, “*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*” (Matt 7:2).

There is no chance that this word will fail of fulfillment! Jesus is exposing us to the real God, and He is fully qualified to do so. He is the “*express image of God*” (Heb 1:43), and “*the fulness of the Godhead*” dwells in Him bodily (Col 2:9). In fact, as it is written, “*it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell*” (Col 1:19). In addition to this, we are faced with this incontestable reality: “*neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him*” (Matt 11:27). Again, it is written, “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, **He hath declared Him***” (John 1:18). Therefore, we are here introduced to the real God, and “*He cannot deny Himself*” 2 Tim 2:13). **His faithfulness involves NOT forgiving those who refuse to forgive, just as surely as it includes forgiving those who ARE forgiving.**

“ **Eph 4:32** *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. 5:1* **Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2** *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor.*”

There is a certain Kingdom logic, if you will, in being forgiving. In the apostles’ doctrine, they build upon the principle that is revealed in our Mark text. This confirms that the Spirit DID recall the words of Jesus to them, just as He said He would (John 14:26). In this we have a sterling example of what is involved in being **guided** into “*all truth*” (John 16:13). At this point, it will be profitable to briefly review their teaching on the subject.

TENDERHEARTED, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER. Here the reasoning is in the context of redemption, where Christ’s words, uttered prior to His death, were within the context of the fear of God. The difference is that now the matter of forgiveness is addressed in view of Jesus having taken “*away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Now that God is just and the Justifier of “*him which believeth in Jesus*” (Rom 3:26), there is a stronger reason for forgiving than avoiding not being forgiven ourselves.

The word “*tenderhearted*” expresses the foundational view of compassion. While “*compassionate*” emphasizes expression, “*tenderhearted*” underscores what compels that expression. The word literally means “*having strong bowels,*” THAYER and has to do with being “*affectionate.*” LOUW-NIDA The possession of this quality is evidence that one has been “*made a partaker of the Divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4). That is, he is not compassionate merely because he is told to be, but rather, like Jesus, is “*able to be touched*” by the ones with whom he has to do

(Heb 4:15). Therefore, believers are admonished to engage in “*forgiving one another*” out of the reservoir of a heart that is like that of their Lord – being “*tenderhearted*.”

To be “*tenderhearted*” is to have a “*heart of flesh*” (Ezek 11:19), that can properly react to offenses. Such a heart reasons that the offending individual did not mean to be offensive, or that they were weak, or that they lacked some understanding. In keeping with the characteristics of love, the tender heart “*seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*” (1 Cor 13:5-7). It has the most favorable view of the circumstances, and stands ready and eager for things to move forward to the glory of God.

This does not address the matter of the offender, but of our response to him. Jesus had already declared, “*but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*” (Matt 18:7). However, even then, He was speaking of the world. The apostles narrow the matter down to “*one another*.” To put it another way, none of us should make it difficult for an offender to repent or amend his ways. Our posture must be one that provokes our brethren “*to love and good works*.” When offenses occur, we must first assume they were not intentional, then react in such a way as to encourage recovery, if necessary, or growth in the area of expression and personal conduct.

FORGIVEN FOR CHRIST’S SAKE. Paul adduces another reason for our forgiveness of one another. God has forgiven us “*for Christ’s sake*” – that is, He was in what Jesus did, doing in Him what could not otherwise be done. The clear implication is that we also forgive one another “*for Christ’s sake*,” or “*in Christ*.” That is, we see Christ’s atoning death as sufficient reason to forgive another, even as God saw in it a just reason for forgiving us.

FOLLOWERS OF GOD. In being forgiving, we are, in fact, being “*followers of God as dear children*.” We know by experience what powerful affects His forgiveness has had upon us. It produces a certain hatred for sin, as well as a love for righteousness, and an eagerness to be well pleasing in the sight of God. Our forgiveness will also lend itself to such encouragement.

WALKING IN LOVE. Love is an environment in which we conduct our lives. Walking in love has to do with our manner of life among men. The acceptable life among our peers is perfectly harmonious with our fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9). That fellowship is within the context of Divine love, and becomes the source of our manners among men. This has particular regard to the love of the brethren – God’s sons and daughters. Such love is to be “*fervent*,” and will “*cover a multitude of sins*” rather than displaying them to others (1 Pet 4:8).

CHRIST ALSO HAS LOVED US. The bottom line of this spiritual equation is that we ourselves have been recipients of love. Even though we were the offenders, He gave Himself, not insisting on His own rights, but rather making a way for us to be forgiven. What is more, God was well pleased with what he did, which confirms the rightness of it all.

CHRIST FORGAVE US. “*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*” (Col 3:13). Although we had sinned against Christ by not believing on Him, receiving Him, and obeying Him, He “*forgave*” us. That forgiveness cannot be traced to any merit on our part. It was purely owing to His own nature and the effectiveness of His sacrifice. Those are reasons enough for us to also forgive.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 125

“ Mark 11:27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as He was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28 And say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things? 29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer Me. 31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. 33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

(Mark 11:27-33; Matthew 21:3-7; Luke 20:1-8)

INTRODUCTION

As they were returning to Jerusalem, Jesus spoke at length with His disciples about prayer, and especially about seeking forgiveness from God in their prayers. Of course, none of this instruction could have been received if the disciples had not been **with** Jesus. Even in those days, when their faith was being birthed and developed, they knew they had to be **with** Jesus to receive any valid knowledge concerning the things of God. None of them concluded that, after spending some quality time with Jesus, they could return to their homes and begin deciphering the Scriptures and acquiring the good things of God. Whether, at this time, they knew it cognitively or not, they sensed in their hearts that Jesus was the End as well as the Beginning, the Last as well as the First, and the Omega as well as the Alpha. There simply is no provision for men to begin with Jesus, and then proceed to spiritual maturity without Him. While it ought to be obvious that a people who required quickening, washing, and sanctification cannot continue in the newness of life without Jesus, there are multitudes of people that are attempting to do so. The Gospel of Christ is too often viewed as only for those who have not yet been delivered from the power of darkness. The earthly ministry of Christ underscores the absurdity of such a view. The disciples had to remain with Jesus to advance, and He had to be with them.

“ Mark 11:27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as He was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28 And say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority to do these things.”

THEY CAME AGAIN TO JERUSALEM. The Gospel record is wisely beginning to focus our attention on the city of Jerusalem. It was prophesied that this would be the place where “a fountain” would be opened “to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness” (Zech 13:1).

Joel also foretold, “*in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said*” (Joel 2:32). This is the reason God had placed His name there, sanctifying the city as the place in which the basis for salvation would be accomplished (1 Kgs 11:36). Therefore, Jesus has returned to the holy city to prepare to lay down His life. I do not doubt that He often pondered the prophecies of salvation that related to that city.

HE WAS WALKING IN THE TEMPLE. During the last few days of His ministry, Jesus was not often in the streets. When in the city, He spent the majority of His time in the Temple. When He was arrested in the Garden, He reminded those imagining they were capturing Him, “*I sat daily with you, teaching in the Temple*” (Matt 26:55; Mk 14:49). Luke says of Jesus, “*And in the day time He was teaching in the temple*” (Luke 21:37). This practice of Jesus was not confined to the last week of His ministry. Throughout those three-plus years when He went about “*doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil,*” whenever He entered Jerusalem, He spent the burden of His time “*in the Temple*” (John 2:14; 5:14; 7:28; 8:20; 10:43).

Mark states that Jesus was “*walking in the Temple.*” Matthew says “*He was come into the Temple*” (Matt 21:23). Speaking of the event covered in our text, Luke states that it took place “*on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel*” (Luke 20:1). Jesus was not simply strolling through the Temple courts, but was teaching the people as He moved along, preaching the Gospel to them. All of this was taking place as He prepared for His death – a staggering experience that moved Him later to pray as His sweat dropped in a bloody form to the ground (Lk 22:44). At that time, He will be moved to pray “*with strong crying and tears*” because of the awfulness of the hour, and the contemplation of being “*cut off*” from His God, as well as from the land of the living (Heb 5:7). Now, however, even though He is only a very few days from His betrayal, He is not engaged in such activities. Instead, He is teaching the people and preaching the Gospel. He will wrestle in prayer when the hour comes, but will not spend His time fretting until then.

For those who desire to be like Jesus – which is God’s predetermined purpose for them – there is a valuable lesson to be learned here. Satan works to cause us to fret, and to live in fear of what is coming. It is far better to busy yourself in the work of the Lord, living by faith and walking in the Spirit, until the time of trial comes. Then you will be able to enter into it with spiritual strength, and glorify God throughout the whole matter.

THERE COME TO HIM. As Jesus was walking about the Temple courts, teaching the people and preaching the Gospel, He was accessible to the people. He is not the only one there. Now the chief priests, scribes, and elders approach him. A certain modern day preacher (2007) will not allow the people to touch him while he is preaching, because. He says, the anointing is upon Him. Behold the King as he moves about. Lo, even His enemies have access to Him, and can ask Him questions – even if they are the wrong ones. A professed preacher or teacher who is not accessible to the people is a false one.

WHO GAVE THEE THIS AUTHORITY? The chief priests, scribes, and elders, ask Jesus who gave Him the authority “*to do these things.*” Luke reads, “*who is he that gave Thee this authority?*” (Luke 20:2) They have in their mind the cleansing of the Temple that had taken place the previous day. They also might have been referring to the blind and lame people Jesus had also healed in the Temple at the time He cleansed it (Matt 21:14). Matthew says they came to Jesus “*as He was teaching*” (Matt 21:23). Luke says their approach took place “*as he taught in the Temple, and preached the Gospel*” (Lk 20:1).

Observe that these men associated what Jesus did with “*authority.*” The word “*authority*”

comes from a word meaning “liberty to do what one pleases . . . the ability or strength with which one is endued.” THAYER These men have seen the results of the authority, and there is no question but that Jesus possessed some extraordinary power or ability. No ordinary man could do such things as successfully cleansing the Temple and, on the same day, healing all manner of blind and lame people. Throughout His ministry Jesus had publicly declared the source of His authority (John 5:36; 10:32,37,38). However, these men had placed no value on the words of Jesus, and therefore did not consider or retain them. It is most unfortunate in our day that men lack the knowledge of the uniqueness of Christ’s work. It is not likely that such a question would be asked today.

“29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer Me.”

One of the evidences that Jesus was the promised Messiah is the manner in which He handled questions. Isaiah prophesied of Him, “*And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and He shall be of quick understanding*” (Isa 11:2-3). This circumstance places at least two obligations upon men. First, to listen to what Jesus says, giving heed to Him who now speaks from heaven. Second, to seek an understanding from Him, for He is come to “*give us an understanding*” (1 John 5:20).

I WILL ASK YOU ONE QUESTION. An attribute of the wisdom and understanding that is resident in Jesus is the ability to determine the validity of a question, as well as the motive that prompted it. All questions do not deserve an answer, and our text provides an example of that reality.

The question asked Jesus had not dealt with the condition of the ones asking it. Therefore, Jesus will first deal with them. He will expose whether or not they are sincere, and if they are truly interested in any authority outside of themselves. He knows the answer to these things, for “*He knew what was in man*” (John 2:25). Jesus does not conduct an interview, or give a test. He will ask “*one question,*” and it will be a wise and discerning one.

ANSWER ME, AND I WILL TELL YOU. Jesus twice makes this statement: “*answer Me!*” He asks the question as **Lord**, not as a Teacher. Now, in just a few words, He has changed the whole intellectual climate. The Jewish leaders had asked a question as though Jesus was answerable to them. Now Jesus affirms that before they proceed any further, they must answer Him. This confirms that the questions of men are not the most important questions. They obtain value only if they are valid, and are asked with the proper spirit and focus.

Jesus, by saying He will answer them if they will answer Him, is not entering into a mere exchange of information. They have come to the light, so to speak, and now He will expose their deeds (John 3:21). This is not a private session, but is taking place as Jesus is walking, talking, teaching, and preaching. Other people are being exposed to this dialog, just as we are. They will learn something about their leaders they probably had not seen before.

IS IT FROM HEAVEN OR MEN? What a question Jesus asked! “*Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me?*” NASB At this time, John had already been beheaded, and yet the potency of his ministry remained. It is interesting that Jesus chose a subject that is still the cause of much controversy – baptism. Jesus Himself had submitted to John’s baptism, coming to the Jordan “*to be baptized of him*” (Matt 3:15). The Pharisees and lawyers, however, “*rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him*” (Luke 7:30). Perhaps some of the people thought they were not ready, or that they did not understand the

purpose of John's baptism. Jesus pierces their hearts, going straight to the real issue. Did John's baptism originate with heaven, or with men? There are, then, things upon earth that were originated in heaven – else this question would have no meaning. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of men to distinguish these realities from things that were originated by men – else there would be no need to ask the question.

One might wonder just how anyone would have known the source of John's baptism. First, as Peter affirmed to the household of Cornelius, John "*preached*" this baptism, as well as performed it: ". . . *the baptism which John preached*" (Acts 10:37). Paul also declared this in Antioch of Pisidia: "*John had first preached . . . the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel*" (Acts 13:24). Second, following the baptism of Jesus, John testified, "*And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*" (John 1:31-33). There was no question, then, concerning the Source of John's baptism. In it, John called upon men to repent toward God, thereby confirming its source. Further, John himself testified publicly to its origin.

This is an excellent question to ask concerning things that are true, as well as things that are false. The root of the matter is that if something said to be related to God was originated by men, other men are not obligated to respect and obey it. If, on the other hand, something is from God, that casts an entirely different light upon it. If it is from God, then it must be determined if God still requires it of men – like circumcision or animal sacrifices. If it is no longer required, God will plainly declare it through His messengers. If it is clearly related to the New Covenant and administration of Christ, it is to be received as from God.

“ 31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. 33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

THEY REASONED WITH THEMSELVES. Upon hearing the question, the men "*reasoned with themselves,*" or "*discussed it among themselves.*" NIV Their reasoning did not even address the question that was asked of them. Instead, they discussed the outcome of their answer, thinking only of themselves, and not of the question itself. These men were not accustomed to thinking in terms of the ultimate source of things. On one occasion, the Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus asking why His disciples transgressed "*the tradition of the elders*" (Mk 7:5). They did not have a fleeting thought about the ultimate origin of the elders' tradition. When they "*reasoned,*" they assumed they were right, and everyone else was wrong.

It is of more than passing interest that they reasoned among themselves rather than with Christ Jesus, who had asked the question. Of old time God has said through Isaiah, "*Come let us reason together*" (Isa 1:18). However, when men accept tradition as valid in religion, they place no corresponding value on God, Christ, or their Word. That, of course, is what enables sectarianism to remain alive and well. Babylon would fall overnight if those choosing to dwell in it would consider the source of its teachings and requirements. However, flesh does not think this way.

IF IT IS FROM HEAVEN. These men are not reasoning whether or not the baptism of John

was from heaven. Rather they are talking among themselves about the possible outcome of SAYING it was from heaven. Jesus already knew what their real answer was. How they felt about John's baptism was also revealed in their refusal to submit to it. They really did not believe it was from God, else they would have done just as the others whom John baptized.

Being shrewd, but not spiritually intelligent, they reasoned, *"If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then did ye not believe him?"* Even to these men, failing to do what is said to be required is an admission that one does not believe the message. As obvious as this form of reasoning is, many of our times cannot even think on this level. They think nothing of saying they believe this or that, even though they do not submit to it. They say they believe the Bible is inspired, yet they rarely read it, and do not conform their lives to it, living *"by every word of God."* Yet, these men did not want to be known as those who did not believe someone who was sent from God, so they determine not to say John's baptism was from heaven.

IF IT IS FROM MEN. Now they are cast on the horns of a dilemma. Jesus has, so to speak, provided only two possible answers: was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? Now, they reason that if they say it was of human origin, the other people who are privy to this discussion *"will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet"* (Luke 20:6). Thus the question that Jesus has asked them has backed them into a corner from which they cannot extricate themselves.

WE CANNOT TELL. **These men do not humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They do not ask the Lord what they can do**, nor do they confess how they really felt about John's baptism. Instead they reply, *"We cannot tell,"* or *"We do not know"* NKJV Their reply does not mean they just did not want to answer, i.e. *"We prefer not to answer that question."* The answer means, *"We have no idea,"* BBE or *"We have not known."* YLT They claimed ignorance on the subject, even though they had heard John and rejected his baptism.

NEITHER DO I TELL YOU. Jesus answers them according to their own words: *"Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."* We see here the nature of the Lord Jesus, and His conduct toward those whose hearts are not right before Him. He will not even tell such people the Source of His authority, much less break open the secrets of the Kingdom. It is Christ's manner to veil and conceal the truth to those who are not suited to receive it. That is why He spoke in parables to the people, *"lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them"* (Matt 13:10-15). There is no wisdom or power in men that can overcome this condition. If men's hearts are fundamentally corrupt, it is impossible for them to see the truth, for the Lord hides it from them. It is this condition that has given rise to the sudden emergence of religious specialists who offer meaningless substitutes for truth. Were it not for the fact that God has hidden the truth, these men could not even surface.

This is a sterling example of something that was revealed through David: *"With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward"* (Psa 18:26). These men were froward – headstrong and self-willed. Therefore, Jesus responded to them in the same manner: *"Neither will I tell you . . ."* NIV He did not answer fools according to their folly (Prov 26:4). How differently Jesus speaks to those humble spirits who follow him!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 126

“ Mark 12:1 And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.”

(Mark 12:1-5; Matthew 21:33-36; Luke 20:9-12)

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus prepares to give Himself as a ransom for many, He is confronted with the spiritual dulness of the people. First, the children have outdone the adults in receiving Him. Secondly, He has confronted merchandising in the Temple, and has driven the offenders and their goods from the premises. Third, he has been faced with pretentious religious officials who have challenged His authority. During this time He has even beheld a leafy fig tree that had no fruit for Him when he was hungry. These are hardly circumstances that would encourage Him to give up His life for that nation, and other sheep who were not of them. Yet, He proceeds deliberately toward the fulfillment of the Father's commandment to lay down His life and take it up again. Here He lives out the great principle of the Kingdom, which is doing the Father's will regardless of the circumstances, and even when appearance does not justify the doing of it. Jesus lived His life with his Father in mind, not the responses of the people. That is the only proper way to live in this world. Should we become occupied with appearance, there will be too many discouragements. Now Jesus begins to speak to the people in parables that reflect the real situation. Even though this is a high feast day, and Jews have come from all over the world to observe it, yet the stench of spiritual death was rising from the carcass of Jerusalem. There was a lot of religious activity, but there was very little substance in it. The next few days would confirm how hard-hearted the people were – particularly their leaders.

“ Mark 12:1 And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.”

Keep in mind, these are the last few days of Jesus' ministry. This time will consummate in His death for the sins of the world. That will be a time when He will fulfill the commandment delivered to Him by the Father – to lay down His life and take it up again

(John 10:17-18). In these last days, Jesus does a lot of speaking. He addressed a rich young ruler (Mk 10:18-21), the Pharisees (Mk 10:2-10), and the chief priests and scribes (Mk 11:27-33). He also teaches His disciples (Mk 10:10-12, 14-16, 23-27, 33-34, 42-45; 11:22-26). He even took time to heal the blind and lame who came to Him in the Temple (Matt 21:14).

The versatility of Jesus exposes us to the Divine nature, and the manner in which Kingdom matters are addressed. Jesus is obeying the Father – fulfilling what He has been given to do. But behold what activities are associated with that obedience! This is a sterling example of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Obedience is accomplished within the framework of Kingdom activity, an acute consciousness of God, and addressing life with the wisdom of God.

HE BEGAN TO SPEAK IN PARABLES. Remember, Jesus is walking about in the Temple complex (Mk 11:27). People are clustered about Him, moving along wherever He went. Now He will speak to the people *“in parables.”* These are parallels of truth in the natural order. However, the parallel is not obvious to the hearer, which is the unique thing about a parable. Jesus said parables concealed the truth (Matt 13:13). The only way they could be understood is for men to inquire concerning their meaning. They were actually a means of drawing out honest and good hearts. So far as the record is concerned, Jesus’ disciples are the only ones who ever asked Him to explain a parable (Mk 4:10; 7:17; Lk 8:9). It is also written, *“But without a parable spake He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples”* (Mark 4:34). Jesus also said He spoke in parables to the multitudes because it was *“not given”* them to understand. The reason He said He explained them to his disciples is *“because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom”* (Mk 4:11). Here is an aspect of Jesus with which leaders who neglect feeding the flock of God will be faced on the day of judgment. They will give an account of ignoring this matter.

A CERTAIN MAN PLANTED A VINEYARD. Jesus delivers this parable in view of Jerusalem’s rejection of Him, and the consequent judgment that would come upon them (Lk 19:42-44). **This confirms that anyone who is exposed to the truth of Christ must take the matter seriously.** The fact that the truth was placed before them makes them responsible for receiving it, and they will be so judged.

In His parable, Jesus states that a vineyard was planted. It was protected by a hedge, or wall, which kept out intruders, and allowed for the safety of the planting of the Lord. He also dug a winepress, where the grapes could be pressed, and the wine harvested from them. He also built a watchtower, so that imminent danger would be detected, and the crop protected. He then rented the vineyard to caretakers to tend it and harvest the grapes, while he himself went into as far country, removed from his own vineyard.

There are several things to be noted here. First, the vineyard had its origin with its owner. Second, there was adequate provision for protection. Third, there was provision for handling the harvest. Fourth, there was provision for the detection of coming danger. It ought to be observed that these are characteristic of the work of the Lord. If the work of God is successfully assaulted, it is not because there was no protection. If the fruit is not gathered and processed, it is not because there were not means to do it. If danger comes unexpectedly, and pollution enters in undetected, it is not because there was not provision for warning.

In this parable, those who are familiar with the Prophets will at once recall what is intended by these words. There are three prophetic references to Israel as a vine or vineyard. These are in Christ’s mind as He speaks. The deplorable condition of Israel will be confirmed by their rejection of Jesus, His betrayal, and them delivering Him to be crucified.

Psalm 80:8-16 likens Israel to vine “*brought out of Egypt.*” It was brought to a land from which the heathen were expelled, and there caused to take “*deep root,*” flourish, and fill the land. Yet, God visited the vine and broke down its hedges, exposing it to danger.

Isaiah 5:1-4 likens Israel to a vineyard planted in a “*very fruitful hill.*” A fence was put around it, the stones were gathered out, a tower was built, and a winepress put in place. Yet, even though it started as “*the choicest vine,*” it yielded “*wild grapes.*”

Jeremiah 2:21 likens Israel as a nation planted “*a noble vine, wholly a right seed.*” It had a wonderful beginning, and expectations were high. Yet this vine “*turned into a degenerate vine*” unto the Lord. Thus Israel was given every advantage, yet yielded miserable results.

“**2** *And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3* *And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.*”

Jesus is going to confirm that more is involved in God finishing the work than meets the eye of carnal men. Although it may seem to contradict the theology of some, everything that had a Divine beginning does not end well. Just a little thought will yield several examples: Satan, his angels, Adam, Eve, Cain, Saul, Solomon, Judas, Phygellus and Hermogenes, and Demas – to name a few. Israel is a particular example of not becoming what God expected. That expectation was not a mere wish. Full provision was made for the realization of a holy anticipation.

God’s dealings with men are being wrought out in a moral arena – that is, a realm where there are competing influences. There are contradicting appeals made to men by opposing forces. In this kind of environment, the people cannot detach themselves from the will of their Maker by imagining He is going to work favorably in them without their involvement. While there is some element of mystery in all of this, the mystery itself is designed to discover those with honest and good hearts, and those whose hearts are corrupt.

The nature of people, as well as the outcome of all things, is fully known to the Lord. However, God is displaying His wisdom to a gallery of witnesses – namely “*principalities and powers in heavenly places*” (Eph 3:10). In addition to these, there are also “*the spirits of just men made perfect*” who are also privy to Divine workings (Rev 6:9-11). At the bottom of the hierarchy of witnesses are the saints on earth who are given to behold the working of the Lord and conclude, “*This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes*” (Psa 118:23). In view of this rather complex circumstance, we cannot afford to adopt a simplistic theology.

THE SEASON. Matthew says, “*when the time of the fruit drew near*” (Matt 21:33). There came a time when fruit was expected from the vineyard – “*the season.*” The vine had been in the soil long enough to produce some fruit, for that was the purpose for planting it in the first place. God does not plant to produce a mere spectacle for the eye. In an institutional setting, there is little understanding about “*the season*” when fruit is expected. In every natural realm, “*fruit*” is associated with growth, maturity, and seasons. But in an institutional religious setting, no such associations are made, and fruit is not really expected. Here, however, Jesus reveals that there does come a time when fruit is intended to be found. He has already confirmed the Divine reaction to a lack of fruit in the cursing of the fig tree.

One “*fruit*” that is rarely mentioned these days is teaching. Yet, God has spoken to this subject. The book of Hebrews was written to retrogressing *Christians* who, like the Galatians, were leaning

toward Law. In their backward propensity, they were found in the time of fruit bearing, yet were barren like the fig tree Jesus cursed. Thus they were told, “*For when **for the time** ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat*” (Heb 5:12). Paul also alluded to this time when writing to the Corinthians. “*Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but **in understanding be men***” (1 Cor 14:20). Again, he spoke of the time of spiritual maturity, likening it to the cycles of natural life. “*when I became a man, I put away childish things*” (1 Cor 13:11).

The besetting sin of the Gentile church is its perpetual juvenility. It is not able to discern either sound or corrupt doctrine. God takes due note of this condition, and the time will come when He will deal with it forthrightly. Such a state is deliberate, and out of keeping with the nature of spiritual life. However, before God deals with it, He sends His servants.

HE SENT A SERVANT. The purpose of the servant was to receive from the keeper of the vineyard the fruit that was expected from it. After Israel had been planted in the promised land, God sent His servants to direct the people, and to gather some fruit when it was due. Samuel was one of the first prophets sent to gather fruit from Israel. He was a noble man, and a good teacher, able to declare unto them “*the manner of the kingdom*” (1 Sam 10:25). Yet the people finally rejected him, preferring to have a king like other nations (1 Sam 8:4-7).

David was another “*servant,*” sent to gather the fruit from God’s vineyard. Five times during his lifetime, God referred to “*My servant David*” (2 Sam 3:18; 7:5,8; 1 Kgs 14:8; 1 Chron 17:7). His Psalms are filled with exhortations for the people to give thanks to God, praise Him, and give Him glory (Psa 22:23; 107:32; 117:1; 135:1; 150:1-6). He established a framework for insightful praise in the worship of the Lord (1 Chron 5:16-24; 23:5; 2 Chron 7:6; 2 Chron 29:26-27). Yet, when times were hard, the people rebelled against David (2 Sam 19:9). They even allowed Absalom, a rebel, to steal their hearts (2 Sam 15:6). Here was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). David became king nearly 400 years after Israel had taken the land of Canaan. It was certainly time for some fruit to be gathered from this nation. However, Israel was not noted for being godly or spiritual during his reign – even though He was a prophet.

“ 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.”

Now Jesus refers to the long period between David and the coming of John the Baptist. At sundry times and in divers manners, God spoke “*in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*” (Heb 1:1). These were times when fruit was sought. The prophets even rebuked and exhorted the people in a concerted effort for fruit to be produced from this “*planting of the Lord.*”

HE SENT ANOTHER SERVANT . . . AND AGAIN HE SENT ANOTHER. The prophets themselves made a point of the repeated sending of the prophets to the people. Early in their history it is said, “*Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets*” (2 Kgs 17:13). As time continued to progress, God sent them more prophets, for the time for them to bear fruit had come. “*Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear*” (2 Chr 24:19).

The prophets were always sent in a timely manner – at “*the season,*” so to speak, or “*when the time of the fruit drew near.*” They came early enough to ensure that it was possible for A harvest

to be realized by the Owner of the vineyard. In fact, a point is made of this in Scripture.

*“Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all My servants the prophets, **daily rising up early** and sending them”* (Jer 7:25). Six times Jeremiah refers to God *“rising up early”* and sending the prophets (Jer 7:13,25; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:15). The Owner was certainly faithful in providing for a good harvest from the vineyard.

WOUNDED, SHAMEFULLY HANDLED, BEATING, AND KILLING. What tragic words these are to read! God’s own servants wounded *“in the head,”* treated *“shamefully,”* struck repeatedly, and even killed. This was all done by the ones who were left in charge of the vineyard – the stewards of God! Matthew reads, *“And **the husbandmen** took **his servants** , and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another”* (Matt 21:35).

During the days of Jeremiah it was written, *“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy”* (2 Chron 36:16). Jeremiah told the people, *“your own sword hath devoured your prophets”* (Jer 2:30). Amos rebuked the people because after God had raised up prophets and Nazarites among them, they *“gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not”* (Amos 2:11-12).

Jeremiah was *“shamefully treated”* when he was thrown into a pit, and sunk down into its mire (Jer 38:6). When Zechariah prophesied against the people, they stoned him to death *“in the court of the house of the Lord”* (2 Chron 24:21).

Jesus chided the scribes and Pharisees for their hard-heartedness, telling them it was going to continue and be evidenced by the further rejection of God’s messengers. *“Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city”* (Mat 23:34). He also addressed Jerusalem, calling attention to its consistent rejection of the prophets: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto Thee”* (Matt 23:37). Paul says the Jews, *“killed . . . their own prophets”* (1 Thess 2:15).

These people were aggressive in their opposition to the prophets. In this parable, Jesus portrayed this rejection in a most vivid manner: *“they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty . . . at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled . . . and him they killed, and many others; beating some and killing some.”* Matthew says they *“took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another”* (Matt 21:35). Luke also has them beating the servants, sending them away empty, treating them shamefully, wounding, and casting them out (Lk 20:10-12).

None of these things can be done accidentally or inadvertently. They can only be done deliberately and with aggressiveness. Such reactions are not the result of mere misunderstanding. Rather, they are the result of a stubborn refusal to hear the word of the Lord. They are driven by hardheartedness, and a love for what God hates. No person who rejects and opposes the servants of the Lord is treated as though he was innocent, or naive, or simply because they did not understand. Israel was sent into captivity because of their rebellion (1 Chron 6:15). God testified to the world concerning His judgment of the ancient people of Israel, *“ **Hear, O earth** : behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, **because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it** ”* (Jer 6:19).

The gravity of their sin is why Jesus is speaking this parable. He will show them that under any other circumstances, they could see such a reaction to good expectation was wrong.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 127

“ Mark 12:6 *Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. 10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?*”

(Mark 12:6-11; Matthew 21:37-44; Luke 20:13-18)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is speaking a parable in the Temple, as He walks about with crowds clustered around Him. There are children of the wicked one among the people, and they are the key figures in the Jewish community – chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus will not ignore them, knowing they will spearhead His death in a few short days. As is characteristic of Deity, He will expose their deeds, showing the absolute unreasonableness of what they will do – even though they are carrying out the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In all of this we are being exposed to the Divine nature. Particularly in the death of Christ, which is the subject of this parable, evil men were employed to carry out Divinely determined objectives. In their malicious deed, as Peter put it after Christ's enthronement, God “*fulfilled*” the things which He had “*showed by the mouth of the holy prophets*” (Acts 3:18). And yet, this did not diminish their guilt one iota. Those men were vessels “*to dishonor*” in God's greater house – or the arena in which he fulfills His purpose. They were used like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and others who brought glory to the Lord, yet were not rewarded for doing so. All of this reveals the complexities of God's dealings with men. When we consider what is happening in the world, we must not view it as fatalistic – as sort of “whatever will be will be.” Or glibly pass off things by saying, “God is going to have His way, no matter what.” That is certainly true, but it is not the whole truth. In the process there are people like those of whom Jesus is now speaking that will end up on the trash-heap of humanity. They were not suitable for holy use, but were rather used for “*ignoble purposes.*” NIV Except they repent, they will be cast into the lake of fire.

“ Mark 12:6 *Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.*”

In this parable Jesus is revealing how heaven would see the events that were soon to take place. So far as the Jewish leaders were concerned, what they were going to be doing

was getting rid of an agitating and disruptive teacher among them. They knew He was a threat to their position. Yet, they felt they were duly appointed leaders, fully supported by the Law, to which they had devoted themselves. However zealously such a view may have been argued, however, it was nothing more than a show of sinful pride. Jesus will reveal the real situation, even though the people themselves were not aware of it. This is because they were in bondage to Satan, who does not share his real purpose with his vassals. His intent was to get rid of the One who had been appointed to bruise his head.

HAVING THEREFORE ONE SON. The picture is of God sending many prophets to His people to alert them to their real condition, and summon them to repentance. If the postulate that men remain free to will and do is true, then surely the action of God Almighty will bring out the remnant of goodness that is imagined to be in men. Because God had dealt with this people for such a long time, and had spoken to them at length about a coming Savior who would be a Son (Isa 9:6), they will surely be prepared to receive and respect the fulfillment of those prophecies. This Son is His “*wellbeloved Son,*” and will therefore duly represent Him to the people. He will confirm the interest of the Father in the people, and be able to gather any fruits that may be among them.

HE SENT HIM LAST. In keeping with the principle of “*the first shall be last,*” and “*the last first*” (Mk 10:31), the best Messenger is sent last, and the lesser messengers were sent first. In this way the condition of the people will be fully confirmed. If they are basically good, with a few flaws, they will hearken to the preliminary messengers, and be fully ready for the final one, giving him reverence.

THEY WILL REVERENCE MY SON. The reverence of the Son presumes an acquaintance with the Father. Jesus Himself said, “*That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father . He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him*” (John 5:23). **Men treat the Son of God in direct proportion to their concept of God the Father .** If they do not love and obey the Son, it is because they have no respect and honor for God. If they have no regard for the Word of the Son, it is because they have no regard for the Word of God. If they do not take up their cross and follow Christ, it is because they have no prevailing regard for God the Father. There is no exception to this rule. Men WILL reverence the Son if they know who He is and have a reverence for the Father in heaven.

This understanding casts much light on the situation within the modern church. **The general disinterest, state of ignorance, and dominating carnality, is owing to a lack of regard for God.** People hold the Bible in their hand, yet have no love for its Author. They pretentiously talk to God, yet have no desire for Him to talk to them. They live in His world, yet do not associate it with Him. They are commanded to seek Him, yet do not do so.

This condition is verified by a rejection of the Son – the Son who comes to gather fruit, and to obtain something from the vineyard! Men would readily receive Jesus, I suppose, if He made no demands upon them. But there is no such Christ from heaven. The servants sent before the Son came to collect fruit for the Owner of the vineyard. The Son is doing the same thing. He did not come to simply see what was happening, or to encourage the husbandmen to try and do a better job.

THEY KILLED HIM. There was enough discernment in these wicked husbandmen to make a cursory association of the son with the owner of the vineyard. Yet, because of their miserable lack of acquaintance with the owner himself, they felt this was an opportunity to gain the vineyard for themselves. They also knew, they would have to kill the son in order to do this – and that is precisely what they did.

Historically, when this parable was actually lived out, here is how the leaders of the people reasoned about Jesus. *“If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation”* (John 11:48). Caiaphas the high priest stepped forward, saying that taking the life of Jesus was the answer. *“Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not”* (John 11:49-50). That was equivalent to saying that, on the death of Jesus, *“the inheritance shall be ours.”* In doing this, they did fulfill the purpose of God, yet they brought judgment upon themselves because they were ignorant of God Himself. They failed to consider the effect of their action upon the One who sent the Son into the world.

“ 9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.”

For some, who believe that men are the ones directing the affairs of the world, the question is, “What CAN the Lord of the vineyard do?” Such men feel that Divine intervention, if it really ever existed at all, is no longer experienced. They reason like those of Ezekiel’s prophecy when he wrote, *“for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not”* (Ezek 9:9).

Sin so anaesthetizes the soul that what seems glaringly obvious to faith becomes totally obscured. Men indulge in sin, among other things, because they do not believe God will react to it. This is because sin focuses on the moment – *“for a season”* (Heb 11:25) – which is considered to be all important at the time. The person who is sinning has absolutely no regard for what the God of heaven thinks about what is being done. Jesus now addresses that delusion – particularly with regard to His own imminent death at the hands of the people to whom He was sent.

WHAT WILL THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD DO? If the vineyard really belongs to the lord of it, you may expect him to do something about the rejection of his son, whom he sent to gather the fruit from it. When, therefore, the husbandmen of this vineyard imagine they will gain it for themselves, they could not possibly be more wrong!

In all of this we do well to consider how God regards those who build religious empires in His name, and heap riches unto themselves. In order to do this, they must *“crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame”* (Heb 6:5). When their moral wickednesses are made known, the Son of God is subjected *“to public disgrace.”* NIV They are no different than the husbandmen of this parable. Jesus will affirm that God IS going to do something about it! An example will be made of Jerusalem and its religious leaders.

HE WILL COME AND DESTROY THE HUSBANDMEN. This is not an idle threat. These wicked husbandmen did not volunteer to give the fruit of the vineyard to its owner. He would have been fair with them, and allowed them to have a generous portion for themselves. When the owner sent servants, they came to “receive from the husbandmen OF the fruit of the vineyard,” or “some of the produce” NASB – that is a fair portion of it, not all of it. The husbandmen, however caught the servants, beat them, and sent them away empty; they cast stones at others, wounding them in the head, and sent them away shamefully treated; many others they killed and beat, and stoned. Now, they kill the son of the owner. Their wickedness has been duly confirmed! There is no doubt about their condition.

The owner will not destroy the vineyard, but will rather destroy those who were charged with keeping it for him! In this case, the vineyard did not yield wild grapes, or bitter grapes. It did bring forth a harvest, but the caretakers would not yield it up to the owner, keeping it

for themselves.

In Matthew's account, he says those who heard Jesus' question responded, "*He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons*" (Matt 21:41). As David's response to Nathan's parallel, they could see the truth in a likeness, but not in actual life (2 Sam 12:5).

This word was fulfilled by Jesus at the destruction of Jerusalem. It was then that the city was devastated, its leaders killed, and even the Temple laid waste. Jesus warned those who listened to Him about those days, and told them when to flee, and how to pray (Luke 21:20-24) – but He did not warn the leaders. They would be destroyed in the melee.

The ultimate destruction will come when Jesus returns. Then the "wicked" usurper, "*the man of sin,*" and all those who, like him, plundered the church in the name of religion, will be consumed "*with the spirit of His mouth,*" and shall be destroyed "*with the brightness of His coming*" (2 Thess 2:8).

Note, that in this parable, the failure of the father to receive what was His from His own vineyard was directly owing to the wickedness of those who were charged with taking care of the vineyard. That is a most arresting consideration! We ought to be able to associate it with the present condition of Christendom, through which God is not being duly honored.

HE WILL GIVE THE VINEYARD TO OTHERS. "*He will give the vineyard to others!*" In Matthew, Jesus spelled out this part of the parable: "*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*" (Matt 21:43). That is a prophesy of the "*times of the Gentiles.*" The Scriptures also indicate that the Gentiles will also prove unfaithful, and the Jews, being put into their own olive tree, will assume the leadership (Rom 11:13-24). In view of this, godly men are provided with another incentive for being faithful. The time will come when – perhaps even in this world, and surely in the world to come – the sheep will be wrested from unfaithful shepherds, and given to faithful ones. This is in fulfillment of Jeremiah 23:4; "*And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.*" God is faithful to care for His own. He will raise up men and women who have an interest in His vineyard.

“ 10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”

Jesus now switches the comparison from a vineyard to a building. Both parallels are speaking of the people of the Lord. The vineyard accents the fruitage that is yielded to the Lord. The building places the emphasis upon a place in which God Himself can reside.

HAVE YE NOT READ? If God has sent a word to the people, it is their responsibility to know it. If He has moved men to write down His thoughts, men are obligated to become familiar with them. The Lord does not allow men the luxury of saying His word is too difficult to understand, or that they are unable to see its relevance for their lives. The fact that God has spoken makes it relevant, for God never speaks without due regard for the circumstances of humanity. Nor, indeed, does He ever speak in isolation from His own Person and purpose. Those who profess an interest in the Lord, and are not newly born into Christ, yet are fundamentally unacquainted with His Word have not told the truth. I do not know that it would ever go well with a person whom Jesus asked, "*Have ye not read?*" to reply, "No, I have not." That is not the kind of answer you want to give to Jesus!

THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED. This is a quotation from Psalm 118:22-23. Peter used this very text when speaking to the religious leaders in the Temple (Acts 4:11). The picture of that of key building under construction. As the building gets under way, there are a number of stones considered for placement in it. The builders might consider some of these stones unsuitable for the building, and therefore reject them.

THE HEAD OF THE CORNER. There is the one stone that is key to the acceptability of the structure: *“the head of the corner.”* One version reads, *“chief cornerstone.”* NKJV Ephesians 2:20 categorically says that Jesus is *“the chief cornerstone.”* Strictly speaking, the *“corner”* stone is distinguished from the *“foundation”* stone, as confirmed in Jeremiah 51:26. The foundation provides for the stability and permanence of the structure placed upon it. The corner stone binds the building together, so that it maintains its symmetry as well as its stability. In Jesus, of course, both of these stones are combined as declared in Isaiah 28:16. *“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste”* (Isa 28:16). Building upon this verse, Peter declares Jesus to be *“a chief corner stone, elect, precious,”* adding that He is also a *“stumblingstone, and a rock of offense”* to those who do not believe on Him (1 Pet 2:5-7).

In Jesus, therefore, we have the key Man – the One upon whom the work of the Lord will be founded, and in Whom everything will be held together. God prepared a nation to receive Him, cultured them with the Law and the prophets, and even sent the forerunner, John the Baptist, to prepare the way for Him. The religious *“builders,”* however, considered Him to be worthless – to be removed from society by violent means, and forever forgotten.

Oh, this kind of assessment has not ceased. There are still professing church leaders who are using other things as a foundation, and attempting to hold the church together with the flawed stones of human tradition and the untempered mortar of carnality.

In spite of all the machinations of men, however, God has made His Son *“the Head of the corner,”* placing Him in the most strategic position, giving Him the most important work, and depositing all the fulness of Himself in the Son. All of the resources are with Him. All of the judgment is with Him. Everything depends upon Him.

THIS WAS THE LORD’S DOING. The thing that is marvelous is not what men did in rejecting Christ, but what God did in exalting Him. In the interest of pleasing the father, Jesus submitted to the worst men could do, the worst the devil could do, and the worst the combined powers of darkness could do. In addition, He submitted to the curse of God, to being *“made sin for us,”* and to the ravages of the last enemy, death. He even did this in a weakened state, as everything came to bear upon him when He was *“crucified through weakness”* (2 Cor 13:4). And now, God has placed Him in the highest position, exalting Him above all, and putting all things under His feet.

Therefore, those who for any reason reject Jesus, have sided with those who were His *“murderers.”* They have despised Him becoming a curse, and being made sin for us. They have despised his sufferings and His death, and rejected Him in the capacity of the Cornerstone and Foundation Stone. Both Matthew and Luke record Jesus adding that whoever does not fall upon Him as the Stone, will be ground by Him *“into powder”* (Matt 21:44; Lk 20:18).

IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES. It is marvelous to see that all the powers of earth and hell could not delay the exaltation of Jesus for so much as a single second! Those with faith and understanding submit to Jesus because of who He is, as well as what He has done.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 128

“ Mark 12:12 And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way. 13 And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. 14 And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest for no man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? 15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? bring Me a penny, that I may see it. 16 And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's. 17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at Him.”

(Mark 12:12-17; Matthew 21:45; 22:15-22; Luke 20:19-26)

INTRODUCTION

As the time when Jesus will lay down His life draws nearer, the opposition against Him increases. Now, His enemies become more aggressive, and the potential distractions become more numerous. All of this is by design. Prior to this, because Christ's “*hour had not yet come*” (John 2:4; John 7:30; 8:20), efforts against Him were frustrated. Because of this, His enemies were more hesitant to press their opposition against Him, for they “*feared Him*” because the people were astonished at His doctrine (Mk 11:18). Even in this text, they drew back from their opposition “*because they feared the people*” (Mk 12:12; Lk 20:19). Yet, that fear appears to be diminishing, as they will become more bold in their opposition to him. Their efforts to snare Him will increase as they employ all manner of craftiness against Him. However, this is only due to the nearness of the hour, when God will allot a period of time to the powers of darkness to do their worst. In this, we catch a glimpse of the scope of Jesus laying down His life. This was not confined to His death on the cross, but included submitting to be vulnerable to His enemies. He allowed them to approach more frequently, for He knew that His death was going to be fulfilled by the very people among whom He had ministered. Yet, none of this turned the Lord from His mission, as He maintained a sound and focused mind.

“ Mark 12:12 And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way.”

Behold how the truth Jesus has spoken agitates His enemies! Also, behold also how Jesus has no concern about it. He is “*meek and lowly in heart,*” but not before those who have no appetite for the truth. He invites people to come and learn from Him – but no such invitation is given to these men. That belongs to those who “*labor and are heavy laden*” (Matt 11:28). One's quest to reach the lost must be tempered with this understanding, else there will be a temptation to modify the truth in order to please men.

THEY SOUGHT TO LAY HOLD ON HIM. The “*they*” of this text are “*the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders*” who had questioned Him (Mk 11:27). These were the Temple authorities, and Jesus was, they thought, in their domain. In seeking some way to “*lay hold of Him,*” these men were trying to find a reason to arrest Him, and get Him out of the public limelight. He was disrupting their sway over the people, and impacting upon their religious careers. Further, they could not deal with Him in the public, so they sought some means to sequester Him, so they could do what they wanted to do with Him. These efforts started earlier – about midway through Christ’s ministry (John 7:25,30,44). Now, these efforts are accelerating.

The very fact that they had to seek to do this is a commentary on the marvelous power of Jesus. It is as though His glory formed a buffer zone around Him, so that none could put a hand upon Him until He consented for such a thing to happen. And, indeed, the time will come when He will do this – the time when the “*hour*” would come when He was to lay down His life, making Himself vulnerable to the powers of darkness and wicked men. However, until that time came, the best His enemies could do was make vain attempts to remove Him from the people.

THEY FEARED THE PEOPLE. They “*feared the people*” because they were all “*astonished at*” Christ’s “*doctrine*” (Mk 11:18). That is, His teaching stood out above everything they had heard from others, and they were attracted to it. John the Baptist had paved the way for this response, himself standing out as a prophet among the people (Mk 11:32). In so doing, he was preparing the way for the Lord with a message. Here is an example of the earth helping the woman, as depicted in Revelation 12:16. That is, those who heard the words of Jesus were used by God to hold back the intentions of wicked men.

THEY KNEW! The reason for their hostility is that “*they knew that He had spoken the parable against them*.” Matthew reads, “*they perceived that He spoke of them*” (Matt 21:45). Luke reads, “*for they perceived that He had spoken this parable against them*” (Luke 20:19). Jesus had not mentioned them, and yet they knew He was speaking about them. They were “*the husbandmen*” who had rejected the servants of God, and would even kill His Son. Like a sharp two-edged sword, Christ’s words had deciphered the thoughts and intents of their hearts, even dividing asunder the soul and the spirit, so that the secrets of their hearts were exposed.

These men were hard-hearted, but they were not unintelligent. Their hearts were corrupt, and yet they were not incapable of drawing valid conclusions. While others “*wondered at His gracious words*” (Lk 4:22), they were convicted by them. In intention, they were like “*brute beasts*” (Jude 1:10), but according to appearance they were religious dignitaries and scholars of the Scriptures.

There is a vast difference between intellectualism and spiritual discernment. Those who operate with only natural abilities can see a lot, but not enough to be saved. They can conclude many things, but not the essential things. They know enough to understand Jesus is against them, but cannot do anything about it, and do not even care to do so. I have personally known several people in this category. They know enough to understand when the truth is exposing them, yet it only makes them more determined to get rid of the truth, like these men sought to get rid of Jesus.

This is the danger of religious scholars – scribes – rising to ascendancy within the church. When scholarship and position become of paramount importance, the church has fallen upon hard times. Scribes and Pharisees could not manage the truth in Jesus’ day, and they cannot do so today. It requires men of purity of heart, who have a love of the truth, and are engaging in a quest to lay hold on eternal life, to properly lead the people.

THEY LEFT HIM AND WENT THEIR WAY. The words are almost identical to what is said of Satan when he had failed in his temptation of Jesus: “*Then the devil leaveth Him*” (Matt 4:11), and “*And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season*” (Luke 4:13). Like the devil, they did not change their minds, but left in frustration to regroup and prepare for another assault. **Christ’s presence was making them worse and worse.** They were perishing, and Jesus was bringing their destiny to the surface, exposing their hearts, yet not changing them – giving them things to see, yet not comprehend.

“**13** *And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch Him in his words. 14 And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest for no man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? 15a Shall we give, or shall we not give?”*

TEMPTATION BY PROXY. Having failed in their attempts to snare the Lord, the chief priests, scribes, and elders now send representatives to speak for them – temptation by proxy. The strange blend of the group they sent betrays the nature of false religion. The group consisted of representatives from the Pharisees, and from the Herodians. The Pharisees were religious ascetics – like monks, who led a separated life, and had a penchant for strict rules and a hard-and-fast disciplined life. Paul referred to the Pharisees as “*the strictest sect of our religion*” NKJV (Acts 26:5). Little is known of the Herodians. Yet, as their name implies, they were primarily a political sect. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia says of them: “They were not a religious sect, but, as the name implies, a court or political party, supporters of the dynasty of Herod. Nothing is known of them beyond what the Gospels state. Whatever their political aims, they early perceived that Christ's pure and spiritual teaching on the kingdom of God was irreconcilable with these, and that Christ's influence with the people was antagonistic to their interests.” A strange set of bedfellows, indeed – the strictest religious sect, and a highly partisan political sect, joining together in opposition to Christ. The reason is that He preached a Kingdom that threatened them both. Early in Christ’s ministry the Pharisees took counsel with the Herodians against Jesus, how they might kill Him (Mk 3:6). Now, the Temple authorities employ this motley group to aid them in their diabolical purpose. Luke says these men were “*spies, which should feign themselves just men*” (Lk 20:20).

TO CATCH HIM IN HIS WORDS. They seek to trap Jesus in His words – to tie Him up in technicalities so He will say something foolish. Luke says they “*sought to take hold of His words, so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor*” (Lk 20:20). They are not seeking to justify their own religious traditions, but now seek to drag the cause into the political court – to get Jesus to say something that will show He is opposed to the Roman government. That will justify the involvement of the government in their cause.

A GLOWING INTRODUCTION. They must have worked a while on their introduction, for it is a remarkable one. They will appeal to religious pride, which was so dominant among themselves. They address Him as a teacher – “*Master,*” or Teacher. They appeal to His character – “*we know Thou art true, and carest for no man.*” They laud Him for having proper motives – “*for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth.*” Luke reads, “*Thou sayest and teachest rightly . . . but teachest the way of God truly*” (Lk 20:21). The psalmist spoke of men who “*flatter with their tongue*” (Psa 5:9). That is, they entice in order to gain a wicked advantage. Elsewhere the Psalmist says, “*Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues*” (Psa 78:36). Like the woman possessed by a spirit of divination, they said the right words, but for the wrong reason (Acts 16:17). These men thought Jesus was like themselves. Thus, if they appealed to His pride, He would weaken, and say something foolish, or in

haste. If they weakened Him by bragging on Him, they could bring Him into their court, where they could gain an advantage over Him. A foolish thought, indeed. Yet, the flesh cannot reason in any other way.

SHOULD WE, OR SHOULD WE NOT? Since the nation was being occupied by the Romans, taxes, or tribute, would be a good subject. Here is an area, they reasoned, where they could get Jesus to say He was not in favor of supporting Rome. After all, He had spoken of another Kingdom, and surely this was an area where He would come out against the governing politic of the land. *“Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?”* Matthew says they asked, *“What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?”* (Matt 22:17). Surely they have the Lord trapped now – “Yes or no!” One or the other. If Jesus says, “Yes,” He will appear as a bad Jew, and one whose answer contradicted His teaching about God’s Kingdom. If He says “No,” He will be seen as a political rebel and insurrectionist, and thus subject to arrest and questioning by the authorities of Rome. So far as the flesh is concerned, the question has been thought out well, and cannot possibly be ignored. After all, it is a public question. Surely it will force Jesus to so divulge Himself before the multitude that He will be seen as inconsistent. Either He is an inconsiderate Jew, or a rebellious subject of the Roman Empire – and either one will serve His enemies well. Will the report go out that Jesus is advocating submission to Rome, or that He is promoting resistance to it? They think they have Jesus cornered.

However, all questions cannot be answered with a simple “Yes” or “No.” There are questions that require a discerning answer, not an impulsive one. A good answer must be supported by sound reason, bringing no reproach upon God, or those He has ordained.

“15b But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? bring Me a penny, that I may see it. 16 And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar's. 17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at Him.”

KNOWING THEIR HYPOCRISY. Matthew says Jesus perceived *“their wickedness”* (Matt 20:18). Luke says He perceived *“their craftiness”* (Lk 20:23). A naive person might imagine these men were very sincere, for they feigned themselves to be *“just men,”* using all of right words, taking the proper approach, and framing their question as though they were interested in what was right. Such an appearance, however, was pretentious, and there was not an ounce of truth in it. Jesus knew their hypocrisy. They were just acting, for so the word hypocrisy means. They were wearing a religious mask, pretending to be men who wanted to do what was right before God. But that is not the kind of men they were, and Jesus knew it.

Scripture confirms God’s total intolerance of hypocrites – those who pretend they have an interest in the Lord, yet, in fact, do not. Isaiah emphatically declares that such people will not receive mercy (Isa 9:17). Jesus said hypocrites drew nigh to God with their mouth, but their hearts were far from Him (Matt 15:7-8). He said they had a portion in Hell, where there is *“weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt 24:51). Paul said that the departure from the faith – spiritual Babylon – would be attended by speaking *“lies in hypocrisy”* – that is, maintaining a religious appearance, while giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim 4:1-2).

WHY TEMPT YE ME? Why are you putting me to the test? Why are you testing me to see what I will say? Why are you scrutinizing Me? Their own Law stated, *“thou shalt not tempt the Lord your God”* (Deut 6:16). That is, You shall not provoke the Lord by trying His patience, or attempting to do things that are not well pleasing His sight. When men venture into forbidden areas, imagining God will protect them, they are tempting Him. These men, even though they are standing before the

Master Teacher tempt Him with a question, the answer of which they have already determined for themselves.

BRING ME A PENNY. Jesus asks for a coin to be brought to Him. If He possessed a lot of money, as some allege, this would not have been necessary. Other versions read “*denarius*” (which is a transliteration, for there is no English equivalent for this word). This was the principal silver coin of the Roman empire. As to its monetary value, it is generally understood to have been equivalent to a day’s wages, as indicated in Matthew 20:2. Here, however, the value is not the point.

WHOSE IS THE IMAGE? Jesus asks them whose image, or likeness, is on the coin, and whose superscription, or name, is inscribed on the coin. At the right is a reproduction of the kind of coin that was given to Jesus, bearing both the image and name of the Emperor, Tiberius Caesar Augustus, who was the Emperor at the time of our text. He is mentioned in Luke 3:1.

RENDER UNTO CAESAR. “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.*” To “*render*” means to give, restore or yield back. In other words, the thing bearing the image belongs to the one whose image it bears. This is the principle of all money or coinage. It is owned by the one whose image and name it bears. The question, therefore, was a foolish question, for the money belonged to Caesar in the first place. If you have ever wondered why you should pay taxes, this is the answer to your question.

RENDER UNTO GOD. Now, Jesus takes occasion to point out their utter hypocrisy. They are to render, or give back to God, the things that belong to Him. And what are those things? The persons themselves are what is to be given, for they bear “*the image of God*” (Gen 1:27; 9:6). They also bear His superscription, or name, in that they have been purchased, and do not belong to themselves (1 Cor 6:19). This once and for all throws down the imagination that men are free outside of Christ. God has made them, and He has purchased them. His image is upon them, and they are obligated to Him in every way. They are in His world, and are being sustained by His power. What pretension it is, therefore, for them to live as though He did not exist.

THEY MARVELED AT HIM. The questioners were nonplused by Christ’s answer. Mark says they “*marveled,*” or were astounded, at it. Matthew says “*they left Him, and went their way*” (Matt 22:22). Luke says “*they could not take hold of His words before the people: and they marveled at His answer, and held their peace*” (Luke 20:26). He exposed their ignorance, as well as their hypocrisy. He left them speechless, with nothing more to say.

It ought to be noted that those who seek answers to life’s perplexing problems, ought to seek first to know the proper questions. It is not on the part of wisdom to come to Jesus with all kinds of questions. That kind of posture suggests that Jesus has not been seen correctly. He is primarily a Teacher, not an Answerer – which means, He has a message to deliver.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 128

“ Mark 12:18 Then come unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked Him, saying, 19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.”

(Mark 12:18-25; Matthew 22:23-30; Luke 20:27-36)

INTRODUCTION

The time is drawing very near when Jesus will observe the Passover with His disciples, and Himself become the ultimate Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7). As He approaches the hour, just as when He was twelve years of age, He is in the Temple going about His Father's business (Lk 2:49). This time, however, He is not hearing the doctors and asking questions as He did when He was but twelve years old – when He was increasing “*in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*” (Lk 2:52). Now, He is the matured Son of God in whom “*all fulness*” dwelt, possessing the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Now He is the Master Teacher, and the students are asking Him the questions. Even now, however, He has not made Himself available to the masses for fielding a variety of questions – as John the Baptist did in the wilderness, when He received questions from the people, the publicans, and the soldiers (Lk 3:10-14). In Christ's conduct we are given an example of what it means to set our affection on things above (Col 3:1-2), do all things unto the Lord (Col 3:17), and “*be obedient in all things*” (2 Cor 2:9). Although He finally isolates Himself from all of the people, He first spends time in the Temple, among the chosen people, teaching them more perfectly in the ways of the Lord. He maintains an intense interest in the place set aside for the Lord – His “*Father's house*” (John 2:16), making Himself available to the people in that environment.

“ Mark 12:18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.”

THEN COME THE SADDUCEES. Matthew says this incident occurred on “*the same day*” as the question concerning paying taxes (Matt 22:23). The Sadducees are mentioned nine times in the Gospels (Matt 3:7; 16:1,6,11,12; 22:23,34; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27), and five times in Acts (4:1; 5:17; 23:6,7,8). Nothing good is ever said about them. John the Baptist referred to them as a “*generation of vipers*” (Matt 3:7). They “*tempted*” Jesus with crafty questions (Matt 16:1). Jesus told His disciples to beware of their teaching (Matt 16:11-12). They opposed the twelve apostles (Acts 4:1; 5:17), and Paul as well (Acts 23:6-8).

There is such a thing as a group that is fundamentally corrupt, and within which it is most difficult to take hold of the truth. The Sadducees are an example of such a group, as well as the Pharisees, Scribes, and Lawyers of Jesus’ day. These were religion bodies of people who had embraced erroneous views – views that distinguished them as a group. In order for anyone within these groups to take hold of the truth, they had to actually overcome the group of which they were a part. These were generally respected groups, held in high regard by the religious community. Paul is an example of one who triumphed over such a group.

WHICH SAY THERE IS NO RESURRECTION. The Scriptures point out that the Sadducees said “*there is no resurrection*” – that is, their teaching, or doctrine, was built upon this premise. This is mentioned no less than four times (Matt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27; Acts 23:8). Therefore, it is possible for a conservative religious community to have members who actually deny the basics of the religion they profess to have embraced. In modern Christendom, this would involve leaders who deny the truth of justification by faith, the judgment of all men, conscious life after death, and the public and glorious coming of Jesus, etc.

THE PROPENSITIES OF AN ACADEMIC RELIGION. There are certain inclinations that are awakened by an academic approach to religion. By *academic*, I mean an approach to truth that is **based** upon the formal study of what men have said about truth – as opposed to being based upon faith. Such an approach tends to be theoretical or speculative, and assigns too much weight to human reasoning and logic. Human traditions and rules are adopted that diminish the importance of the truth itself. In fact, such things take the place of the truth, and are treated as though they are equal with Scripture. For the Sadducees, an example of such teaching is that “*there is no resurrection.*” In our day examples are “the thousand year reign of Christ,” “soul sleeping,” “God loves everyone the same,” etc. – all of which are anchored in human understanding, not Divine affirmation.

A TECHNICAL QUESTION. The question posed by the Sadducees was a highly complicated one. No doubt they considered it to be well thought out. The question itself was based upon the law of Moses (Deut 25:5-10). The purpose of the Moses’ command was to maintain a godly lineage among the Israelites, which nation would bring forth the Messiah. The Law described fleshly brothers dwelling in the same place, with one of them dying and leaving no children behind. The brother of the dead husband was to “*perform the duty of an husband’s brother,*” so that a son would “*succeed in the name of the brother*” who had died. In that way the name of the dead brother would not be “*put out of Israel,*” or no longer exist. If the brother refused to do this, the elders of his city called him and the wife before them, confirming that he did not care to take his brother’s wife as his own. The woman then removed one of his shoes, spit in his face, and said “*So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his father’s house.*” The name of that man would then be called, “*The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.*” An example of a man who refused to do this is Onan, brother to a man whom God killed because he was wicked. When Judah told him to marry his brother’s wife and raise up seed to him, Onan refused, and the Lord killed

him also (Gen 38:7-10). The Law also allowed for a near kinsman to take the place of a brother, if the dead man had no brethren (Num 27:11). A case involving this is found in Ruth, who was taken as the wife of Boaz, a “*near kinsman*” (Ruth 2:1; 3:9-13; 4:1-14).

Now, from those rules, the Sadducees concocted a scenario in which seven consecutive brothers took a woman to wife, seeking to raise up seed for the one before them who had died. Although they did not believe there was a resurrection, and thinking to stump Jesus, they asked whose wife the woman would be in the resurrection, having been married to seven different men – none of which produced a son, supposedly further complicating the situation.

“ 23 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?”

JESUS ANSWERED. Jesus will not ignore public questions – assaults on the truth that are expressed among the people. This is because erroneous views – particularly when they are expressed publicly – have a defiling effect. Paul spoke of a particular false teaching that affirmed “*the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some*” (2 Tim 2:18). Jesus warned His disciples, “*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*” He was speaking “*of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*” – what they taught (Mk 16:11-12). Their teaching tended to permeate and defile the thinking of the people, corrupting their thoughts like leprosy finally contaminates the whole body. Therefore, Jesus will not dismiss their doctrine as though it would fall to the ground by itself. In a sterling example for all who would lead the people of God, he will cast down this imagination, and pull down this stronghold, lest it continue to corrupt the people (2 Cor 10:4-5). The Sadducees have asked a foolish question publicly. Therefore, in the interest of the glory of God and the people, Jesus will expose them openly. They were driven by ignoble motives, and were thus richly deserving of this sound rebuke and unvarnished exposure.

DO NOT YE THEREFORE ERR? Other versions have Jesus saying they were “*mistaken,*” NKJV “*in error,*” NIV “*wrong,*” NRSV “*go astray,*” CSB “*deceived,*” GWN “*misled,*” NAB and “*wander out of the way and go wrong.*” AMPLIFIED Their question was driven by a flawed theology, which was the result of their deception. They had not received the love of the truth, and were therefore deceived by strong delusion. To “*err*” is to veer off the path, and commence going in the wrong direction. When such a distraction takes place, there is no possible way to arrive at a right conclusion. The “*broad*” way – which is the totally wrong way, even though it pretends to offer more alternatives – **always** leads to “*destruction*” (Matt 7:13). Truth cannot be obtained by flawed means, for a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. It is not possible for people to be saved or illuminated by means of false doctrine. A doctrine, or teaching, that is pointed in the wrong direction cannot produce truly godly people.

YE KNOW NOT THE SCRIPTURES. Other versions read, “*you do not understand the Scriptures,*” NASB and “*have no knowledge of the holy writings.*” BBE These men did have an academic knowledge of the Scriptures, else they could not have framed their question. In fact their familiarity with the Scriptures was far in advance of the average American churchman. Yet, they did not comprehend the Scriptures. Their theology had placed a mental template over the Scriptures so they could only see what they wanted to see. That is the result of deception – it distorts the way the Scriptures are read and understood. For example, ancient Job spoke of the resurrection of the dead (Job 14:12-15; 19:25-27). David spoke of it also (Psa 16:9-10; 17:15; 49:15). Isaiah prophesied of the resurrection (Isa 25:8; 26:19). Ezekiel depicted the resurrection in the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14) – a spiritual teaching that would have made no sense at all if there was no resurrection. Daniel also spoke of the resurrection of the dead (Dan 12:1-2; 12:13), as well as did Hosea (Hos

13:14). The Scriptures in the hands of the Sadducees provided the record of three people being raised from the dead. (1) The son of the widow of Zarephath – 1 Kgs 17:17-23, (2) The son of the Shunammite woman – 2 Kgs 4:32-37, and (3) the body of a young man that was thrown into the grave of Elisha – 2 Kgs 13:21. At this time, Jesus had already raised the dead son of a widow from Nain(), Lk 7:12-15), Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:49-55), and Lazarus (John 11:43-44). Also, Jesus had previously taught about the resurrection of the dead (Lk 14:14; John 5:19; John 11:24-25). Yet, these men formed their doctrine just as though these texts were not in the Scripture at all. As if that was not enough, they stubbornly clung to their doctrine even though it contradicted Scripture, had been disproved by at least three resurrections within the last two years, and was exposed as false through the public teaching of Jesus.

The minds of these men had been blinded – that is why they had no effective knowledge of the Scriptures. What seemed clear beyond all controversy to those with faith, was totally obscured to the Sadducees, and no amount of explanation could clarify the truth to them. Those who insist on adopting a sectarian view of the truth will fall into the same snare, for God will not permit such people to see or profit from His truth. The Divine commentary on the positions and lives of such people is that they “*err*,” going astray.

YE KNOW NOT THE POWER OF GOD. Not only were they wrong about Scripture, they were wrong about God as well. They had no acquaintance with His power, which is the means by which the dead will be raised. There are still those who deny the possibility of what God is declared to do, assigning mystical meanings to such things as the resurrection of the dead. Such views are the result of being ignorant of the greatness of God's power – a power that has been most fully exhibited in the resurrection of Christ. Those who know the power of God in truth acknowledge that with God, “*nothing is impossible*” (Lk 1:37). Such know the power of God.

“ 25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.”

Jesus will proceed to affirm the truth. He will not argue with these men, for their position is altogether fictitious. They are willingly ignorant, and therefore Jesus will not discuss the subject with them. He will rather declare the truth of the matter.

WHEN THEY SHALL RISE. Jesus declares, “*they shall rise from the dead!*” Matthew records Him simply replying, “*in the resurrection*” (Matt 22:29). The Lord addresses the subject in view of the total foolishness of the Sadducees' position. He does not give them credit for being either right or honest, and gives their view no dignity. There is not the remotest chance that their theology was correct – that “*there is no resurrection.*” You may recall that their teaching would even penetrate into the Grecian world, being taught in the Corinthian church. Paul challenged those people with this question: “*how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*” (1 Cor 15:12-13). The absurdity of the view that there is no resurrection of the dead is also seen in Paul's words to Agrippa: “*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*” (Acts 26:8). The position cannot be justified on any level. It is foolish, even at the academic point, which is the lowest view of the truth of God. In fact, the only way this view can be adopted is to be ignorant of the Scriptures and the power of God.

Notice how Jesus speaks – with certitude and confidence: “*when they shall rise from the dead.*” Thus He holds the doctrine of the Sadducees up to derision because there is no sense in it. Our day requires a return to this kind of spiritual candidness – particularly regarding the resurrection of the dead. I have personally witnessed a number of expressions from purported Christian men that

smacked of the religion of the Sadducees. I well remember the recent funeral of a venerated saint of God in which one of the speakers declared funerals were a sort of mystery and disappointment to him. He confessed that he marveled that the one whom he was honoring had confessed a season of exhilaration at a funeral in which hope was being lauded and the expectation of eternity promoted. I fear this kind of view is not as uncommon as some imagine.

Notice the certitude of Christ's words concerning the raising of the dead. "*the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*" (John 5:28-29). Paul speaks with the same confidence and firmness: "*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*" (1 Cor 15:52). Again he affirms, "*the dead in Christ shall rise*" (1 Thess 4:17). The day of judgment postulates the raising of the dead (Rev 20:13), so that a denial of the resurrection constitutes a denial of the day of judgment as well. The fact that these are not common subjects in the contemporary church is itself proof that its leaders have gone astray, erring like the Sadducees. It is not possible that something of the magnitude of the resurrection the dead could be glossed or neglected by anyone with understanding!

NEITHER MARRY NOR ARE GIVEN IN MARRIAGE. Luke provides these additional words of Jesus, "*The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage*" (Luke 20:34). Resurrection, however, does not have to do with this world, but "*the world to come*" (Lk 20:35). Therefore, those who affirm the saints are coming back with Jesus to rule in this present world could not possibly be more wrong. After their death, and in the resurrection, they will "*obtain that world,*" not this one (Lk 20:35).

Now Jesus exposes the absurdity of the position of the Sadducees. Their question completely ignored the fact that there is no marriage following the resurrection. Marriage is something established in view of mortality, and the resurrection of the dead has to do with immortality. One of the primary reasons for marriage is procreation, or the continuance of the human race (Gen 1:28; 9:1). Whatever the relationship of those who were one married is in the world to come, it will **not** be one of marriage. Should both parties obtain that world, their relationship with one another will be vastly superior to the one they had in the flesh.

THEY ARE AS THE ANGELS. Jesus goes on to say that the resurrection will result in a similarity to the angels – at least in the matter of marriage. Luke adds, "*Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*" (Luke 20:36). As Paul declared, death will be "*swallowed up in victory*" when we "*put on immortality*" (1 Cor 15:53-54). Equality with the angels is in this regard: "*neither can they die any more.*" That is precisely why they "*neither marry nor are given in marriage.*"

Thus you see the ridiculousness of the Sadducees' question, and how their spiritual stupidity and corrupt hearts were exposed by it. They spoke as though God had been silent on the matter of the resurrection, thus making it purely a matter of conjecture.

Valid questions must integrate with the truth of God. If they are merely speculative – which many religious questions are – they are nothing more than the expression of error.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 130

“ Mark 12:26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.” (Mark 12:26-27; Matthew 22:31-33; Luke 20:37-38)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was God “*manifest in the flesh*” (1 Tim 3:16). For this reason His name was called “*Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us*” (Matt 1:23). This was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14: “*Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel*” (Isa 7:14). This name, however, was never used in reference to Jesus after His birth – either in addressing Him personally, or in the doctrine of His Person. It is a name that is known by spiritual intuition and insight. Paul expressed it to Timothy in the words “*God manifest in the flesh.*” He also spoke of it to the Colossians, declaring, “*For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell*” (Col 1:19), and “*For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*” (Col 2:9). Again, it is affirmed in the book of Hebrews: “*Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person . . .*” (Heb 1:3). The term “*Son of God*” also stresses this reality (John 5:18). John also points to this truth doctrinally when he wrote, “*And the Word was made flesh*” (John 1:14). Yet, serious disciples eventually become keenly aware of the obscurity of this truth in the professed Christian community. The words of Jesus, although the precise expression of the mind of God, are regularly brushed aside as though this were not the case. Some even teach that Jesus preached and taught as a Jew under the Law, and that His words have no part in the New Covenant. This is a most serious error, and reflects a state of spiritual blindness and alienation. We have in this text a sterling example of the weight of Christ’s words, as well as the perspective from which He spoke. We will find in them a destructive blow to some very contemporary theology. Because of the aloofness of the modern church from God, these words will have a somewhat strange and irrelevant sound to them. Some may even dismiss them as too weighty. However, these words address foundational matters that must be understood.

“ Mark 12:26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?”

Although the Sadducees have not mentioned their doctrine – namely, that there is “*no resurrection*” (Mk 12:18) – Jesus will not fail to confront them with their error. Theirs was a materialistic religion, for they also denied the existence of angels and spirits (Acts 23:8). We have no Scriptural record of any of their number promoting their doctrine, or precisely how it was stated. It may even be possible that their **omission** of teaching on angels and spirits

constituted a denial of their existence. If that is the case, it brings the matter very close to our time. Josephus, Jewish historian, says this of the doctrine of the Sadducees: they “take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades.” Jewish Wars, book ii. chapter 8, section 14 and “The doctrine of the Sadducees is this, that souls die with the bodies.” Antiq., book 18, chapter 1, section 4 The point to be seen here is that Jesus would not ignore their erroneous teachings, but boldly confronts them. They have not mentioned their foolish teaching, but He will do so. That is His manner.

AS TOUCHING THE DEAD. What is the state of “*the dead?*” Are they non-existent, as the Sadducees taught? Or are they unconscious, or in a state of inactivity, as the Adventists and soul-sleepers teach? Were expressions of the ancients, prior to “*life and immortality*” being brought to light, the ultimate statements concerning “*the dead?*” Here are some examples of the statements of reference. “*For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?*” (Psa 6:5). “*The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence*” (Psa 115:17). “*For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten*” (Eccl 9:5). “*For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth*” (Isa 38:18). If we do not consider these texts in view of the Gospel, we will not understand them.

These words reflect the absence of illumination concerning “*life and immortality*” (2 Tim 1:10). The words are true, but are spoken with life in this world in mind. The idea seen in them is that men must devote themselves whole-heartedly to the Lord while they can. They do not address the matter of existence or consciousness after death. Even with all of that, holy men have always known there was going to be a resurrection (Job 14:12-15; 19:25-27; Psa 16:9-10; 97:15; 49:15; Isa 25:8; 26:19; Dan 12:2-3; 12:13; Hos 13:14).

In expressing the words “*the dead,*” Jesus indicates that those who have died are still recognized as people. They are not non-existent. The word “*dead*” refers to the body, which is vacated at death, when the soul departs from it (Gen 35:18).

THE BOOK OF MOSES. This confirms that Moses wrote the first books of the Bible. Thus the Jewish Scriptures are described as “*Moses and the Prophets*” (Lk 16:29,31; Acts 26:22; 28:23), and “*the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms*” (Lk 24:44).

IN THE BUSH. This refers to the calling of Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage (Ex 3:2-4:23). Exodus says “*the angel of the Lord appeared*” unto Moses “*in a flame of fire out of the bush*” (Ex 3:2). Stephen also refers to this angel (Acts 7:30). Yet, the message delivered by the angel was from the Lord God Himself. Therefore the text reads, “*the Lord saw . . . God called unto him . . . I am the God . . . the Lord said . . . Moses said unto God . . . God said unto Moses . . . the Lord said unto him,*” etc. This also has been God’s consistent manner – whatever a messenger, whether man or angel, said in the name of the Lord is declared to have been said by God Himself. Thus the blasphemy of those who say men wrote the Bible, not God, is seen for what it really is.

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB. Matthew reads that Jesus preceded these words by saying, “*touching the resurrection of the dead*” (Matt 22:31). Luke says, “*that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush*” (Lk 20:37). Thus Jesus throws their doctrine down to the ground, showing that it contradicts what God has clearly said.

God identified Himself to Moses by saying, “*I am the God of thy father, the God of*

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:6). God so identified Himself because He had especially revealed Himself to the fathers (**Abraham** : Gen 12:1-18; 13:14; 17:9-15; 18:13-17; 21:12; **Isaac** : Gen 25:11; 46:1; 48:15; **Jacob** : Gen 28:13-16; 31:3,11-13; 32:28-30). **God chose to be known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – long after they had died and been gathered unto their people** . He did not say He was their God in the past, but that He was their God at the present, even when He was speaking (Ex 2:24; 6:3; Deut 6:10; 1 Kgs 18:36; 1 Chron 29:18; 30:6; Matt 22:32; Acts 3:13; 7:32). Here, Jesus also speaks in the present tense: “**I AM the God of . . .**”

At the time of “*the bush*,” Abraham had been dead for 329 years, Isaac for 224 years, and Jacob for 198 years. Yet, God said He was still their God. We conclude, therefore, that they had not ceased to exist, but were somewhere in subjection to God and in communion with Him.

“ 27a He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. . . ”

Because Jesus is the Expositor of God, we should expect Him to speak with unparalleled understanding concerning His nature. Men may speculate and philosophize about God, but Jesus reveals both His character and His manners. We do well, therefore, to give our undivided attention to Him. He now speaks of the God “*with whom we have to do*” (Heb 4:13).

HE IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD. Matthew reads, “ *God is not the God of the dead*” (Matt 22:32). Do not the Scriptures speak of the Lord in respect to “*the quick*” [living] “*and the dead*” (2 Tim 4:1; 1 Pet 4:5)? How is it, therefore, that Jesus says God is **not** the God of the dead? In this case “*the dead*” are those who are no longer framed with mortality. “*Dead*” is not equated with non-existence or a lack of awareness and sensitivity, as the Sadducees taught. The fact that those who die leave this world does not mean they pass into oblivion, or that they no longer are responsive. John saw some people who were dead through martyrdom, yet were under the altar of God, and they were asking questions and receiving answers (Rev 6:9-11). Jesus spoke of two men who were conscious and aware of their circumstances after they died (Lk 16:22-31). It will do no good to say Christ’s words were a parable, for even if they were, parables are likenesses that are real, not ones that are fictitious.

In these words, Jesus is saying that there is a sense in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are **not** dead. While there is, indeed, a part of them that is dead, there is also a part that is **not** dead. The raising of the dead is actually the reuniting of the unseen part of man with the body – then an immortal body. Jesus’ argument is that conscious and responsive personalities will be raised from the dead, not sleeping, inactive, or unconscious ones.

Paul said that when he died he would be “*absent from the body*,” yet “*present with the Lord*” – not eventually, but at the time he left his body (2 Cor 5:8). He knew that God was “*not the God of the dead*.” That is, no one is “*with the Lord*” without an awareness of it.

A word needs to be said here concerning the purported identity of God with dead religious movements. God is not the God of past movements, former days, etc. At no point does God associate Himself with the dead – past or present! Those who can only glory in the last, by that very posture, confess their alienation from the God of the living!

THE GOD OF THE LIVING. In these words, Jesus is affirming that Abraham, Isaac, Jesus represented Abraham talking hundreds of years after he had died (Lk 16:25). Peter, James, and John saw Moses over 1,500 years after he had died. For that matter, in order to confirm that life in this world is not the only life, both Enoch and Elijah were translated into

the unseen world without dying (Heb 11:5; 2 Kgs 2:11-13). Peter, James, and John also saw Elijah speaking with Jesus about His death – something about which the prophet had never spoken while in the world (Lk 9:31). Nothing in Scripture suggests these men ceased to exist. Translation presupposes movement to another area. These two men left this world, yet did not cease to exist. That throws down the notion that there is no consciousness after men leave this world. That is not even to mention Jesus, who is no longer in this world, yet is very much alive and active.

The resurrection will be of those who **exist**, not of those who do **not**. After they die, and prior to the resurrection, their bodies are dead, and “*rest*” in the grave. Their spirits, however, live on. For the righteous, there is advancement, learning, and growth, as confirmed in Abraham, Moses, and Elijah. For the wicked, there is torment and painful recollection, as confirmed in the rich man of Luke sixteen. There is a very definite sense in which they are all alive.

ALL LIVE UNTO HIM. Who are “*the living?*” Luke provides some insight into this matter. He records Jesus adding, “*For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him*” (Luke 20:38). Other versions read, “*to Him all are alive,*” NIV “*to Him all of them are alive,*” NRSV “*In God's sight all people are living,*” GWN “*to Him everyone is alive,*” NJB and “*they are alive [not dead] unto Him [in definite relationship to Him].*” **AMPLIFIED**

At death, men pass from this world, but they do not move away from God. God does not preside over insensitive creatures – that would be an affront, or insult, to His Godhood. How is it possible for God to be “*over all*” if there is a natural experience that moves a person beyond the awareness of and submission to His Person? Such a doctrine, though commonly held by many professing Christians, presents a distorted view of God Himself. All men remain accountable to God, whether in the body or out of the body. God does not relinquish His Sovereignty for a season to death. Death is an experience to which humanity is subject. However, it is not one that interferes with the government of God over the individual. So far as God is concerned, there is no death. That is, there is no experience that can put a person beyond the reach of Divine influence. That is precisely why David said it was not possible to get away from the presence of the Lord. He spoke of the extremities of heaven and hades, saying that neither place could possibly put him away from God (Psa 139:7-8). For the wicked, final removal from God will occur when Jesus comes (2 Thess 1:9).

“ 27b . . . ye therefore do greatly err.”

Jesus takes hold of the doctrinal house of the Sadducees and shakes it down to the ground. The superstructure of their theology was wrong because they were ignorant of God Himself. They saw God as presiding only over men in the flesh, and viewed matter as the primary substance. But they were wrong. They had failed to consider the vast heavenly host that surrounds the Lord (Lk 2:13; Heb 12:22; Rev 4:4; 5:11; 7:11), the “*spirits of just men made perfect*” (Heb 12:23), and “*principalities and powers in heavenly places*” (Eph 3:10).

GREATLY ERR. Jesus does not simply say they made a mistake, or did not understand, or did not think deeply enough. He said that did “*greatly err.*” Other versions read, “*greatly mistaken,*” NKJV “*badly mistaken,*” NIV “*quite wrong,*” NRSV “*going far astray,*” CJB “*badly deceived,*” CSB “*greatly misled,*” NAB “*you have made a serious error,*” NLT and “*you are entirely wrong in your views.*” **WILLIAMS**

Errors are not all the same, and it is disastrous to approach them as though they were. Abraham, for example, was technically mistaken about how God would maintain Isaac as the promised heir (Heb 11:19). His mistake, however, was only because of a lack of detailed

revelation. In just a few moments he saw the matter more clearly and abandoned the view he at first entertained. He had thought in harmony with the nature of God and the revealed purpose of God, but was not clear in all of the details at the time. By comparison, the Scribes and Pharisees were wrong in their view of Jesus – so wrong that Jesus said to them, “*how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*” (Matt 23:33). The magnitude of the error of the scribes and Pharisees was that it required sinning against a greater revelation – one in which God had, so to speak, extended Himself to make the Messiah known to them.

There are errors that require denying pivotal revelations – express illumination that has been given to acquaint the people with the way things really are. In the case of the Sadducees, considerable had been revealed through the Prophets concerning the resurrection of the dead, angels, spirits, the end of the world, and a time of judgment. Additionally, Jesus had spoken of the resurrection, the day of judgment, and of the generation of that time facing people who had lived in previous generations – like Nineveh, the Queen of Sheba, and even Sodom and Gomorrah. To stubbornly maintain a flawed doctrine concerning the basic constitution of mankind, as well as the appointed time in which men will all stand before their Creator, was inexcusable.

Some delusions are like a giant cloud that casts a larger shadow, obscuring even more than other aberrant thoughts. The person who is persuaded it is wrong to eat meat is not in as serious a condition as the person who thinks he can live with his father’s wife. Satan can work more extensively with the latter delusion. No error is harmless, but when flawed thinking is at a foundational level, it corrupts the whole of thought. For example, a person who thinks this world is the main world is at more of a disadvantage than the one who thinks marriage is forbidden.

To say there is no resurrection compels the deceived one to emphasize **this** world and **this** time. It obscures the fact of the appointed day of judgment, and lessens the magnitude of sin and transgression. The distortion of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead can “*overthrow the faith of some*” (2 Tim 2:18). And why so? Because it chisels away at the very purpose of God, diminishing the future and the necessity of preparing for it.

David once asked, “*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” (Psa 11:3). A compelling question, indeed! It seems to me that one of the besetting sins of our time is the failure of the professing church to identify, expound, and build upon the foundation. The result is that life in this world is being seen as bigger and more significant than it really is. On the other hand, heaven, eternity, the coming of the Lord, and the day of judgment, have been pushed to the background of religious thought. The result is a carnal, uninformed, and emaciated church. It can be said of spiritual Babylon, “She has ‘*greatly erred!*’”

ASTONISHED AT HIS DOCTRINE. Matthew says that when the multitude heard Jesus’ answer to the Sadducees, “*they were astonished at His doctrine*” (Matt 22:33). The word “*astonished*” is an arresting one. Its general meaning is amazed or shocked. It carries the idea of “cast off by a blow,” or “drive away.” THAYER Speaking crudely, it is like having the wind knocked out of a person, so that they are speechless and totally incapable of carrying on any more conversation. Once the teaching of Jesus comes home to the heart, men respond like Job, “*Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth*” (Job 40:4). At that time Jesus is no longer approached as though He was one of man’s peers. No fault can be found with what He declares, even if it is not understood. David said it this way, “*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it*” (Psa 39:9). Solomon said it like this: “*If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or*

if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth” (Prov 30:32). We are living in a time when a new kind of preaching and teaching is required that yields this kind of response. Modern preaching it not powerful enough. It allows for too many questions, rebuttals, and rejection. Oh, for more astonishment among the carnal!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 131

“ Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

(Mark 12:28-31; Matthew 22:34-40)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is about His Father’s business – in the Temple, speaking of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. He has drawn the attention of the people – both friend and foe – for that is His nature. Wherever His presence is detected, He is always dominant. To my knowledge, no one ever asked Jesus to join their movement or group. There seemed to be an awareness that He was operating by a different agenda, and could not be enticed to become part of some other enterprise. One of the ways to diffuse the expression of tangential thoughts is to speak the truth as it is in Jesus. It is vastly superior, and by its very nature moves people to a higher plateau of thinking. We are witnessing examples of this in the questions that have been asked of Jesus in the closing days of His ministry. Here are some that were asked during the days covered in our text: *“Is it lawful for a man to put away His wife for every cause?”* (Matt 19:3). *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* (Mk 10:17). *“Is it lawful to pay tribute to Casesar?”* (Mk 12:14). *“In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife”* (Mark 12:23). And now, a man asks Jesus concerning the greatest commandment. **Notice the nature and theme of all of these questions.** Even when they were tempting questions, designed to catch Jesus in a technical error, they all dealt with things from the spiritual point of view. Even when asking about paying taxes, they wanted to know if it was *“lawful”* – i.e., if the matter had been addressed in the Word of God. All of this confirms the kind of impact that Jesus had upon people. They never associated Him with mere trivia, or called upon Him to participate in such things. That is because the accent of His communication was unquestionably clear. Those who represent themselves as being with Him ought also to be clearly associated with such things.

“ Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all?”

HE HEARD THEM REASONING TOGETHER. Unless Jesus withdrew with His disciples, His teaching was of a public nature. If you were where He was, you could hear what He was saying. This means that Jesus’ instruction was not always personalized, dealing with individual matters.

Truth has a larger circumference than human experience. It is like a jewel that is held within the setting of eternal purpose. This why, when it is truly known, it makes the people free (John 8:32). Here, we find a scribe who was listening to the dialog Jesus was having with the Sadducees. Matthew informs us that he was actually with the Pharisees, who consorted with the scribes regularly: “*But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question*” (Matt 22:34-35).

There is something of interest to be noted here. Jesus did not make a practice of joining in the discussions of others. However, **others were drawn into what He was saying**, even though their purposes were not always honorable. I am always suspicious of an approach to Christ and His work that attracts unthinking and slothful people. This is not to be confused with publicans and harlots getting into the Kingdom of God before the religious elite (Matt 21:31). The people in this category (publicans and harlots), of whom Jesus spoke, knew what they were, were discontent with it, and saw in Jesus a means of escape. I do not know that it is proper to associate them with vagrants, the drug culture, and the likes.

HE PERCEIVED JESUS HAD ANSWERED THEM WELL. This particular scribe took note of the excellence of Jesus’ answer. This reveals much about the manner in which Jesus spoke. He did not speak loosely, but with holy deliberation and insight. His words drew the attention of thoughtful people. It is not proper for those who speak for Jesus to be noted for clumsy speech, flawed expressions, and unchallenging thoughts. Truth has an appeal to the highest part of man – a part that is hidden beneath the veneer of sin, but is drawn out by truth.

Matthew also tells us that the scribe was **tempting** Jesus with this question (Matt 22:35). That is, he was testing Jesus – examining the level of His knowledge and probing His understanding. This may seem like an innocent gesture, but it was not. It is the evidence of unbelief, as though some weakness or inconsistency could be discovered in the Teacher from Nazareth. Men are forbidden to tempt the Lord, seeking to discover whether or not He is everything He seems to be. The proper way to prove the Lord is not by asking Him questions, but by doing what He has commanded. This is the point God made to Israel concerning tithing (Mal 3:10). He called upon them to act in faith, not test Him in unbelief.

WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF ALL? Matthew says He asked, “*Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*” (Mat 22:36). This was a thoughtful question, and revealed a mind-set that has nearly been lost by our generation. Sin, being basically self-centered, does not allow for such questions. It does not think about what is primary, fundamental, essential, or preeminent. It does not allow for the “*one thing*” mentality, unless it is the gratification of the flesh. God has created man after His own image. Part of that likeness is being driven by a single purpose, and gathering all things under a solitary objective. This image has been greatly corrupted by sin, yet enough of it remains to still qualify men as being “*the image and glory of God*” (1 Cor 11:7; Gen 9:6; James 3:9). As such, they can think in terms of an emphasis, accentuation, or stress.

Now, here is an exceptional question, even though it was not asked with the proper motive. We know it was a good question because Jesus answered it, and did not rebuke the man for asking it. The question itself was within the perimeter of truth, and reflected a Kingdom manner.

“*Which is the first commandment of all?*” The scribe is not asking about the commandments of men – although the answer to his question will address even those. He is asking about the most prominent commandment “*in the law*” (Matt 22:36). What is the most important requirement of the Law? The words of the covenant, written on the tables of the covenant, had the Ten Commandments.

There were hundreds of other commandments that surrounded those requirements. Some had to do with daily human conduct. Others with handling certain kinds of social matters. There were many that related to the ordained ceremonies required in the Old Covenant. What was the single commandment that stood out above them all? What was first in priority? What was the main thing men were to do? What was their primary duty? It is to be understood that whatever it is, if it is not done, nothing else really matters. In our day, this kind of thinking is unusual, and there is by no means a unity within the church concerning the answer to this question.

“ 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

THE FIRST OF ALL. Jesus precisely answers the question asked by the scribe. Other versions read, “*the foremost,*” NASB “*the most important one,*” NIV “*chief commandment,*” WEYMOUTH and “*first and principle one.*” AMPLIFIED As used here, the word “*first*” means “*first in rank, influence, honor, and principle.*” THAYER All commands, then, do not have an equal ranking. In the Law, there was one commandment that outranked all others, and upon which all of the others depended. This was not an academic ranking, but a moral one. To fail in this commandment was to fail in all other commandments. In fact, a failure to obey this commandment accounted for all disobedience and waywardness.

THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD. Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5: “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*” Moses nowhere declared this to be the first and foremost commandment. Had he done so, the scribe’s question would have required nothing more than the recollection of a text. This is a question that required discernment. It called for a conclusion. On one occasion “*a certain lawyer*” asked Jesus “*Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” Jesus replied, “*What is written in the law? how readest thou?*” (Luke 10:25-26). The lawyer gave the same answer Jesus will give this scribe, and Jesus told him, “*Thou hast answered right*” (Lk 10:27-28).

That is the kind of answer Jesus is giving – **how the Law was to be understood.** This commandment was not on the tables of the covenant. Yet, if anyone read the tables correctly, this is the conclusion to which they should have come.

LOVE GOD WITH ALL THE HEART. Make no mistake about this – this was an absolute requirement – the first commandment of all! God was to be loved “*with all the heart.*” The requirement is driven by the fact that “*The Lord our God is One*” – that is, He is God alone. There is no other God. That demands that love not be withheld from Him, which withholding is idolatry. To love anything or anyone more than God is, in fact, idolatry.

The “*heart*” is the inmost part of man. Intellectual, emotional, and determinative capacities are there. Here is where character is found, motivation, causes, and the want, desires, or will. God does not require some token recognition by the heart, but that He be loved with **all** of the heart, so that no part of man’s essential makeup is not focused upon the Lord.

LOVE GOD WITH ALL THE SOUL. The “*soul*” is equated to the personality of the individual, and has primarily to do with expression. It also has the capacity to cause the person to be elevated with expectation, or cast down in despair. God is to be loved, preferred, and served with all of our expressive capacities. Paul calls them our “*members*” (Rom 6:13).

LOVE GOD WITH ALL THE MIND. The Deuteronomy text does not contain the word “*mind.*” This is a further breakdown of the soul of man, and refers to the capacity to understand, discern,

comprehend, and engage in protracted thought. God is to be loved with all of the mind, so that he is discerned, and comprehended. He is to be the Theme of meditation, contemplation, musing, and cogitation.

LOVE GOD WITH ALL THE STRENGTH. Moses used the word “*might*.” This refers to ability, aptitude, or capability. Because all ability is given by God, it is to be given back to Him, loving and preferring Him above all else – for He is above all. Moses reminded the people that this was a Divine requirement. “*And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee , but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul*” (Deut 10:12).

Moses knew that sin had so blighted man’s capacities that this commandment could not possibly be obeyed. However, that did not remove the commandment, or make it less of a requirement. It still had to be done. Therefore Moses promised the people, “*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul , that thou mayest live*” (Deut 30:6).

THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT. If a person wants to talk about commandments, this is the ranking one – and it is not even stated as such in the Ten Commandments. The great salvation of God enables men to keep this commandment, and to do so joyfully, and with unparalleled satisfaction.

Among other things, the words of our Lord confirm that **man’s primary responsibility has to do with his individual response to God Himself.** When it comes to DOING, what is done **Godward** is the fundamental thing. The first commandment is now encapsulated in believing on Christ, which enables us to meet the requirements of this love (1 John 3:23).

“ 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

THE SECOND. The scribe did not ask about the second commandment, but Jesus will declare a word on it anyway, because He was being tempted, or tested, by the question and He knew it. The word “*second*” does not reflect the sequence of the commandment, but its subordination to the first commandment. It is second in priority, not first. It is second in importance, not primary. It is the next commandment and not the first one. It is man’s secondary responsibility, not his fundamental one.

Also, by saying “*the second*,” Jesus means that the Law really contained only two commandments. They related to man’s responsibility to God Himself, and to man, who is the offspring of God. The table of the Law detailed the involvements of loving God in the first four commandments (Having no other gods before Him, no graven images or bowing down to idols, not taking God’s name in vain, and keeping the Sabbath day holy – Ex 20:3-11). Secondly, loving our neighbor was encapsulated in the last six commandments (honoring father and mother, not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying, and not coveting – Ex 20:12-17).

Several texts of Scripture summarize human responsibility in a brief manner. **SOLOMON** : “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter : Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is the whole duty of man*” (Eccl 12:13). **MICAH** : “*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?*” (Micah 6:8). **JOHN** : “*And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment*” (1 John 3:23). **JESUS** : “*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent*” (John 6:29). The more detailed we are in our

thinking, the further we tend to drift, both morally and spiritually.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF. In the Law, “*the second*” commandment was not declared together with the first one, as it is by Jesus. Moses cites this commandment in another place, and within the context of a number of detailed instructions. Here is what he wrote by inspiration. “*Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but **thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself** : I am the LORD*” (Lev 19:18).

Jesus is giving the summation of the law concerning our neighbor. He finds the requirement within a rather lengthy discourse, lifts it out of the context, and declares it to be “*the second*” commandment. I do not believe it is possible to take an academic approach to the matter, have an open-book test, and find the students making a statement like this. This was the expression of understanding – the articulation of the “*sense*” of the commandment.

Paul gave a similar summation of this requirement: “*For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself** . Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Rom 13:9-10). He wrote the same to the Galatians: “*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself** ” (Gal 5:14).*

Within the framework of the New Covenant, this commandment is enlarged. For example, Jesus did not tell His disciples to love one another as they loved themselves. He rather said, “*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; **as I have loved you** , that ye also love one another*” (John 13:34). John declared that the person who loved his brother was abiding in the light, and there was no occasion of stumbling in him (1 John 2:10).

Under Christ, failing to love our brother not only reveals one does not love God, but that he does not **know** God – for no one who knows Him does not love Him. Thus John wrote, “*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love*” (1 John 4:8).

When it comes to loving our “*neighbor*,” without regard to whether or not they are in Christ, the requirement of the Law is summed up in a single statement: “*love does no harm to a neighbor*” NKJV (Rom 13:10). In Christ, however, the bar is raised higher. Brotherly love is depicted as “*preferring one another*” (Rom 12:10). It also expresses itself when the saints “*esteem other **better** than themselves*” (Phil 2:3). Thus, in Christ Jesus, and under the New Covenant, loving our neighbor as ourselves is not enough. That is not satisfactory for those who have been reconciled to God!

Therefore, when Jesus says, “*There is none other commandment greater than these,*” He is speaking within the context of the Law and the Prophets. Matthew clearly states this in his record of this occasion. “*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*” (Matt 22:40). Once Jesus takes away the sin of the world, as He is preparing to do, it will enable men to see much more, and thus will alter the entire landscape of human responsibility.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 132

“ Mark 12:32 And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He: 33 And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.” (Mark 12:32-34)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was a prodigious worker – going about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38). However, that is not all He was. He was also a profound Teacher, and much of the focus of the Gospel is put upon what He **said** . In fact, if Jesus had not said much, the memory of Him would have quickly faded. One of man’s chief weaknesses is that he cannot long retain what does not influence his mind and understanding. A religion that starves the mind is destined for obsolescence, for man is created in God’s image, and therefore has a propensity to thought, contemplation, and understanding. This is what makes a religion based upon tradition so dangerous. There is no understanding in it – only the embrace of something that has been thought out by someone else, and is embraced because of the ability of someone to convince people of its validity. While such a religion may have the appearance of being intellectual and disciplined, it is really for the spiritual sloth, for it does not engage the whole man. As confirmed in the Gospel, the teaching of Jesus was always fresh and vibrant, because He always spoke the truth, declaring it within the context of the will and purpose of God. His words challenged man’s capacity for thought, and gave the people something to discern. In so doing, those who embraced the words of Jesus were motivated from within, and did not follow like the blind who adhere to blind leaders. In this text we will observe the reaction of Jesus to a person with understanding. It will at once become apparent that such a person has certain advantages that are not vouchsafed to the blind and ignorant. An understanding of this circumstance will have a significant impact on how a person lives.

“ Mark 12:32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He.”

WELL, MASTER. Other versions read, “*Well said Teacher,*” NKJV “*Right Teacher.*” NASB and “*You are right, Teacher.*” NRSV This man had first “*perceived*” that Jesus had answered the Sadducees “*well*” (12:28). Now, He discerns that Jesus has also responded expertly to the question he has posed. Whatever may be said of this man, it is refreshing to read of one who actually assesses what Jesus says, weighing it in view of the Scriptures.

Notice how he addresses the Lord: “*Master.*” This is not “*Master,*” as referring to on who is over a slave or servant. That comes from another word that means Lord, or supreme authority. That is a relationship that is compared with servants (Luke 16:13; Rom 14:4; Col 3:22; 4:1). Here,

however, the term “*Master*” is associated with a disciple, or learner – a relationship of which Jesus often spoke (Matt 10:24,25; Mk 14:14; Lk 6:40). This scribe is evaluating Jesus as a teacher who has the ability to assess and express the truth, for that is what a teacher is supposed to do.

This view of Jesus – the Master Teacher – is one that is being lost in our generation. The people are **not** being brought to associate Jesus with truth, enlightenment, understanding, and direction. Those are matters that are imagined to belong to a different class of people – religious professionals. However, Jesus is clearly declared to have come to give us “*an understanding*” (1 John 5:20), to expound the Father (Matt 11:27-28), and to teach us (Eph 4:20-21). A religion that does not sharpen the minds of men and bring an understanding of God and the things of God to them, is not one in which Jesus can be found.

THOU HAST SAID THE TRUTH. The word “*truth*” means what is real, or factual. It is what is free from all pretense, falsehood, and deceit. Because of this, “*the truth*” is something that cannot be altered. It is not subject to change, and never becomes obsolete. It is the opposite of what is feigned, fictitious, and false. It is not theoretical or speculative, but is what is absolutely certain, and is therefore valid and relevant. Much of the instruction of professed Christian teachers does not fall into the category of “*the truth.*” **Everything** Jesus said, as well as all Scripture, is so classified.

Jesus affirmed that God sanctified, or set people apart, with the truth, adding that God’s Word “*is truth*” (John 17:17). The effective ministry of the Holy Spirit is traced back to the fact that He testifies to “*truth.*” This is what enables believers to “*abide*” in Christ (1 John 2:27). It ought to be noted that at the very point where religion centers in humanity and its self-perceived needs, “*the truth*” loses its appeal. **“Truth” can only be perceived as essential when it is within the context of God Himself, not humanity.** If it is placed within the context of man, his needs, and his desires, truth at once is not perceived as necessary.

Truth can be “*said*” – spoken, or articulated. That is because it deals with reality. It is also why parables are not the premier way of declaring truth, and rather tend to obscure it. For this reason, Jesus spoke of how the truth would be communicated following His departure from this world. “*These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father*” (John 16:25). Instead of “*proverbs,*” other versions read “*figurative language,*” NKJV “*figuratively,*” NIV “*figures of speech,*” NRSV “*dark sayings,*” ASV “*with the help of illustrations,*” CSB “*allegories,*” DARBY “*parables,*” GENEVA and “*similitudes.*” YLT In delivering a word concerning the primary commandment, Jesus has spoken plainly, and in the words of Scripture itself. The scribe recognized this and consented that this was an excellent answer.

THERE IS NONE BUT HE. Jesus quoted Moses who said, “*The Lord our God is one Lord*” (Deut 6:4). The scribe now gives a discerning interpretation of that word: “*There is none but He!*” Actually, the scribe has correlated Deuteronomy 6:4 with other Scriptural affirmations: “*there is none else*” (Deut 4:39); “*Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any*” (Isa 44:8); “*I am the Lord, and there is none else*” (Isa 45:5); “*I am the Lord; and there is none else*” (Isa 45:18); “*But the LORD is the true God*” (Jer 10:10).

This is why God is to be loved with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is why serving other gods is sinful. It is why men are iniquitous when they serve personal interests, competing demands, and the gods originated by men. **There really is no other God.** That means

anything and everything representing itself as worthy of men's devotion will ultimately fall, and all who trusted in such will fall with them. Any service that is not ultimately directed to God will be found worthless, and will lead to condemnation. Any directing interest that does not find its fulfillment in God Himself is leading individuals to perdition. It may be a religious distortion, a career, a family, or some form of pleasure or entertainment. If there really is "*none but*" God, then the commitment of one's life to such things is lethal in its implications. It is **not** vain to serve God. It is vain to serve anything or anyone else.

“ 33 And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

TO LOVE HIM. The extent of what is involved in loving God is something that will prove challenging to our thinking throughout the entirety of our lives. It is one thing to know what the first commandment says: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . .*" It is quite another to perceive the implications of that requirement – and it **is** a requirement. Our perception of this commandment grows as we grow. It enlarges as we become more mature. Solomon said, "*the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light*" (Prov 6:23). Experientially, we will find the light of this commandment penetrating into the crevasses of life, challenging our love to expand more and more, and passing far beyond mere verbal expression.

John defined the love of God in very precise language: "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous*" (1 John 5:3). This is not the statement of a goal, but is a standard of measurement by which we can assess our own love. If we come short in this regard, the secret is not to try harder to keep His commandments. We do not love God **because** we keep His commandments, but **keep** His commandments because we love Him. If His commandments are grievous, or burdensome, we are not to work harder at making them less burdensome. They are not grievous **if** we love God. It is the love itself that must be our focus, not the things produced by that love.

Loving God will proceed from seeing Him as He really is – particularly as His glory is seen "*in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor 4:6). It is our familiarity with God Himself that moves us to love Him – not our familiarity with His commandments. This is a critical distinction that must be seen. I find that modern preaching greatly obscures this fact.

When Moses asked God to show him His glory, God declared Himself to Moses. He did not shine a light on the commandments, opening them more fully to His servant. He rather illuminated the mind of Moses concerning His own person (Ex 34:6-8). **It is the understanding of God Himself that sheds light on His Word** – whether it is His commandments or His promises. It is also what moves honest and good hearts to love Him.

The Law declared the necessity of loving God, **but did not provide the incentive to do so.** It was "*weak through the flesh,*" which could not see enough in the Law to provoke the whole-hearted love of Him. Nor, indeed, is there such a thing as any other moral law that can move people to love God. They must be able to comprehend Him in order to love Him.

THE UNDERSTANDING. In declaring the "*first commandment,*" Jesus did not use the word "*understanding,*" nor did Moses. Jesus said "*heart, soul, mind, and strength.*" The scribe said "*heart, understanding, soul, and strength.*" Two different words were used ("mind" and "understanding") – both in the Greek and in the English. Technically, the word "*mind*" means "a faculty of understanding," or "a way of thinking or feeling." THAYER The word

“*understanding*” means “a running together, a flowing together,” or putting it all together. THAYER Jesus emphasized the **capacity** of the mind, while the scribe accented the **accomplishments** of the mind. Both were true. Jesus spoke in such a way as to promote an analysis or godly conclusion, and the scribe answered the challenge with a perceptive reply. Not only must man love God with his intellectual capacity, but must do so by **arriving at proper conclusions about God**. These conclusions will be accomplished by putting Divine statements together – seeing how they fit together, and thereby being led to a proper and profitable conclusion.

Because he is made in the image of God, mankind possess the capacity to think deeply, and to understand how things fit together. This can be seen in all persons. Some have the ability to understand mechanics, others music, others mathematics, others electronics, and still others various arts and sciences. Some can understand construction, others cooking, and others sewing, and still others the human anatomy. They can make sense out of things related to these areas of knowledge, and be productive, and even creative, in their use of that knowledge.

To love God with “*all the understanding*” involves **not** being expert in any other era, while remaining ignorant and impractical when it comes to God. No person can be pleasing to God that is acquainted with other bodies of knowledge, but is unacquainted with God – that is comfortable in other areas of knowledge, but is ill-at-ease in the presence of God.

IT IS MORE THAN ALL OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES. Loving God with all of our capacities outweighs anything else that is offered to God. That includes all kinds of sacrifices and practical inconveniences. This love does not exclude the necessity of sacrifices, but outweighs them. A person can wear themselves out in religious service – suffering the proverbial “*burn-out*.” But if they do not love God with all of their being, it was all for nothing. If “*offerings and sacrifices*” are not prompted by love, they are not acceptable. If they are not the result of perceiving, being attracted to, and profoundly loving God, they are nothing more than the works of men.

“ 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question.”

HE ANSWERED DISCREETLY. Jesus notes how people respond – what they say and how they say it. The daughter of a Syrophenician woman was healed because of what that women **said** – her “*saying*” (Mark 7:29). Another time, after hearing what a certain centurion **said**, Jesus responded, “*Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*” (Matt 8:10). Another time, after hearing something Peter said, Jesus replied, “*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*” (Matt 16:23). It is no wonder that Jesus said, “*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*” (Matt 12:37). We do well to be good stewards of our words. They can be a source of blessing or a reason for rebuke. Ultimately, they will contribute to either our justification or condemnation. You cannot get more weighty than that!

Jesus observed that the scribe had answered “*discreetly*.” Other versions read “*wisely*,” NKJV “*intelligently*,” NASB “*sensibly*,” CSB “*with understanding*,” NAB “*thoughtfully*,” NET and “*realizing how much the man understood*.” NLT The word “*discreetly*” means “*wisely, prudently*,” THAYER “*sensibly, thoughtfully*,” FRIBERG and “*with understanding*.” LOUA-NIDA In other words, this scribe did not belch out an answer that had been learned in a classroom. His was not the statement of the official scribal position on the text, or the authorized view of the elders. His reply reflected **his** reasoning on the matter – what he himself had concluded from the law of

Moses.

Those who have spent time discussing the things of God with others know what it is like to hear foolish answers – responses that have not been thought out. They know the impact of hearing answers that are nothing more than statements of what a particular sect embraces, or what was learned in a schoolroom or read in some book. In the modern Christian arena, insightful responses are not at all common. Sometimes it is even difficult to get any kind of response at all, must less a discreet or intelligent one. This condition reveals a lot.

Everyone who wears the name of Jesus does well to heed the admonition of Scripture: “*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know **how** ye ought to answer every man*” (Col 4:6). It is not honoring to Jesus when those who are identified with Him speak without insight, or do nothing more than spout sectarian creeds and positions.

NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM. Here is an assessment of remarkable power and encouragement. Being spoken by Jesus Himself, this was a precise statement of case. With a single exception, every version in my possession reads precisely the same: “*not far from the kingdom of God.*” Young’s Literal Translation reads, “*not far from the reign of God.*”

This is a remarkable statement, for people do not ordinarily think of the Kingdom of God in relation to their proximity to it. It is true that there is a sense in which this Kingdom is in our midst, or within the circumference in which we find ourselves (Lk 17:21). However, that does not have to do with our participation or involvement. It rather means that God is working to fulfill His purpose whether we are aware of it or not. Here, however, Jesus speaks of the participative aspect of God’s Kingdom. Jesus elsewhere spoke of entering the Kingdom (Matt 5:20; 7:21; Mark 10:15,23,24,25; John 3:5).

Among other things, this confirms that, while all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, those who have not yet entered the Kingdom are not equidistant from it. There are some, of whom this scribe is an example, who are “*not far from the Kingdom of God.*” Their entry is more likely than others who are lacking in certain areas. Note, this scribe’s close proximity to the Kingdom was not owing to any outward achievement. It was not because he had always offered the appointed sacrifices, kept all of the feast days, and devoutly honored the Law’s distinction between the clean and the unclean. None of these things were of themselves wrong, but they could not move the individual closer to the Kingdom – closer to actually becoming profitably involved in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Their was a single trait that Jesus observed in this man – a trait that revealed he was closer to the Kingdom than many of his peers. **It was his understanding – his discernment or comprehension.** His thoughts were more in keeping with the Kingdom. He was able to detect the fundamental thing, and to put it into words that precisely stated the case. He could see more than the average person, and the commandments of the Lord made more sense to him than was common. In Christ Jesus, this becomes the norm, not the exception. The fact that it is unusual within the professing church confirms that it is at a great distance from God. **NO MORE QUESTIONS.** The answer of Jesus to the Sadducees, His reply to this scribe, and His observation concerning him, dried up the minds of carnal inquirers. If they had any questions, they would ask someone else. There was something about Jesus that made it embarrassing to ask foolish questions, put words to unbelief, or attempt to justify contradicting positions. Wherever the presence of the Lord Jesus is discerned, it is still that way.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 133

“ Mark 12:35 And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? 36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. 37 David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his son? And the common people heard Him gladly. ”

(Mark 12:35-37; Matt 22:41-46; Lk 20:41-44)

INTRODUCTION

Time continues to march forward, leading to the time when Jesus will obey the Father’s commandment to lay down His life, then take it up again. The sacrifice of His life will require His total commitment. He cannot be diverted from the consideration of it, or come to that time unprepared. Yet, this does not mean that He must be isolated from the people – at least not at this time. He is therefore in the Temple – His Father’s house (John 2:16), where service to God was the whole point. Here is where sacrifices were made by the priest (Lk 2:24). Yet, Jesus, according to the Law, is not qualified to be a priest, for He was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi, the tribe from which the priests were selected (Heb 7:14). Because the sacrifice He was going to make was of a different order, therefore the Priest who made it must also be of a different order. **The point is that the Temple, together with its ordained activities, was an environment in which the Lord could make His initial preparation.** It was a place wholly devoted to activities pertaining to God. This was not a place for mere socializing and community events. At this point, this place, and what occurred there would not interfere with what the Lord was going to do. The communications that took place there would have a proper focus and direction. It seems to me that much can be learned by this manner of Christ. A lot of activities that involve church people are really not conducive to spiritual preparations. They are too casual, and too close to the world. It is not that they are of themselves wrong. They rather tend to dull the conscience, so that the gravity of living in view of death, the end of the world, and the coming of Christ are not brought to the forefront of the mind. While we must zealously avoid making laws and forcing people into a stereotyped religion, we must also master the art of associating the activities of Jesus with our own living toward the Lord.

“ Mark 12:35 And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?”

THE TEACHING JESUS. Here we are being exposed to the teaching Jesus. In the Gospels, there are over forty references to Jesus teaching. They are over two hundred and twenty references to things Jesus *“said.”* There are eleven references to His *“doctrine.”* This

perfectly coincides with what Jesus is doing now from heaven (Eph 4:20-21).

But we must be able to correlate the fact of a teaching Jesus with spiritual life. Throughout history informed and spiritually intelligent Christians have been rare. Even in the first century, at the forefront of Jesus building His church, holy men had to deal with the prevalence of spiritual ignorance (Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1;12:1;1 Thess 4:13; 3 Pet 3:8, etc.). Some were upbraided because sufficient time had passed for them to be teachers, and yet they were still spiritual juveniles (Heb 5:12). If Jesus is a Teacher, how can these things be? Is it possible that He is recalcitrant in His ministry of teaching, failing to carry out that function? Who would dare to imagine such a thing? He is the consummate faithful One, who is “*called Faithful and True*” (Rev 19:11). He is “*the faithful and true Witness*” (Rev 3:14). **It is not possible for a person or a church to remain unlearned if they are knowingly in the presence of Jesus.** That would be equivalent to being in the Temple, walking along with Jesus, yet never acquiring any knowledge. In such a case, it is hardness of heart and blindness of the mind that have produced the ignorance. That is how serious the condition is. To professing Christians who never grow up into Christ, Jesus says, “*Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word*” (John 8:43).

AS HE TAUGHT. The fact that Jesus was teaching confirms that He was the dominant figure in the Temple – for the teacher is always the focus of attention. That is one of the traits of a true teacher. Jesus was not there to listen to the people’s problems like Moses did (Ex 18:13), or arbitrate difficulties like Solomon (1 Kgs 3:16-28). For some people, this defines teaching – answering questions. But that is not the manner in which Jesus teaches. While He did answer questions, such as the one previously put forth by a certain scribe, our text now finds **Jesus** asking the question.

This text assists us in understanding what is involved in Jesus’ teaching. He is the One who sets the agenda, and determines the focus of the subject. Even if a question is directed to Him, He will take that question and build upon it, making the answer profitable to all. In our day, there is a distorted view of relevancy and importance. The importance of a subject is imagined to be established by the listeners. That is why contemporary preachers and teachers adapt their messages to the people, and inquire about the concerns they have. Jesus did not teach that way, and He does not send others out to major on such things. This does not mean there are not legitimate inquiries. It does mean that what Jesus **says** is the central matter. As this text will confirm, fundamental issues relate to Jesus Himself, not the duties of men. This does not mean that duties are ignored, and no one must be so simple as to think in that way. Duty is to be considered within the framework of the Persons of God and Christ. That is why certain commandments under the Law were preceded or followed by the expression, “*I am the Lord*” (Ex 15:26; 20:2; Lev 11:44; 18:2-6,21,30; 19:4-4, 10,12,14,16,18).

INQUIRY ABOUT THE SCRIBES TEACHING. Matthew says that while the Pharisees were gathered together He asked them, “*What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?*” when they answered “*The son of David,*” He asked the question of our text. Jesus is still keenly aware of what men teach – particularly what they say about Him. It should not surprise anyone to sense Divine interrogation, when the heart seems to shout out, “*Why are you teaching*” this or that. That is a way in which the Lord probes the thoughts and intents of the heart.

THE SON OF DAVID. As applied to Christ Jesus, the phrase “*Son of David*” never occurs in Scripture prior to Matthew 1:1. No prophet referred to the Messiah in this manner. He was prophesied to occupy “*the throne of David*” (Isa 9:7), was referred to as “*David*” (Jer 23:5; 30:9; Hos 3:5), “*grow up unto David*” (Jer 33:15), and God’s “*Servant David*” (Ezek 34:23-25). However, prior to His coming, the Messiah was never referred to as the “*Son of David.*”

However, this was a legitimate view, as confirmed in Matthew 1:1. This was a holy conclusion, based on the promise of the seed of David sitting upon His throne forever (1 Sam 7:12-13,16). Although the promise was ambiguous at the time, David himself later concluded that the promise did not apply to Solomon alone, as confirmed by the inspired 89th and 132nd Psalms (89:34-36; 132:11).

The scribes, therefore, had drawn a proper conclusion. They had read and correlated the Scriptures accurately, perceiving the sense of them. However, it appears that at this time this had been reduced to an academic view that was not accompanied by understanding. Therefore Jesus challenges their thinking concerning this saying - which saying was true.

“ 36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”

DAVID HIMSELF SAID. This statement confirms that holy prophets did not speak while in a sort of trance that excluded their understanding. It is true that king Saul, though he bore animosity against David, the Lord’s anointed, prophesied (1 Sam 18:10). Once he did so after he had “*stripped off his clothes*” (1 Sam 19:23-24). However, we do not have a single word of those prophesies – none of them are recorded, or passed from one generation to another. Although some have cited Saul as an example of being, what they call, *slain in the Spirit*, that is their own assessment, not that of God. When Jesus said, “*David himself said,*” He does not mean the saying originated with David, but that he said it with understanding and discernment. His mind and heart were involved in the saying as well as his lips and pen.

SAID BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. Concerning the origin of David’s words, they were brought to him by the Holy Spirit. This was a morsel of heavenly knowledge vouchsafed to David, who was not only empowered to say the revealed words, but to understand them as well. This is the manner in which *spiritual understanding* is ministered to the people of God – something Paul prayed the saints would receive in full measure (Col 1:9). This is not a procedure in which the mind is sidestepped, but one in which it is illuminated. The understanding is not excluded, but is rather enlightened. This also contradicts the notion that messages from God are given in a language that is not comprehended by the one receiving it. Words spoken in an unknown tongue are from the standpoint of the hearer, not the speaker. The one uttering such words is to seek to interpret them to those who hear him, and not to himself (1 Cor 14:12). Teaching concerning speaking by the Spirit in an unearned language is only and always addressed within the context of the assembly (1 Cor 14). This text is an example of this principle.

THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD. David’s expression refers to two personalities, with One speaking to the other – yet both are termed “*Lord.*” In the Hebrew text (Psa 110:1), the two words are different (Yehovah and Adoni). One refers to Jehovah, and the other to the Messiah. In the Greek text (Mk 12:36; Matt 22:44; Lk 20:42), the words used are identical (Kurios = *Lord*). This word means Master, or the One in supreme authority. David is confessing that the Messiah, although a Man, is nevertheless **his** Lord – not by virtue of human greatness, but by virtue of his nature. He also said this knowing that it referred to One who would come from his own lineage (Psa 132:11). David did not view the coming Messiah as his son, but as his Lord. By the Spirit, he knew the implications of the Messiah sitting on his throne (2 Sam 7:13), building the house of God (1 Chron 17:12), and having an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:16). All three of these areas have been confused by modern theologians. This confirms that, in this day of greater glory, such men actually know less about what David said than he knew during the twilight age of revelation.

This was also a view of the exalted Christ. It did not refer to Him in his humbled state – although He was Lord then as well. It rather refers to Him in His exalted state, **after** He had been delivered from the realm of the dead, carried back to heaven in a cloud, exalted, and enthroned at the right hand of God.

SIT THOU ON MY RIGHT HAND. This is a summary view of the exaltation of Christ. He is to “*sit*” as one that has completed His assignment on earth, and has been invested with all power in heaven and in earth. Sitting, in this case, is the posture of a reigning King. As confirmed in Solomon (1 Kgs 2:12; 1 Chron 29:23). When Esther was received by the king, who was her own husband, he was sitting upon his throne (Esth 5:1).

Mark refers to the seating of Jesus in Mark 16:19: “*and sat down on the right hand of God.*” Peter refers to David’s prophecy, stating that it was fulfilled following Christ’s return to heaven (Acts 2:34-36). Paul refers to it in Ephesians 1:20-22, stating that Jesus is presently “*far above*” all principalities and powers, with all things being put under His feet. In the epistle to the Hebrews, the Spirit also refers to this, declaring that, from this exalted position, Jesus is now “*the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (Heb 12:2).

David is one of the few souls who was given to understand the exaltation of the Messiah (Psa 2:8-9; 24:7-10; 68:18). Daniel was also given a view of this (Dan 7:13-14). This confirms the sacredness of this view.

TILL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES THY FOOTSTOOL. It is not that making Christ’s enemies His footstool requires a lengthy period of time. That will be accomplished instantly when He is seen in His glory (2 Thess 2:8). The period covered in the word “*until*” refers to the “*day of salvation*” (2 Cor 6:2) in which the Lord is bringing “*many sons to glory*” (Heb 2:10). It is the time when God’s exchange program is taking place (Isa 61:3), and the sons of God are being changed “*from glory to glory*” (2 Cor 3:18). When the saints have all been duly readied, the time for subduing the enemies will come, and Jesus will leave heaven to gather in the saints and bring an abrupt halt to the activities of the wicked. Until that time, he is “*expecting*” (Heb 10:13).

“ 37 David therefore himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his son? And the common people heard Him gladly.”

DAVID HIMSELF CALLETH HIM LORD. Matthew says that David “*in the Spirit*” called Him “*Lord*” (Matt 22:43). Luke reads, “*David himself saith in the book of Psalms*” (Lk 20:42). Once again, we see that this is a discerning remark. It was not said without the involvement of David’s intelligence and comprehension. David was like the scribe who is instructed “*unto the kingdom of God,*” bringing forth “*out of his treasury things new and old*” (Matt 13:52). Inspiration gives “*understanding*” as well as information (Job 32:8). In fact, the very word “*inspire*” means to *breathe into*. In the creation, God breathed into man’s “*nostrils*” (Gen 2:7). Inspiration breathes into the heart and mind, bringing understanding as well as utterance.

By saying “*calleth,*” the text means that this is how David viewed the coming Messiah. He did not see Him as an impersonal deliverer, but as his own Lord, Master, and Controller. *Calling* refers to words that are pushed from the mouth by insight and persuasion. David not only saw that the Messiah was his Lord, but he gladly acquiesced with the condition, joyfully agreeing with it, and seeing it as a blessing and asset to him personally. This was the Old Covenant equivalent of confessing Christ “*before men*” (Matt 10:32).

WHENCE IS HE HIS SON? Ordinarily, a son is subservient to the one who begat him. That is what makes David's confession appear unreasonable to the flesh. The fact that the people in general also made no association of the Messiah with Divinity complicated the matter for them.

There were not many references in Moses and the Prophets that clearly declared the Messiah would be Deity as well as a Man. Isaiah said His name would be "*Immanuel*," which is interpreted "*God with us*" (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23). He also said His name would be "*The mighty God*" and "*Everlasting Father*" (Isa 9:6). Isaiah's prophecy of John the Baptist said he would cry out "*Prepare ye the way of THE LORD*" (Isa 40:3). Jeremiah said His name would be "*The LORD our righteousness*" (Jer 23:6). Yet, for those without insight, there is a certain vagueness in these texts. The person who is "*unskillful in the word of righteousness*" (Heb 5:13), cannot process truth, see the sense of it, or reason upon it.

Jesus was "*the son of David*" in the sense of His kingly lineage (Matt 1:1; 2 Sam 7:12). He was the "*Seed*" of the woman, in the sense of His birth as a Man (Gal 3:15; Gal 4:4). He was the "*Seed*" of Abraham in the sense of being the promised Offspring (Gen 22:18; Gal 3:16). He is "*of the tribe of Judah*" as regards His High Priestly ministry (Heb 7:14; Rev 5:5). **However, all of these associations are secondary.** None of them are primary. Jesus is **first** of all the Son of God (Mk 1:1; John 1:34; Acts 9:37; Rom 1:4; 1 John 4:15). That is the association that sanctifies all of the others. If He was not the Son of God, it would have made no salvational difference if He was the offspring of the woman, Abraham, David, or Judah.

Jesus asked this question because those to whom He was speaking did not see His affiliation with God the Father. They only saw Him as a man – perhaps even a teacher or miracle worker. While He was, indeed, a man, it was His Divinity that sanctified His humanity, like the Temple sanctified the gold that was in it (Matt 23:17).

THE COMMON PEOPLE HEARD HIM GLADLY. Other versions read, "*the great crowd enjoyed listening to Him*," NASB and "*The large crowd listened to Him with delight*." NIV The "*common people*" were the non-professional people – as compared with Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, and the priests. Their delight with the Lord's teaching was owing to the fact that He did not speak with the theological monotony of the scribes (Mk 7:29), the institutional aggressiveness of the Pharisees (Matt 23:15), or with the harsh legalistic tone of the Lawyers (Lk 11:46). Although Christ's words were challenging, and anything but shallow, the majority of the people seemed to profit from them, while the religious elite was only stymied by them.

At some point, the individual must find delight in listening to Jesus. That is certainly not the essence of true discipleship, but it is one of the beginning requirements. If a person is not attracted by what Jesus is saying, no progress will be made toward the experience of what He came to do. It is not possible than an approach to religion that does not major on the communication of the truth of God is either right or truly profitable.

NO MAN WAS ABLE TO ANSWER. Matthew says of this occasion, "*And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions*" (Matt 22:46). Christ's words were so weighty they actually smothered the opposition. Their theological minds dried up, withering in the blast of truth. Jesus did not resort to apologetics, scientific proofs, or some hermeneutical principle. Instead, He challenged his critics with calling for a diagnosis of Scripture – plain, unvarnished Scripture. He took one of their own observations, and asked them why they said it. Furthermore, their observation was true – yet they still could not answer Him, because their view of the Christ did not allow them to give a discerning answer to the question. Their traditions had robbed them of perspective.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 134

“Mark 12:38 *And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,* **39** *And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:* **40** *Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.”*

(Mark 12:38-40; Matt 23:1-7; Lk 20:45-47)

INTRODUCTION

One of the marks of the good Shepherd is His care for the sheep, “*the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand*” (Psa 95:7). His care for them includes alerting them to dangers, particularly predators who have an innocent appearance, yet are as ravening wolves. Our text provides us with an excellent example of this care, and of the manner in which it was exercised. Jesus had a tender regard for sensitive souls who were under the bludgeon of the Law, and yet gravitated to him to hear His gracious words. He did not have such a regard for brash and dominating religious men who used the people of God as a means of gain, exploiting them with both their teaching and their manners. He spoke boldly and openly about them, pointing out their inconsistencies and ignoble motives. This was done out of a deep concern for the people of God toward whom He was endeared. Some of the people Jesus particularly upbraided, and concerning whom He issued solemn warnings, included **Pharisees** (Matt 16:6; Lk 12:1; Luke 11:42-43), **scribes** (Lk 20:46; Matt 23:13-15), **Sadducees** (Matt 16:11; Matt 22:23-29), **Lawyers** (Lk 11:46,52; Lk 14:3-5), and **Herod** (Mk 8:15; Lk 13:31-32). In speaking of them He used terms like “*serpents*” and “*vipers*” (Matt 23:33), “*hypocrites*” (Matt 23:13), “*blind guides*” (Matt 23:16), “*fools and blind*” (Matt 23:17) being “*as graves*” (Lk 11:44), and “*fox*” (Lk 13:32). He charged them with taking away the key of knowledge (Lk 11:52), shutting up the kingdom of God (Matt 23:13a), hindering people from entering the Kingdom (Matt 23:13b), and placing unnecessary burdens on the people (Lk 11:46). All of this is Shepherd-talk – words that flow from a profound love and care for the people of God as well as an absolute and perfect hatred for those who are hindrances and cause offenses to them. These men did not appear to be what they really were, and thus Jesus exposed them, lest people be further deluded by them. This is an aspect of shepherding that is scarcely known in our time.

“Mark 12:38a *And He said unto them in His doctrine . . .*” Other versions read, “*He said to them in His teaching,*” NKJV “*in His teaching He was saying,*” NASB and “*As He taught.*” NIV

I must keep before you that Jesus is moving closer and closer to the time when He will lay down His life as a ransom for all. Yet, as He approaches that awful hour, He is in the Temple, teaching extensively, and opening the truth before the people. In this text, He will even warn his listeners, particularly His disciples, about wolves in sheep’s clothing – religious

pretenders and charlatans who are driven by pride and the lust for attention. Yet, this in no way detracts Him from His mission – which means there is a connection between these words and the salvation of God. That is why they in no way turn Him away from the work He has been sent to do (John 10:17-18).

Briefly summarized, this means that anything and everything that tends to obscure the salvation of God, or cause people to be dull concerning the Kingdom of God, is, for that very reason, wrong, sinful, and to be avoided. No person can put themselves at variance with God and the fulfillment of His purpose, and remain in good standing with Him – religious or not.

HE SAID TO THEM. Remember, this is an inspired record, written as holy men were moved along by the Spirit of God. Therefore, the attention is drawn to what Jesus **said** – to His teaching, or doctrine. The longer I live, and the more I am exposed to the religious trends of the day, the more I am astounded at how very little the people are exposed to what Jesus said and taught. There are some circles who actually draw more attention to what Moses and Solomon said than to what Jesus and those He sent have said. Jesus said of His own words, “*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). Again He said, “*the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works*” (John 14:10). He said, “*My words shall not pass away*” (Matt 24:35). He said He would be ashamed of those who were ashamed of His **words** (Mk 8:38). He said those who did not receive His **words** would be judged by them “*in the last day*” (John 12:48). He also said that if a man loved Him, he would keep His **words**, affirming that His Father would love such a person, and that He and the Father would make their abode with him (John 14:23). A perpetual ignorance of what Jesus said can in no way be justified. It is wrong!

This was a public teaching of Jesus. Matthew says of this occasion, “*Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples*” (Matt 23:1). Luke provides a more specific description: “*Then in the audience of all the people He said unto His disciples*” (Luke 20:45). Here we behold another aspect of true teaching. While the words are spoken to all of the people, they are specifically directed to the disciples – those who are following Jesus. Aside from the private meeting of Nicodemus with Jesus, He did not meet with the religious leaders of the day. His disciples came to Him “*privately,*” but such a privilege was not vouchsafed to the religious elite (Matt 24:3; Mk 9:28; Mk 13:3). There were also numerous times when Jesus withdrew from the multitudes with His disciples (Mk 6:32; Lk 9:10), and spoke to them specifically and privately (Lk 10:23).

You will search in vain for an example of Jesus speaking to the multitudes without His disciples being present. If the occasion of Nicodemus is cited, it must be remembered that he himself was also a disciple, even speaking up for Jesus while among the Pharisees, to whom he belonged (John 7:50-53). All of this confirms that the primary concern of Jesus was for those who followed Him. He never left them to declare the truth to others. When He moved about through the various cities and villages, it was with His disciples (Matt 9:35). That is one of the primary reasons He chose the apostles – “*that they should be with Him*” (Mk 3:14). In view of this, the widespread neglect of the children of God is a most serious offense.

IN HIS DOCTRINE. Christ’s “*doctrine*” is what He taught. Viewed from the standpoint of its focus, He preached “*the Kingdom of God*” (Lk 4:13). That is, everything He taught revolved around what God was doing. Concerning the content of His message, He “*preached the word*” (Mk 2:2), and “*the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God*” (Lk 4:44). In this we see how Jesus opened up what God had said – what He had prophesied, revealed, and promised. The

Scriptures themselves were a prominent part of what He had to say (Matt 21:42; Lk 4:21; 24:27; John 5:39; 7:38; 10:35; 13:18).

The text refers to “*His doctrine.*” Early in His ministry, Jesus clarified the meaning of this. “*My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me*” (John 7:16). Therefore, those who refuse to hear Jesus have, in fact, refused to hear God. Those who hear Him have heard what God Himself has to say. Therefore Jesus said, “*He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me*” (John 12:44). The gravity of a body of people who are fundamentally ignorant of the doctrine of Christ cannot be overstated. If His words are spirit and life, then it is not possible to be saved while remaining in ignorance of them. Even a cursory consideration of this circumstance will cause great alarm to grip the heart.

“ 38b . . . Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, 39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts.”

Remember – this is something Jesus said in His doctrine. This is included in what he taught, and His doctrine was not His, but the Father’s who had sent Him. That means that this is something the Father wanted known – something that was to be **said** . It also means that this had to do with the Kingdom of God, which is what Jesus preached. These things are related to “*spirit*” and “*life,*” which appropriately described what Jesus said (John 6:63). They must not be viewed as negative words. Rather, they are truthful words that correctly describe the situation.

BEWARE! The word “*Beware!*” is like the blast of the trumpet of a watchman that is on the wall. It is an alert to danger in which the people are made aware of peril and jeopardy. It also confirms that the subject under consideration is not apparent, and therefore requires a call to alertness and perception.

The word “*beware*” means, “to see, discern, perceive, and know.” THAYER It carries the ideas of knowing, understanding, considering, weighing, and contemplating. “*Beware*” is a kind of contraction of the two words *become aware* . It involves alertness and taking notice of something. It is looking at something and seeing it for what it is. This is not a word promoting fear, but one that encourages discernment and understanding. There are matters with which we are confronted that, because of the jeopardy that attends them, are to be comprehended. A religion that does not promote spiritual understanding and discernment is dangerous beyond all comprehension. It is a tool in the hands of the devil, and will lead a person into the broad road that leads to destruction. If this was not the case, there would be no need for this admonition, and therefore Jesus would not have said it.

OF THE SCRIBES. Originally, “*scribes*” were writers in general, and copyists of the Law in particular. Notable scribes of Old Covenant times include Seraiah (2 Sam 8:17), Sheva (2 Sam 20:25), Elihoreph and Ahiah (1 Khgs 4:3), Shebna (2 Kgs 18:37), Nethaneel 1 Chron 24:6), David’s uncle Jonathan (1 Chron 27:32), Zadok (Neh 13:13), Elishama (Jer 36:12), Baruch (Jer 36:26), and Ezra (Ezra 7:6).

Eventually, the scribes “rose to the rank of a learned profession – becoming the doctors of the Law and interpreters of the Scriptures.” McCLINTOK Ezra was the ideal scribe who is depicted as one who “*prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*” When Artaxerxes sent a letter to Ezra he addressed him as “*a scribe of the law of the God of heaven*” (Ezra 7:10,12).

By the time of Jesus, they had carved out a significant position for themselves, and had

shaped the concepts and religious life of the people. The teaching of Jesus was therefore compared with the teaching of the scribes, and found to be vastly superior to it (Matt 7:29). It was the scribes who taught the people that Elijah must “*first come*” (Matt 17:10). Jesus acknowledged their grasp of the text of Scripture, declaring that they sat in “*Moses’ seat*” (Matt 23:2). These were prominent opponents of Jesus, and were key figures in the plotting of His death. They have a parallel in the preachers and teachers of our day who have also shaped the thinking of the people with their doctrines, determining the thrust of contemporary religion.

THEIR TRAITS. Here is the Savior’s assessment of this group of elite religious men.

“Long Clothing” – Other versions read “*long robes,*” NKJV and “*long flowing robes.*” NIV This was so unlike the high priests and priests who wore special clothing before the Lord, but took that clothing off when they left the tabernacle (Lev 6:11; 16:23). In other words, the scribes were more conscious of men than of God, and attired themselves to be seen of them. Matthew reads, “*But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments*” (Matt 23:5).

“Love salutations in the marketplaces” – Other versions read, “*to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces.*” NRSV They loved human recognition, and thought little of Divine acceptance and approval. The praise of men was their quest, and not the praise of God. Matthew says they loved “*greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi*” (Matt 23:7). Men today may prefer “*reverend,*” or “*bishop,*” or some other distinctive title.

“Love chief seats in the synagogues” – Other versions read, “*the best seats,*” NKJV and “*most important seats.*” NIV Prominence among the people was their quest – to be seen as preeminent in the religious community. The prominence of Jesus was established by what He said and did. These men gained prominence by where they were seated.

“Love uppermost rooms at feasts” – Other versions read, “*best places,*” NKJV “*places of honor at banquets.*” NIV Outside of the Temple and the synagogues, these men continued to seek prominence among men. They wanted to be noticed and honored – not for what they said, but according to appearance. All of these were worldly manners, not godly ones.

“40 Which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.”

DEVOUR WIDOWS HOUSES. Other versions read, “*take away the property of widows,*” BBE “*rob widows by taking their houses,*” GWN “*shamelessly cheat widows.*” NLT These men were like the false prophets Isaiah described as “*greedy dogs which can never have enough*” (Isa 56:11). Again, God spoke through Isaiah of evil religious leaders who appointed unrighteous decrees, and “*take away the right from the poor of My people, that the widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless*” (Isa 10:2). Jeremiah also spoke of those who oppressed “*the widow,*” exploiting them for personal gain (Jer 7:6). Ezekiel also spoke out against those who “*vexed*” the “*widow*” (Ezek 22:7). They were like the evil men of whom Micah spoke, who coveted the fields of others and “*take them by violence,*” as well as the houses of others (Micah 2:2). Micah speaks of this kind of exploitation in language that jars the soul, thereby confirming the wickedness of such practices. “*Who also eat the flesh of My people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron*” (Micah 3:3).

Although these scribes were expert in the Law, their conduct toward widows violated that very Law. “*Ye shall not afflict any widow*” (Ex 22:22). Should men choose to ignore this warning, here is what God says He will do: “*If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless*” (Exodus 22:23-24). The Lord is said to execute judgment for the widow (Deut 10:18). In the harvesting of grain, olives, and grapes, a remnant of the fruit was to be left behind for the widows (Deut 24:19-21). One of the curses pronounced from Mount Ebal was against any person who perverted the judgment of widows (Deut 27:19). In spite of these clear warnings, the scribes exploited widows, taking their resources from them, and plundering their goods – no doubt in the name of the Lord.

These practices continue today, both on an institutional and personal basis. The resources of widows are often the targets of financial campaigns. Their estates and savings accounts are frequently considered to be institutional resources.

No person who seeks to take advantage of the finances or property of widows will escape the judgement of God. They have committed an offence that betrays their miserable spirit. Should a person be foolish enough to make it difficult for a widow, or to add to her concerns, or to multiply her sorrows, or make life more burdensome to them, God will deal with them, and it will not be in mercy. Had this not been the case, Jesus would not have drawn attention to this despicable trait of the scribes.

FOR PRETENSE MAKE LONG PRAYERS. Other versions read, “for appearance’s sake,” NASB The Amplified Bible associates it with the plundering of the widows goods: “*Who devour widows’ houses and to cover it up make long prayers.*” Luke reads, “*and for a show make long prayers*” (Lk 20:47). In this case, either they made long prayers for the widows in order to obtain their resources, or they made long prayers of feigned thanksgiving for them when they had gained their goods.

We would say that they took the resources of widows in the name of religion, presenting the work of God as sorely in need of their resources, and probably pronouncing a special blessing upon them after they had deceived them into giving.

Of course, religious begging is still very much in vogue, and characterizes a considerable percentage of all Christian activity. Purported media ministries have become better known for what they receive than what they give. They have built financial empires of great opulence as a result of cunning religious marketing and exploitation. Jesus did not overlook such practices, and neither should we. We now have religious exploitation in the church, education, entertainment, music, literature, motivation, organization, and fund raising. This has now become a major branch of the Christian community. No wonder spiritual Babylon is said to traffic in such a vast array of merchandise (Rev 18:12-13).

GREATER DAMNATION. How does Jesus view such exploitation? He leaves no doubt about the matter. Such people will receive “*greater damnation*” Other versions read “*greater condemnation,*” NKJV “*will be punished most severely,*” NIV and “*will receive the heavier sentence of condemnation.*” AMPLIFIED There will, then, be degrees of punishment that are appropriate to the sins committed. That is why the day of judgment will be “*more tolerable*” for some sinners than for others (Lk 10:12). A more severe sentence will fall upon such abusive souls – who have used their religion for personal gain, and through it have exploited the people. They have built empires that have nothing to do with eternity, and have built them upon goods extorted from those upon whom God commanded them to have compassion. It is

no wonder the Lord Jesus said to beware of such people! Mark them and avoid them!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 135

“Mark 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. 42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43 And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: 44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” (Mark 12:41-44; Lk 21:1-4)

INTRODUCTION

What did Jesus do when He was **not** teaching – particularly as He approached the time when He would lay down His life, a ransom for many. We know that at the very last He spent time with His disciples, and in earnest prayer. But what of now – just a few days from that time? What will He do if no one has asked Him a question, or He has concluded some discourse? We may be sure, whatever He does, it will be in strict accord with the Divine nature. During such times, we are being exposed to the fulness of the Godhead bodily, so we do well to take note of what He **does**, as well as what he says. The Lord Jesus never conducted Himself with a disregard for who He was – the One who “*came down from heaven*” (John 3:13), When He dwelt among men, taking upon Himself “*the likeness of sinful flesh*” (Rom 8:3), He laid aside the prerogatives of Deity, humbling and emptying Himself (Phil 2:7). However, His character remained the same, and He always did the things that pleased God (John 8:29). Therefore, when we read of incidents like the one before us, we are being exposed to the Divine mind. When we are exposed to Christ’s **re** actions, as well as His actions, we are being exposed to Deity, not mere humanity. Jesus did not empty Himself of Deity, but of the right to employ Deity in the salvation of men. That is, He was a Savior who Himself depended upon God. This is an important distinction to discern.

“Mark 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.”

During the time of our text, Jesus has done a number of things in the Temple – His Father’s house. He has cleansed it of merchandisers, and those who bought their goods (Mk 11:15). He would not allow anyone to carry a vessel through the Temple (Mk 11:16). He told the people why He had driven out the merchants (Mk 11:17). He answered the chief priests, scribes, and elders who had questioned His authority (Mk 11:27-33). He spoke to the people in parables concerning His own rejection by the leaders (Mk 12:1-11). He answered a question about paying tribute to Caesar, taking occasion to tell the people to give God what bears His image (Mk 11:14-17). He confronted the scribes who tempted Him by asking a foolish question concerning a woman married to seven husbands, and whose husband would be her’s in the resurrection (Mk 12:18-27). He answered another scribe who asked Him to identify the

greatest commandment of all (Mk 12:28-34). As He taught, Jesus instigated a dialog concerning Christ being “*the son of David*” (Mk 12:35-37). He issued a warning about the scribes, telling the people to beware of them (Mk 12:38-40).

Thus far, the conduct of Jesus is clearly focused. The one time men attempted to pull Him aside into the political arena, He brought the focus back to man and God. When some tempted Him to meet them in the arena of philosophy, He promptly brought the focus back to the Scriptures and the necessity of discerning them. **Keep in mind, we are being exposed to the manner in which Divine life thinks and acts when in a human body.** In nearly every congregation of Christians with which I am familiar, this kind of conduct would be considered radical and impractical, putting one out of touch with the people.

JESUS SAT OVER AGAINST THE TREASURY. The text does not say that Jesus was weary, but that may very well have been the case. He had been walking and teaching in the Temple complex for some time. Now He sits down, His enemies shrinking back because they have been stymied by His answers, public rebukes, and warnings that the people beware of them. Where will Jesus sit down? One might imagine that He would leave the Temple, but He did not. Instead, he sat down “*over against the treasury.*” That is, Jesus sat opposite, or across from, the treasury, or collection box. This is where the One in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily chose to sit!

The “*treasury*” was a repository for receiving gifts to the Temple ministry – a contribution box GINGRICH or chest for offerings. FRIBERG Jewish history says there were thirteen of these chests in the Temple. GILL Of old time, the Temple had a treasure house, where various gifts and tithes were brought (Neh 10:38-39). Malachi also mentioned the bringing of tithes into the storehouse (Mal 3:10). All of this was based on the support system of the Tabernacle. There, a special coin – “*the shekel of the sanctuary*” – was given for the support of the priests and Tabernacle service (Ex 30:13; Lev 27:3; Num 3:47). There were also tithes of crops for the support of the priests and animals for sacrifice and the priests. That is where the concept of the support of the work of the Lord by His people began. Paul alludes to it in First Corinthians, affirming that the principle carries over to the support of the Gospel (1 Cor 9:13-14).

HE BEHELD HOW THEY GAVE. Other versions read, “*observing how,*” NASB “*watched how,*” GWN and “*watching the way.*” IE And what was He watching, observing, or beholding? It was “*how they gave.*” Some people have never been introduced to a Jesus like this – but this is the real Christ! In an assembly where they pass the collection plate, consider that Jesus is walking along with the deacon, watching **how** people put their money into the plate. If a container for personal contributions is placed in a certain area, consider Jesus as standing there, watching **how** people put their offerings into it. This is not a speculation. This is what Jesus actually did, and it has been written in order that we might know it.

Jesus was not merely beholding external manners – although He did do that. Jesus mentioned some who gave in the synagogues, who actually sounded a trumpet before doing so in order that they might gain the attention of the people (Matt 6:2). However, more was involved in His beholding than that. He also beheld the heart – whether this was an act of thanksgiving, or one of reluctance and legal obligation. He beheld whether this was a “*cheerful giver,*” or one who gave “*grudgingly*” (2 Cor 9:7). Jesus still beholds such manners.

MANY THAT WERE RICH. Not **all** that were rich, but **many** of them, “*cast in much,*” putting in “*large sums.*” NASB Jesus knew they were rich. He also knew how much they gave, and why they gave it. Of course, as Jesus will point out, heaven does not give special recognition to rich men who give a lot to the Lord. They are expected to give a lot, because they have a lot. For some

people, that is simply too personal – yet this is still the way Jesus is. The mere recollection of this will have a powerful impact upon every honest and good heart. Keep in mind that this is happening while Jesus approaches the hour of His death.

“ 38b *And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.*”

How perceptive is Christ? When He is in a public gathering, what does He see? What captures His attention? If men are in a religious setting, they generally look for the leaders, or some other prominent figure. If their minds are not matter at hand, they might look for their friends, or for novel sights. In an entertainment or sports setting, people will look for the featured entertainer or favorite athlete. What will Jesus behold? He is in the Temple – Herod’s Temple – which was itself a most impressive and imposing complex, with courts, towers, buildings, etc. Will all of this impress the Lord? Where will His discerning eyes be focused? Remember, this is the Son of God, and His death is fast approaching. What will **HE** see!

A CERTAIN POOR WIDOW. Even though the Lord, who knows all things, knew her name, she remains nameless in the record. If this was not the case, some religious bodies would have made an official church saint of her and regarded her after the flesh. So her name is withheld. What we do know about her is that she was not merely one of a cluster of widows from the local community. She was a “*certain*” widow – in this matter distinct from all of the others. There can, then, be noble distinctions among a group of people who are not themselves noticeable. She was a “widow,” which means that she was once married, but her husband had died. Yet, even though deprived of her husband, she continued to serve and honor the Lord alone. Additionally, we also know that she was a “*poor*” widow, with very limited resources. While poverty has driven some people away from the Lord, and even moved them to steal, this “*poor widow*” was giving honor to the Lord – coming to the Temple, and then giving when she got there. If we knew nothing more of her than this, she already stands heads and shoulders above many professing Christians. This is the person who caught the lingering eye of the Savior.

SHE THREW IN TWO MITES. Luke says that Jesus saw the widow “*casting in thither two mites*” (Lk 21:1) – that is, He saw her in the process of doing so. Jesus did not take note of how much the rich gave – only that they gave a lot. But in this case, He noted the exact amount of her offering! This is not how men would respond. They would make a special note of the large gifts, and consider the small one anonymous. In fact, it is not unusual for special awards to be given to those who contribute the most. That is the manner of the world. It ought not to be the manner of any body of people claiming allegiance to the Lord Jesus of our text.

“*Two mites,*” we are told, “*make a farthing.*” Thus she put the equivalent of “*one farthing*” into the treasury. Finding no precise English equivalent for this expression, some versions read, “*two mites, which make a quadrana,*” NKJV “*two small copper coins, which to amount to a cent,*” NASB and “*two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.*” NIV By modern estimation, a “*mite*” would be the equivalent of 1/5 cent, and two of them 2/5 of a penny. Round figures estimate “*two mites*” as a third of a penny. However you look at it, this was an extremely small amount of money, and would be considered unworthy of notice by anyone else.

HE CALLED HIS DISCIPLES. Notice that the disciples did not sit next to the treasury with Jesus. Perhaps they were discussing what they had heard Jesus say. Now, however, Jesus has seen something He wants them to see also, so He calls His disciples to Him – that is how He summons them, with a “*call.*” Of course, that assumes that whatever the disciples were doing, they were still alert for the call of the Master. Many a poor soul has never mastered the art of being alert for the call

of Jesus, even though in a practical way, they are, in a sense, separate from Him. The disciples were, however, still in the Temple – and that is the secret to alertness, being in a place and about activities that are devoted to the Lord.

THIS POOR WIDOW GAVE MORE. This is not a word any economist or financial advisor would have said. Nor, indeed, would any Christian institution of which I am aware, make such an observation. In this word we are not being exposed to mere oratory, or some form of hyperbole or exaggeration. This a precise statement of the case from heaven’s point of view, which IS the proper view: She had “*put in more than all those contributing to the treasury.*” AMPLIFIED In what sense had she given “*more*” ? It was in the sense in which giving is evaluated by God. **Giving is measured by what is left, not what is contributed!** It is determined by proportion, not by amount! This is the precise point Paul makes in his second epistle to the Corinthians: “*it is acceptable and welcomed in proportion to what a person has, not according to what he does not have*” AMPLIFIED (2 Cor 8:12). Men will reason that an institution cannot be built with such gifts. Of course, God is not building institutions, so that is of no concern to Him. There was also a Temple to be maintained in the time of our text. Notwithstanding, the Divine assessment of this widow’s gift was, “*more . . . than they all.*”

“ 44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

In a few short words, Jesus evaluates the gifts of both the rich and the poor. This is a Divine assessment, for even though Jesus was tempted as a man, He spoke as the Lord. Even though He suffered as a man, His words were the words of God. Even though He humbled Himself becoming as a servant, His words would never pass away. I do not believe this reality has dawned on many souls. It appears that they find it too easy to ignore the words of Jesus, and sometimes even to twist them to blend with their own ideas. Further, the fact that Jesus said these words to His disciples confirms that this is something His followers are to know. Their lives are to be lived in an awareness of this observation. It will assist in liberating them from covetousness and fleshly approaches to giving to the Lord.

OF THEIR ABUNDANCE. “*The rich*” gave a lot because they had a lot – “*of their abundance.*” It is not that this was wrong, it is just that it was unimpressive. It was something that was expected of them, for it was God who gave them “*power to get wealth*” (Deut 8:18). The Scriptures teach us that those with much are to know how to handle it. They are “*not to be highminded,*” or conceited and haughty, “*or trust in uncertain riches.*” They are rather to trust “*in the living God,*” “*do good*” with their resources, “*be rich in good works,*” ready and willing to “*distribute,*” and to “*communicate*” or share their resources (1 Tim 6:17-18). Such souls will be honored by God, just as surely as this poor widow.

But that is not the kind of rich people Jesus has been observing. His wording suggests that the **only** reason they gave was that they had much, and therefore it was no disadvantage for them to put “*much*” into the treasury. In fact, other versions read they gave “*out of their surplus*” NASB “*what they had no need of,*” BBE and “*what they could spare.*” GWN They made sure they still had an abundance left. What does a person or family do when they have a lot of extra funds – more than they need? Do they squander it on luxuries, or things that they do not need? All people have to determine this for themselves. But they must do so while being aware that Jesus is observing them, and taking due note of what they do.

Those rich men did not give out of a thankful heart, or with any degree of sacrifice. They were not thinking about the Lord, the Temple, or the ordained activities that went on

there, and those who did them. Of course, in the Christian environment in which we are living, these men would receive special attention, and the precise amount of their giving would be duly noted. Perhaps they would receive a special award for being the premier givers, and the ones upon whom the work of the Lord depended. Under such circumstances, Jesus, at the best, would only receive what the world refers to as “honorable mention.” You can decide for yourself how that kind of attitude will be assessed on the day of judgment.

OF HER WANT. While those who were rich have their gifts out of their abundance, this poor widow gave hers “*of her want.*” That is, “*out of her poverty,*” NKJV “*poor as she is,*” NLT “*of her destitution,*” DARBY or “*out of her deep poverty.*” AMPLIFIED An accountant would have advised her that she could not afford to give to the Temple. A counselor might have told her that God did not expect an impoverished widow to give. A language expert might have told her that nothing in the Greek suggested that a person in her financial situation was under any obligation to give to God. However, this woman was not looking for a reason **not** to give, but showed that she had found a reason **to** give. She realized that what little she had was given to her by God, and she knew He could be trusted to give her daily bread. She was persuaded the Lord knew she had “*need*” of food, shelter, and clothing. The rich men probably knew that also – at least in a creedal way. But this woman was willing to trust the Lord, and to stifle any tendency to lust after other things. She not only gave, she made a trip to the Temple to do so. When she reached into her purse, there simply was not much there. In fact, Jesus will tell us how much was there, and what she did with it.

ALL THAT SHE HAD. How poor was “*poor*” ? Precisely what was the level of “*poverty*” in which this woman found herself? When she reached into a bag, there were ONLY two mites in it. Thus, Jesus said, “*she cast in **all** that she had.,*” or “***all** she owned.*” NASB Was it that she had some extra funds at home, and these two mites were simply all that she had with her at the time? Indeed not! Jesus says this was “*even all **her living** ,*” “*her **whole** livelihood,*” NKJV or “*all she **had** to live on.*” NIV In other words, this woman went home with nothing. Like the widow that was commanded to sustain Elijah, she had to depend on the Lord for her **next** meal. Jesus took note of this circumstance, and stated the truth of the matter – that she had out-given all the others. I do not doubt that she found some provisions when she returned home.

The purpose of this text is not to teach people to give everything they have and live day-by-day. Rather, it is to show them that they should know how to handle what they **do** have, how to correctly honor the Lord, and that living by faith is always seen and honored by God.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 136

“ Mark 13:1 And as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! 2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3 And as He sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:1-4; Matt 24:1-3; Lk 21:5-7)

INTRODUCTION

As the time draws near for Jesus to lay down His life, the disciples do not have the faintest idea of what is going to take place. Jesus is keenly aware of the circumstances, and they are oblivious to them – unaware of “*the hour*” that was approaching. One might expect that Jesus would depart from such a situation, choosing to be alone at that time. But this is not the case. Instead, these men are growing more and more precious to Him. As it is written, “*having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end*” (John 13:1). That love has prompted the Lord to remain with His disciples, continuing to declare the Kingdom of God to them, acquainting them with both the manner and the determinations of that Kingdom. There is something important to note in all of this. These were the key men in all the world – twelve of them. Christ’s manner among these men will be indicative of how He conducts Himself among all that have been given to him by the Father. I do not know of any place in Scripture where Jesus is said to have become intimately involved in the domestic or social aspects of the lives of His disciples. There was the time that he healed the mother of Peter’s wife (Matt 8:14-15). However, that hardly qualifies as, what I have referred to as, intimate involvement. The point here is that **the lives of the disciples revolved around what Jesus was doing**. His life was **not** centered in what **they** were doing. This does not mean He was heartless, but that He was rather intent upon His disciples being consciously joined together with him and His Father, and involved in the will of God (John 17:21-24). A view of Jesus that has Him **focusing** on the personal lives of His people is not one gathered from Scripture. He knows them, to be sure, but the accent is placed on them knowing and following Him.

“ Mark 13:1 And as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!”

AS HE WENT OUT OF THE TEMPLE. Jesus had been in the Temple complex for some time. Two separate entrances have taken place (Mk 11:11,15). Further, this occasion was the last time He would be in the Temple. He would never enter it again as a Man. During those two times He did

the following. •1 – Observed the things taking place in the Temple (Mk 11:11). •2 – Cleansed the Temple (Mk 11:15). •3 – Stopped people from carrying things through the Temple (Mk 11:16). •4 – Preached the Gospel in the Temple (Lk 20:1). •5 – Healed the blind and lame that came to Him in the Temple (Matt 21:14). •6 – Responded to the priests and scribes who told Him to rebuke the children for praising Him (Matt 21:15-16). •7 – Taught the people concerning the Temple being a house of prayer (Mk 11:17). •8 – Responded to the Temple authorities who asked Him by what authority He was acting (Mk 11:27:33). •9 – Delivered a parable concerning His rejection by the rulers (Mk 12:1-11). •10 – Delivered the parable about the wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14). •11 – Responded to a question about paying tribute to Caesar (Mk 11:13-17). •12 – Responded to those who tempted Him by asking concerning a woman who had seven husbands (Mk 12:18-27). •13 – Responded to a scribe who asked Him the identity of the greatest commandment (Mk 11:28-34). •14 – Instigated a discussion about why the scribes said Jesus was the son of David (Mk 12:35-37). •15 – Issued a warning about the scribes (Mk 12:38-40). •16 – Delivered a scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:1-36). •17 – Pronounced judgment against Jerusalem (Matt 23:37-38). •18 – Taught every day in the Temple (Lk 19:47). •19 – Observed how people cast their money into the treasury (Mk 12:41). •20 – Particularly noted a poor widow who gave all she had, and commented concerning her gift (Mk 12:42-44). As far as we know, our Lord's comments about this poor widow were among the last recorded words of His public teaching.

All of this has taken place in 2-3 days, and provide a kind of index concerning the aggressive ministry of Jesus. Nothing in Scripture suggests that He is less active in heaven than He was upon earth. The real Jesus is a working and productive Jesus – even in His people!

ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES SAID TO HIM. The disciple who asked this question is not identified. Mark says one of His disciples asked him a question while he was exiting the Temple. Matthew says that “*His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the Temple*” (Matt 24:1). Luke says that “*some spake of the Temple*” (Lk 21:5). The picture we get is that as they were leaving the Temple complex, the disciples were talking among themselves concerning the Temple. All of them decided to draw Jesus' attention to the subject of their discussion. Mark points out that one man spoke for them all.

SEE THESE BUILDINGS. This question was apparently prompted by Jesus' statement concerning the widow who cast all that she had into the Temple treasury. Mark says the disciples drew the attention of Jesus to the buildings in the Temple complex: “*Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!*” Another version reads, “*Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!*” NIV Another reads, “*Look, teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!*” RSV The Amplified Bible reads, “*Teacher! Notice the sort and quality of these stones and buildings!*”

Luke provides further insight into the nature of this observation. He says some had been speaking about the Temple, “*how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts,*” and that Jesus answered while that observation was being made (Lk 21:5). Concerning the expression “*and gifts,*” other version read “*votive gifts.*” NASB “*gifts dedicated to God,*” NIV “*offerings,*” RSV and “*and consecrated offerings [laid up to be kept].*” AMPLIFIED “*Votive gifts*” are gifts accompanied by a vow.

After leaving the Temple, they finally arrived on “*the mount of Olives*” (Matt 24:3). Either there or along the way, the Temple site had apparently been especially magnificent. With the setting sun brightening its grandeur, the glistening marble and ornate gold must have been most impressive. Historians confirm that some of the blocks of marble were as large as seventy feet long, ten feet wide,

and eight feet high – impressive in any period, and within any culture.

Much of this resplendent beauty had been made possible by large gifts. The point the disciples appear to be making is that if all of the gifts had been the size of that offered by the poor widow, such an impressive Temple would never have been built. How is it possible that she gave “*more than they all*,” when such meager gifts could never have allowed that Temple to be built? In addition to this, Jesus had also said to Jerusalem, as reported by Matthew, “*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*” (Matt 23:38). The words “*your house*” no doubt refer to the Temple itself, and were said as Jesus was leaving it (Matt 23:38-24:1). In other words, having rejected their Messiah, when Jesus once and for all left the Temple, it was destined for sure destruction. Now they would have it all for themselves – at least for a while.

“ 2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

JESUS SAID UNTO HIM. Mark has Jesus replying to the person who asked the question. Because the question represented the inquiry of all of the disciples, Matthew says “*Jesus said unto them*” (Matt 24:2). The fact that Jesus answered the question confirms that this was an area where understanding was required. Our Lord is dealing with more than a casual observation. He perceives that the manner of the Kingdom has not yet been grasped. Therefore He will uproot the notion that the Kingdom of God majors on things that can be seen, are impressive, and are the works of men’s hands. The love and preference for appearance continues to dominate the thinking of many professing Christians, even though this record has been left for our admonition.

As is always the case, the words of Jesus are never vain, pointless, or optional. He Himself declared, “*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). In this statement, Jesus was not referring to official words or statements, for He never spoke loosely, casually, or without strict spiritual perspective. Men may depart from their godly persuasions when they speak, but Jesus did not. They may offer explanations and opinions that are not within the framework of an acute consciousness of God – but Jesus did not.

DO YOU SEE THESE BUILDINGS? At this time, Jesus saw these buildings differently than the disciples. They saw them as the result of great gifts and extensive effort– a magnificent set of structures dedicated to the Lord and to the fulfillment of His ordinances. And, indeed, from their perspective this was true. Jesus, on the other hand, saw the **destiny** of these buildings. He saw them as a place where widows had been robbed, and corrupt teaching had been delivered. He saw them as a place where He had been summarily rejected by the Jewish leaders, even though He had been sent to them by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom they professed to be their fathers, and which God they worshipped. Thus He asked His disciples, “*Do YOU see these buildings?*” He is urging them to look at them again, and to see them from another perspective.

Mark refers to “*these great buildings*.” Matthew and Luke record that Jesus said “*See ye not all these things ?*” (Matt 24:2), and “*as for these things which ye behold*” (Lk 21:6). The expression “*these things*” is translated from a single word. This is the same expression Jesus used when referring to the Gentiles quest for food, drink, and clothing, referring to those objects as “*these things*” (Matt 6:32-33). He also used it when referring to matters that are revealed to the sons of God: “*these things*” (Matt 11:25; 13:51). When referring to what God had given Him to say to the world, Jesus referred to them as “*these things*” (John 8:26).

In other words, “these things” must be understood within the environment to which they belong. There are things that belong to the order of the seen – the temporal order. Therefore it is

written, *“the things which are seen are temporal”* (2 Cor 4:18). Whatever the eye can see or the hand can touch must be seen as temporary. A person has reached a sort of spiritual milestone when this can be done with consistency and thankfulness.

ONE STONE SHALL NOT BE LEFT ON ANOTHER. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say exactly the same thing: *“there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down”* (Matt 24:2; Lk 21:6). That is, the buildings would be violently destroyed. He is not speaking of the process of decay, or even of the end of the world, when everything that **can** be shaken **will** be shaken (Heb 12:27). The Temple would be decimated in an earthly disaster wrought by men, and as a result of Divine judgment. Of course, there is a sense in which everything that is seen is subject to destruction. However, that is not what Jesus is speaking of here. Matthew records Jesus saying the following just before He left the Temple. These words were spoken after He had soundly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, **Ye shall not see Me henceforth**, till ye shall say, **Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord**”* (Matt 23:37-39). This is the time to which Jesus now refers.

Here we behold the heart of Jesus. Although He is moving toward the hour when *“the iniquity of us all”* will be laid upon Him, and He will be *“forsaken”* by His God, yet His thoughts linger on the rejection that has been experienced in Jerusalem. He sees the Temple that He had twice cleansed as being destroyed by the Gentiles, and trodden down by their feet (Lk 21:24). With that in mind, how differently the Temple buildings looked to Him! Oh, what a penalty would be imposed upon those people and their magnificent buildings because they had spurned the Just One! So, in view of this situation, He summons His disciples to look at the buildings again, seeing them from a higher point of view.

“ 3 And as He sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”

AS HE SAT. Jesus *“sat,”* perhaps wearied with the strenuous activities of these closing days. He has spent His last time in the Temple, at least as a Man. Now He is not only considering His own sacrificial death, but the judgment that shall be brought upon the people who heartlessly entered into it by betraying and murdering Him.

The *“mount of Olives”* was a prominent place during the closing days Jesus spent with his disciples. Once, during His ministry among the Jews, He *“went unto the mount of Olives.”* It was at that time that *“all the people came unto Him, and He sat down, and taught them”* (John 8:1-2). That was also the time when the scribes and Pharisees *“brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery”* (John 8:3). There is no other reference of Jesus going to this mount until the time arrived when He would prepare to die for the sins of the world.

This is the mount where he was located when He sent out two disciples to bring a colt on which He would ride into Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah (Matt 21:1). It is also where He would take His disciples on the night of His betrayal, after they had sung a hymn (Matt 26:30). During the last week of His pre-cross life, it is written that *“at night, He went out, and abode in the mount called the mount of Olives”* (Lk 21:37). This is the place where He agonized in prayer prior to His betrayal, when His sweat fell to the ground in great drops of blood (Lk 22:39). Now He sits there *“over against the Temple,”* or opposite to it, where it was

in His full view.

PETER, JAMES, JOHN, AND ANDREW. As Jesus sits there, four of His disciples come to Him: Peter, James, John, and Andrew – two sets of brothers. These were the first disciples Jesus called to Himself. First, He called Peter and Andrew (Matt 4:18), and immediately after that James and John (Matt 4:21-22). Andrew, in fact, was the first one who heard John the Baptist speak of Christ, and left John to follow Him. He then went and told Peter that they had found the Messiah, and brought him to Jesus (John 1:40-42). Both sets of brothers were fishermen, and both left their trade to follow Jesus. Only Mark identifies who came to Jesus with this question. Whether or not the other disciples heard His answer directly is not clear.

THEY ASKED HIM, PRIVATELY. The heart of these disciples is revealed in their quest for an understanding of Jesus' words. It seems to me that they perceived the sensitivity of the word Jesus spoke, and thus sought to be alone with Him when they asked for insight. In this event we will see the fulfillment of Jesus words, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*" (Matt 5:6).

WHEN SHALL THINGS BE, AND WHAT WILL BE THE SIGN? "*Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?*" Two arresting questions! Matthew specifies three questions: "*when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?*" (Matt 24:3).

These disciples had made an association of different words spoken by the Lord. Just prior to this, when He spoke of the desolation of the Temple and the widow's gift, He had not said anything about His coming or the end of the world. I do not doubt that they correlated the promise, "*Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (Matt 23:39), with His coming. But the relationship was not too clear. Jesus had, however, spoken frequently of both His coming and the end of the world during His ministry. References to His coming include the following: Matt 16:27-28; Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26,27; 12:40; 17:24-30; 18:8). Jesus spoke specifically of the end of the world one time, in Matthew 5:18. Following this, He spoke of it also (Matt 24:35; Mk 13:31). However, the prophets had made a point of the world passing away (Psa 102:25-27; Isa 24:19-20; 34:4; 51:6; 65:17).

Thus these disciples were not only familiar with Scripture, but could obviously correlate it with the words of Jesus. Also, they were able to discern that there was a similar correlation in the words that He spoke to them. **This is a marvelous commentary on the impact of Jesus upon the hearts and minds of those who have ears to hear.**

Note that these disciples inquire concerning "*the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled.*" Among other things, they entertained no doubts about the certainty of their fulfillment. They only wanted to know what would enable them to see it. Matthew says they asked concerning "*the sign of Thy coming and the end of the word*" (Matt 24:3). **Here it is important to note that it is not wrong to ask for signs.** Jesus said that "*a wicked and adulterous generation*" would not be given a sign (Matt 16:4; Mk 8:12). But He will not deny the request of His disciples. Luke is most precise in his statement of the question. "*What sign will there be when these things are about to take place ?*" NKJV (Luke 21:7). Thus we have the setting for the well-known Olivet discourse. It is a text that has been misunderstood, disbelieved, and even mutilated.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 137

“ Mark 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: 6 For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.”

(Mark 13:5-7; Matt 24:4-6; Lk 21:8-9)

INTRODUCTION

The very fact that these words were spoken very near to the time when Jesus was betrayed, is good reason to give special heed to them. They were especially important because of the time. In just a day or so, the disciples will be put to the greatest test they have ever experienced. For the first time, they will all forsake Christ. Jesus knows this, and therefore speaks to them of things most critical – things that will better prepare them for the future. Later Jesus will tell them that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will bring Christ’s words to their remembrance (John 14:26). I have no doubt, that the discourse He now delivers to these eager disciples what will rank high in the words the Spirit will enable them to recall. Once they are recalled, the Spirit will also shed light upon them, guiding the disciples into all truth as Jesus said He would (John 16:13). Because this Olivet discourse has been greatly muddled by succeeding generations, the church has tended to either neglect it altogether, or treat it as being totally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. I find it exceedingly difficult to believe that Jesus would deliver such a lengthy discourse concerning a temporal judgment alone. For the destruction of Jerusalem was not intended to make a full end of it. Jesus will make this clear in the words that follow. There are things said in this text that have challenged the most prodigious spiritual thinkers throughout history. Every believer can profit from them, and be duly warned concerning great spiritual disturbances and perilous times. Let us gird up the loins of our minds and prepare to glean in a field that is designed to cause hope to flourish.

“ Mark 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you.”

Jesus is seated on the Mount of Olives, and Peter, James, John, and Andrew have approached Jesus privately. Their approach testifies to their respect for Jesus, and their complete dependence upon His word. The question that had been asked Jesus was, *“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”* (13:4). Matthew gives the more extensive version of the question: *“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”* (Matt 24:3).

These disciples do not ask Jesus questions like the Pharisees did (Mk 10:2), or the scribes

(Mk 7:5), or the Sadducees (Mk 12:18), or even that rich young ruler who inquired about eternal life (Mk 10:17). Their motives were more pure, their quest more fervent, and their reliance more complete. While they had asked Jesus a question about what the scribes taught (Mk 9:11), this time their question was more noble and more focused. They asked Jesus about what HE had said.

BEGAN TO SAY. It is frequently said of Jesus that He “*began to say*” (Matt 11:7; Lk 4:21; Lk 11:29; 12:1). This expression emphasizes the thoroughness of our Lord’s words. He spoke out of the rich reservoir of His knowledge and grasp of the truth, and with a complete understanding of all things. He also knew **what** was appropriate to say, and who should hear it. The word “*began*” comes from a word that means “to commence from the beginning.” LOUW-NIDA In this case, it meant Jesus started at the proper place, and proceeded to the appropriate conclusion. Note how Jesus begins His answer. It has great significance.

TAKE HEED. Then Gospels contain fourteen references to Jesus saying “*Take heed,*” covering eleven different occasions. They are translated from a single Greek word that means “to have understanding, to discern, perceive, understand,” THAYER “careful observing, watch, beware,” FRIBERG “to see to it, take care.” GINGRICH **Jesus taught that men are responsible for being perceptive, understanding, and discerning.** They are to see to it that they are not ignorant or unlearned about critical matters. This is a most difficult assignment in a society such as our own, that is largely hedonistic – enamored of pleasure and entertainment. Even in matters relating to the worship of God Almighty, men speak of having fun, enjoying themselves, etc. A great emphasis is placed on feeling and appearance – neither of which are to be trusted. I am persuaded that if Jesus walked in our society as He did in Galilee, He would have very few requests to speak in the churches. His words were too demanding for as lethargic society. He told people to take heed and beware of certain people (Matt 16:6) and to take heed how they heard. The apostles told those who labored for the Lord to take how heed they built on the foundation (1 Cor 3:10), to take heed to themselves (1 Tim 4:16), and to take heed to the Gospel (2 Pet 1:19). Taking heed calls for a posture of alertness and spiritual intelligence.

LEST ANY MAN DECEIVE YOU. And what are they to discern, beware of, and guard against? They are not to allow themselves to be deceived by any man! Those who follow Christ are responsible for seeing to it that they are NOT deceived. They are to see to it they are not simple, and easy to be persuaded of something that is not true. By saying “*lest any man deceive you,*” Jesus means that it is possible to make a place for the devil (Eph 4:27), having an unguarded moment when the deceiver can convince you of something that is not true. To put it another way, if you do not take heed, being spiritually alert and vigilant, you WILL be deceived, for Satan always seizes upon such opportunities. Matthew reads, “*that no man deceive you*” (Matt 24:4). Luke reads, “*that ye be not deceived*” (Lk 21:8), emphasizing the **condition** of being deceived rather than the **means** through which the deception comes.

While it is true that being deceived in any area is wrong, Jesus particularly focuses on being deceived regarding the matters of which He has spoken: the destruction of Jerusalem, His own coming, and the end of the world. Notwithstanding His warning, and solemn injunction to take heed in the areas of teaching, the coming of the Lord and the end of the world are among the doctrines that been corrupted most of all. It is as though the devil heard his words, and commenced the development of doctrines that would tend to obscure and muddle rather than clarify and stabilize the thinking of the people.

If men are to take heed not to be deceived in these areas, why have men allowed the church to become so grossly ignorant in them? Why can religious charlatans hawk their

fictitious books concerning the coming of Christ and the end of the world among Christians? Why have church leaders failed to expound these matters to the people? Why are the writings of men on these subjects more popular and better known than what Jesus and the apostles had said on them? Or, are there people who are oblivious to this circumstance? Does anyone of sound mind imagine that the words of our text do not apply to them? Do the contextual fanatics imagine that they only apply to Peter, James, John, and Andrew?

It ought to be noted that the worst of all exploitation is that which capitalizes on the words of Jesus. Those who use His words to build careers and sell books are the worst of all.

“ 6 For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

The reason for Christ’s sober warning is the onslaught of delusion that was coming. **The increase of delusion demands that there be a corresponding increase in alertness, vigilance, and discernment.** Even the world knows this is the only proper response to impending danger. When the possibility of a terrorist attack increases, the nation is put on a high alert. If there is a hurricane or tornado approaching, all kinds of warnings are issued. Special devices are sounded to make people aware of impending disaster. Areas are even evacuated when serious danger is known, and provisions are made to move people to a place of safety. Men do know what to do in the time of danger. Now, we will see how seriously they will take the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who knows all things, and speaks with the interest of His people in mind.

MANY SHALL COME IN MY NAME. Other versions read, “*using My name,*” GWN “*assuming My name,*” WEYMOUTH “*bearing the name,*” WILLIAMS and “*appropriating to themselves the name.*” AMPLIFIED That is, they will come declaring that they will do what the promised Messiah was promised to do. They will say they can accomplish that the promised Christ was prophesied to do (Deut 18:15,18). They declare they are the answer to the need of the people. They say they are the ones upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests (Isa 61:1-4).

Concerning these deceivers, Josephus said, “The land was overrun with magicians, seducers, and impostors, who drew the people after them in multitudes into solitudes and deserts, to see the signs and miracles which they promised to show by the power of God.” Among these are mentioned particularly Dositheus, the Samaritan, who affirmed that He was Christ; Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-10), who said He appeared among the Jews as the Son of God; and Theudas (Act 5:36), who persuaded many to go with him to the river Jordan, to see the waters divided.

It is interesting to note that one of the official titles of the Pope of Rome is “the Vicar of Christ.” The following is taken from the Catholic Encyclopedia: “. . . the title Vicar of Christ is more expressive of his supreme headship of the Church on earth, which he bears in virtue of the commission of Christ and with vicarial power derived from Him.” NEW ADVENT CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA The word “vicar” means “one serving as a substitute or agent: specifically: an administrative deputy.” That is a classic example of someone coming “in the name” of Christ, from the ordinary point of view.

SAYING, “I AM CHRIST.” While the words “*in My name*” might be considered as meaning by Christ’s authority, or with His blessing, Jesus takes the matter further than that. He says the deceivers would claim to actually be Him: “*I am Christ!*” Luke says, “*the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them!*” (Lk 21:8).

There have been men who made this claim. One of Scriptural note is Simon, who was noted for being “*the great power of God*” (Acts 9:10). Historians also affirm “the names of 24 false Messiahs are recorded as having appeared between the time of the Emperor Adrian and the year 1682.” ALBERT BARNES

However, of more immediate relevance is the apostolic doctrine concerning other Christs who were not encapsulated in a particular man in the flesh, but in a false gospel. This represents an even more subtle attack by the wicked one. Paul alluded to these Christ-imposters in Second Corinthians, referring to them as “*another Jesus whom we have not preached*” (2 Cor 11:4). Later in this very discourse, Jesus will refer to the aggregate of these imposters as “*false Christs*” (13:22). These imposters make claim to attributes that belong to Jesus alone. Yet, they have no power to do what He does. Like all idols, they are personalized by demons (Deut 32:17), who spread their damnable heresies among men (1 Tim 4:1).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they he did not want them to “*have fellowship with devils,*” or demons (1 Cor 10:20). He also said that these demons spread a spiritual table from which men could eat and drink. Yet, one could not eat from the Lord’s table if they did (1 Cor 10:21). We are speaking about very real unseen personalities, who perpetrate very real doctrines, and have very real influences. It is the solemn responsibility of every professing follower of Christ to see to it that they are not taken in by such deceivers

AND SHALL DECEIVE MANY. Both Matthew and Mark relate the words of Jesus: “*and shall deceive many.*” Other versions read “*mislead many,*” NASB and “*lead many astray.*” NRSV That is, they will throw the people off course, lead them to adopt the wrong emphasis, and effectively direct them to the broad road that leads to destruction. Jesus is the real “*Way,*” but these will put men on another way. This will not be a small uprising that will quickly die out. It will be a pervasive delusion during which a great “*falling away*” will occur (2 Thess 2:3). It will lead many to “*depart from the faith,*” and give “*heed to seducing spirits*” (1 Tim 4:1).

However, the only ones who will not be deceived will be those who took Christ’s warning seriously – those who saw to it that they were not deceived. The rest, because of their failure to do this, will be vulnerable to these pretenders, and will embrace strong delusion.

“7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.”

Jesus now begins to identify some signs that will attend the destruction of Jerusalem, His own coming, and the end of the world. They are ominous signs that indicate agitation, social upheaval, and natural turbulence. Disorder, animosity, and political fermentation will take place. Jesus is teaching His disciples to associate such phenomena with proper things, and not to learn to live with them as though they were normality’s rather than indicators.

YE SHALL HEAR. Reports would come to their ears of political turbulence and upheaval. Although at the time of this prophecy Rome was in a state of peace, historians say that shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem “Four emperors, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, suffered violent deaths in the short space of eighteen months. As a consequence of this, bloody wars broke out. “Under Cureanus the Roman governor, a sedition was raised on the day of the passover, in which twenty thousand perished; after that, in another tumult, ten thousand were destroyed by cut-throats: in Ascalon two thousand more, in Ptolemais two thousand, at Alexandria fifty thousand, at Damascus ten thousand, and elsewhere in great numbers.” Vid. Joseph. Antiq. 50:20. c. 6. & de Bello Jud. 50:2 As Jesus will confirm later,

similar disturbances will precede His coming and the end of the world. It ought to be noted that signs are given to be seen, digested, and to constrain men to make preparations for what follows.

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS. Luke says “*wars and commotions,*” “*disturbances,*” NASB or “*revolutions.*” NIV (Lk 21:9). Wars are conflicts that were taking place. I gather that the immediate opposition would be to the Jews, as the judgment of Jerusalem drew near. Rumors of wars were intentions that had not yet been carried out. Josephus says that Bardanes, and after him Vologeses, declared war against the Jews, but it was not carried into execution, Antiq. xx. 34. He also says that Vitellius, governor of Syria, declared war against Aretas, king of Arabia, and wished to lead his army through Palestine, but the death of Tiberius prevented the war, Antiq. xviii. 5. 3. The social and political environment would be filled with reports of nations clashing, and of nations set in opposition to one another. Although God had ordained government (Rom 13:1-7), yet because of iniquity and imminent judgment against those who committed it, the fabric of society would begin to come apart.

Men may ascribe various causes to the appearance of such conflict. They might say it was owing to a deterioration of morality, or the decline of involvement of men in noble causes, or the breakdown of the family unit. Perhaps it could be traced to the rise of an appetite for entertainment, or the lust for the things of the world. While there is a measure of truth in those observations, they are not precise enough. Jesus does not say these signs are the evidence of the fall of a nation, or are indicators of the rise of iniquity. Rather, these are signs of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, signs of His coming, and signs of the end of the world. They are indications that iniquity is already on the throne, and God has already been renounced. They are confirmation that judgment is coming – a judgment that cannot be reversed or averted.

BE NOT TROUBLED. Matthew and Mark read “*be not troubled.*” Luke reads, “*be not terrified.*” That is, do not be troubled or terrified concerning the reports of wars and rumors of wars. Do not be distracted by these things, so that fear moves to the throne of the heart displacing faith. “*Troubled*” is a word related to hopelessness, despair, and cries of fear. It is an inward experience that disorients the soul, and causes alarm and unsettling. In this case, it is the opposite of faith and peace that settle the soul, enabling the individual to proceed properly.

SUCH THINGS MUST NEEDS BE. Mark reads, “*such things must needs be.*” Matthew reads, “*these things must come to pass*” (Matt 24:6). Luke reads, “*for these things must first come to pass*” (Lk 21:9). That is, there is no way to avert these things, so do not allow yourselves to be diverted by them. These are Divine appointments – that is why they “*must be.*” They are the means by which God will alert His people to what is coming in order that they might make due preparations for them. He will not necessarily insulate them from such things, but will make provision for them to respond appropriately. Although wars and rumors of wars sound as though chaos is taking over, they are all being strictly managed by the Lord. The situation will not be out of control, although thoughtless men will think it is.

THE END IS NOT YET. These signs are the beginning, not the end. They are the prelude, not the symphony. The “*end*” of which He speaks specifically relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, when one Temple stone would not be left upon another. However, it generally applies to His coming, and the end of the world as well. He will inform them later that there will be other signs that will alert the people to the need for taking special measures.

“*The end*” is an appointed end, whether we are speaking of Jerusalem or the world. For

Jerusalem, Jesus announced “*Your house is left unto you desolate*” (Matt 23:38), “*Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles*” (Lk 21:24), and “*ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say. . .*” (Matt 23:39). A moral line had been crossed, and a Divine judgment had been determined that would not be reversed. We learn from this of the seriousness of continually rejecting the Lord’s Christ. There comes a time when the judgment of the ungodly is cast in stone.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 138

“Mark 13:8 *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.*” (Mark 13:8; Matt 24:7-8; Lk 21:10-11)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is answering the inquiry of His disciples. Matthew gives a more full account of their request. *“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?”* (Matt 24:3). It is a mark of true disciples to inquire into any epoch that has been foretold – whether for blessing, cursing, or judgment. Disciples do have inquiring minds – not for the sake of gathering information, but in order that they might prepare themselves for what is coming. Before leaving the Temple, and after upbraiding the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, Jesus had declared the coming desolation of the Temple, and that the people would see Him no more until they said *“Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Matt 23:37-39). Jesus had also delivered an arresting parable in which He likened Israel to a vineyard, saying God would destroy the husbandmen of the vineyard, and give the vineyard to others (Mk 12:9). These sayings, coupled with Christ’s words concerning one Temple stone not being left upon another, have prompted this question. In the question itself, we see some advancement in the disciples. Prior to this, when Jesus said He would suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and rise the third day, Peter had said, *“Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee”* (Matt 16:22). Now, however, so such response is registered at the news of something not desired. Rather, these men have asked for some signs concerning what Jesus had said, that they might the better prepare for it, and be alerted when when the things of which He had spoken were about to happen. These days, there is an appalling lack of this kind of spirit. Men have been victimized by an erroneous theology that declares God’s people will never pass through such things. Their can be no more erroneous theology than one that disarms the people!

“Mark 13:8a *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom . . .*” All three of the synoptic Gospels say the same thing. The global environment will be one in which nation will compete against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Not only does this word apply to the period immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, it extends beyond that to the time after the dominance of the world empire of Rome, when there would be competing kingdoms. It appears that the greater part of this word has to do with the coming of the Lord and the end of the world.

Notice how there is an escalation in what the Lord prophecies. First he has spoken of provincial and regional conflicts: *“Wars and rumors of war”* (13:7). **Now, however, the disruption spreads to nations and kingdoms.** No longer is the conflict confined to rulers and their selfish plans, but now whole bodies or people and political entities are involved in fierce

and unrelenting competition.

NATIONS. Nations have to do with race or ethnicity. It particularly has to do with the Gentile world. Ultimately, nations consisted of the various “*families*” of the sons of Noah. As it is written, “*These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood*” (Gen 10:32). From the standpoint of Divine purpose, this was the predetermined assignment of people to certain areas of the earth. Again it is written, “*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation,*” or “*the exact places where they should live*” NIV (Acts 17:26).

History says the following about the period just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. “At Caesarea the Jews and Syrians contended about the right to the city, and twenty thousand of the Jews were slain. At this blow the whole nation of the Jews was exasperated, and carried war and desolation through the Syrian cities and villages. Sedition and civil war spread throughout Judea; Italy was also thrown into civil war by the contests between Otho and Vitellius for the crown.” ALBERT BARNES

In confirmation of the fact that sin has thoroughly defiled humanity, nation will rise against nation, and those of common ethnicity will contend for the dominance. They will seek their own interests rather than those of the Lord. They will ignore the Divinely appointed quest of seeking the Lord (Acts 17:27), choosing instead to promote their own worldly interests. Perhaps it will be in the name of fairness, or equality, or some other personal interest. However, as men grow more and more self-centered, they become more and more belligerent and contentious. As this accelerates, it is a sign of judgment to come, and of the ultimate demise of all things. This is one reason why Paul said the perilous times that were coming would be characterized by men being “*lovers of their own selves*” (2 Tim 3:2).

KINGDOMS. Kingdoms have to do with a rule, and the extent of the rule. It is a political view of the people. Thus we read of “*the kingdom of Og*” and “*the kingdom of Sihon*” (Josh 13:21,27), “*the kingdom of Babylon*” and “*the kingdom of Persia*” (Dan 4:29; 10:13). All of these kingdoms apply to “*the kingdoms of the world*” (Isa 23:17), or “*the kingdoms of this world*” (Rev 11:15).

This word also confirms that the prophecy is not confined to the destruction of Jerusalem, for Rome was the world empire at that time. This kind of global political disturbance extends beyond the fall of Rome, into the time when kingdoms are jousting with one another for the dominance.

These are the kingdoms Satan showed to Jesus “*in a moment of time*” during His wilderness temptation (Lk 4:5). From a spiritual point of view, Satan has a kingdom, comprised of the kingdoms of this world (Lk 11:18). Over and above that, there is the “*kingdom of God*” (Rom 14:17), also referred to as “*the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt 4:17), “*the kingdom of His dear Son*” (Col 1:13), and “*the kingdom of Christ and of God*” (Eph 5:5).

There is an interesting consideration concerning kingdom rising against kingdom. All of this occurs in Satan’s subordinate domain. Jesus once said that a kingdom divided against itself would fall, and that Satan would not fight against himself. As it is written, “*If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub*” (Luke 11:18).

This competition among kingdoms, therefore, is dictated from above. It is like the stone of God's kingdom striking them and breaking them to pieces (Dan 2:34). Division and competition is always the prelude to dissolution – whether it is among the kingdoms of the world or the professing church – spiritual Babylon. The dividing of Satan's kingdom confirms that it will fall.

This also corroborates why men cannot trust in kings, or kingdoms, or governments. Because of their very nature, the kings of the earth eventually set themselves against the Lord Himself (Psa 2:2), and all kingdoms eventually compete against Christ.

“ 8b . . . and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles . . . ”

Not only will there be disruptions in the social fabric of the world – among men; there will also be disruptions within the natural order. This will be like the convulsions of travail that are but a prelude, and not the main thing.

EARTHQUAKES IN DIVERS PLACES. Luke reads “ *great earthquakes,*” (Lk 21:11) , indicating that Jesus is not speaking of normal tremors of the earth, but rather refers to extraordinary ones. Other versions read, “*in various places*” ; i.e. scattered throughout the world., and not linked together by any obvious, apparent, or common cause. Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, numerous earthquakes were recorded. They were “at Crete, and in divers cities in Asia, in the times of Nero: particularly the three cities of Phrygia, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse; which were near to each other, and are all said to perish this way, in his reign” JOHN GILL

This is another sign that extends to the coming of the Lord and the end of the world. It is not limited to the destruction of Jerusalem, as Jesus will later affirm. The particular point made is that they will take place in **various** places. As an example of this kind of phenomenon, the picture on the right of this page shows the earthquakes that were registered by the Earthquakes Hazzard Program throughout the world, and between July 18 th and 25 th of 2007.

FAMINES. Another sign of imminent judgment and the end of the world is famines. A deadly famine occurred in Ireland between 1845 and 1840 in which 1.5 million people died. The world's deadliest recorded famine took place in Northern China between 1959 and 1961. An estimated 30 million people perished in that famine. Between 1967 and 1969, over a million people died from a famine in Nigeria.

Because “*the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof,*” God Himself is associated with famines. Because of their sin, God told Israel He would stop their land from yielding increase (Lev 26:20). In the time of Joseph, God “*called for a famine*” upon the whole earth (Psa 105:16). In Elisha's day God “*called for a famine*” that lasted for seven years (2 Kgs 8:1). In the days of Haggai, God “*called for a drought upon the land:*” (Hag 1:11). An increase in famines, therefore, is under the supervision of God. Otherwise, it would not be possible for them to be a “*sign.*”

THE EARTH IN TRAVAIL. Earthquakes and famines are confirmation that earth is in the bondage of corruption, for these are the indications of a downward change, decay and ultimate dissolution. Scripture refers to this as nature being in “*the bondage of corruption*” – a condition imposed upon creation because of man's sin (Rom 8:21). As the tremors of travail are the

indication of the imminent birth of a child, so violent disruptions in nature are the labor pains of earth – a prelude to the working of the Lord. Ultimately, that working involves deliverance from the bondage of corruption. It also involves bringing down the opposing forces of this world, and ministering judgment to those who have despised the Lord's Christ. Under no circumstances are men to view natural calamities as happenstance that are out from under the control of the Almighty.

TROUBLES. Mark adds the general word, "*troubles.*" This refers to varied forms of disturbance and commotion. Matthew sheds further light upon this by using the word, "*pestilences,*" stating that all three signs will be "*in divers places*" (Matt 24:7). Pestilences are plagues – whether of disease or an invasion of pests, as occurred in the judgments against Egypt prior to the exodus. Josephus records a massive plague that broke out in Babylonia in 40 AD, and Tacitus records one in Italy in 66 AD. Between the years 1347 and 1350, the "Black Death" plague wiped out between 15% and 50% of all of Europe! The bubonic plague broke out in three major epidemics – the 6 th , 14 th , and 17 th centuries – killing over 137 million people.

It is generally understood that famine, and grievance pestilences flowing from it, immediately preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, being found within the city itself..

Luke adds to pestilences, "*fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven*" (Luke 21:11). Josephus records that dreadful thunderings and lightnings, a voice in the Temple saying to "Depart," comets and blazing stars all preceded Jerusalem's destruction. It was as though all nature went berserk, as when "*the stars fought against Sisera*" (Judges 5:20). At that time, and at the end of the world, everything will work together **against** the ungodly. No protection will be afforded to those outside of Christ.

In a day that has vaunted scholasticism, such awesome signs are relegated to the past, with little significance being assigned to them. However, this is Jesus speaking, and what He says is not to be regarded as a mere history lesson, unrelated to the rest of the world, or all of time. Such a position is a foolish one to take, indeed.

" 8c . . . these are the beginnings of sorrows"

Jesus is speaking with great sobriety, outlining the things that will precede the destruction of Jerusalem, and His coming and the consequent end of the world..

THESE. What a brief description of the things Jesus has said: "*these.*" **1–** Many deceivers and false Christs will come. **2–** Many will be deceived. **3–** They will hear of wars and rumors of wars. **4–** Nation will rise against nation. **5–** Kingdom will rise against kingdom. **6–** There will be earthquakes in divers places. **7–** There will be famines in various places. **8–** There will be trouble and pestilence in different places. **9–** There will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. All of these are being strictly managed by the God of heaven, and are designed to meet His appointed objectives. Further, there is a reason for them all – a purpose that is driving them. For Israel and the city of Jerusalem, it is the result of their rejection of Christ. Even though they did what was determined to be done (Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28), yet they will reap a terrible harvest for doing so. **God will not ignore the rejection of His Son.**

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS. Matthew reads, "*ALL these are the beginnings of sorrows*" (Matt 24:8) – **and beginnings are always the smallest part of a matter.** These are the commencement of something – the first in a series of things that will take place in increasing

measures. By saying “*beginnings*” Jesus is declaring that greater calamities will follow. This agrees with what He said earlier: “*but the end shall not be yet*” (13:7).

This is not stated to burden the disciples, so that they are crushed beneath the weight of this knowledge. It is rather intended to promote patience and endurance. The details, while there are many, are **not** the real point. It is rather **the need of patience**, that after His people “*have done the will of God,*” they might “*receive the promise*” (Heb 10:36).

The Lord informs us of the necessity of developing strength to stand. These “*beginnings,*” as awesome as they appear, are like footmen that pave the way for horses. As Jeremiah said, “*If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?*” (Jer 12:5). What can be said of those who fall away from the Lord when things are relatively calm, and they are not enduring persecution? For one thing, their name is legion because of the multitude of them. However, if men will give heed to the words of the Lord, He will gently lead them into a proper frame of mind, so they will be able to survive both the beginning of sorrows, and the bitter dregs of the cup as well.

Ponder the solemn warning of Hebrews 12:3-4: “*For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*” (Heb 12:4). For Jesus, what **men** did to Him was only the beginning of sorrows. It is what God did to Him that was contending with the horsemen! Thus He prepared Himself for that occasion, and consequently gained the victory.

SORROWS. The word “*sorrows,*” as used here, refers to the travail pain of birth pangs. As concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, a judgment from the Lord, it was attended by the birth pains of appointed sorrow. Relating to the coming of the Lord and the end of the world, there will also be attending birth pangs – beginning sorrows. For those who are living by faith, they will drive a more firm wedge between them and the world, preparing them for an enjoyment of glory. This is necessary, for the transformation of the body will involve a thorough removal of every means of fleshly gratification. It is therefore essential that there be no lingering appetite for the things of the world. The words “*love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*” are certainly a commandment (1 John 2:15) – but they are more than that! They are a clarion call to prepare for the removal of the world, so that we are not overcome by “*the beginning of sorrows.*”

One of the great weaknesses of contemporary Christianity is its predilection for beginnings and shallowness. Because of its teachers and leaders, it is prone to take the elemental things and exalt them to places of prominence. In doing this, men are forced to live on the surface of life with no spiritual depth or roots. The army of religious professionals who deal with the management of personal and social problems, are being billed as horsemen. But they are not. They are nothing more than spiritual footmen who are absolutely worthless when the time comes to face the real horsemen, who are more powerful and ride more swiftly. What will those who have trouble being a good husband or wife do when they face the lion-like subtlety of the devil? What will those who need accountability partners to keep them from doing what is wrong do when they have to grapple with the tempter alone?

Jesus is preparing His disciples for the stark realities of spiritual life. They will be asked to minister in a city that has been consigned to judgment, and they must be able to do so without fainting at the beginning of sorrows. Also, they must testify to succeeding generations concerning the appointed destruction of the world, so they may also be prepared for it.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 139

“ Mark 13:9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. ”

(Mark 13:9-11; Matt 24:9; Lk 21:12-15)

INTRODUCTION

There are times when words extend beyond scholastics, theological positions, and mere information, into a realm that calls for the utmost sobriety. Those are times when the accent is placed on discernment and readiness, preparation and stability. We must come to the place where all of Christ's words are seen to be in this category. Actually, if Jesus did, in fact, speak only the words that God gave Him to speak (John 7:16; 8:28,38,40; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8), it could be no other way. God is not in the business of dispensing novel information. Yet, this very passage, which brings relevancy and sobriety to their peak, is often viewed from a purely academic point of view – just as though it had nothing whatsoever to do with us. That God would send Jesus into the world to deliver any message subject to obsolescence is an utter absurdity. Jesus Himself said, *“My words shall not pass away.”* In fact, He said this in the very discourse we are considering (Mk 13:31). As long as the world stands, therefore His words shall remain, pertinent, relevant, and profitable to those who will embrace them. It has been many years since the professing church has taken the Olivet discourse seriously. It has become a text of controversy and lifeless views. However, as we go through this text, we will search in vain for so much as a single word that will suggest this text is not to be viewed with the utmost sobriety and interest. It seems to call out to us to search our hearts and to prepare ourselves with the apostles for the events declared in this passage. There are overtones in Christ's words that indicate the destruction of Jerusalem will not exhaust His prophetic utterances.

“ Mark 13:9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.”

BEFORE THESE THINGS. In his record of this discourse, Luke says Jesus preceded this warning with these words, *“But before all these”* (Lk 21:12) – that is, **before** they hear of wars and rumors of wars, **before** nation rises against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and **before** earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and fearful signs and wonders in the heavens. Although the signs Jesus has just related are most arresting, yet there is something to which His disciples must give their immediate attention.

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES. Other versions read, “*watch out for yourselves,*” NKJV *be on your guard,*” NASB “*beware,*” NRSV “*take care,*” BBE “*watch yourselves,*” CJB “*Look to yourselves,*” DOUAY “*watch out!*” NLT In the Gospels Jesus says “*Take heed*” no less than fourteen times, “*beware*” ten times, and “*watch*” twenty-two times. This is the language of alertness, perception, and sensitivity. It is the opposite of being “*dull of hearing*” (Matt 13:15), and “*slow of heart*” (Lk 24:25). Taking heed is a posture of faith in which one becomes acutely aware of his surroundings and of the message they are delivering.

Paul spoke of a spiritual condition that was likened to being “*asleep*” (Eph 5:14) – a state that called for one to awaken (Rom 13:11). This is a dangerous condition in which to be at any time, but especially when danger is lurking right around the corner. Spiritual life is such that collapse is inevitable if one is not prepared – i.e. ready to face the enemy.

It is possible for a person to adopt a view of life in which it is imagined that protection is guaranteed independently of effort on the part of the believer. However, this is not the nature of salvation. In redemption, we are called into the process of salvation, and participate in the matter. All though it is God who works in us “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure,*” yet it is equally true that we work out our own “*salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil 2:12-13). Over the years I have observed that unbelief is totally incapable of grasping this reality. It completely eludes those who insist on walking in the flesh.

RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION. Jesus tells His disciples that opposition will come from religious people – even their own people. The disciples will be hauled before Jewish councils, and even be beaten in the synagogues. This kind of treatment began right after Jesus went back to heaven (Acts 4:5-21; 5:17-40). Not long after that, Saul of Tarsus went into synagogues and brought men and women out of them bound unto Jerusalem (Acts 9:2).

The very first oppression of the disciples came from the Jews, and was exerted in both the Temple and the synagogue. The Apostles were beaten (Acts 5:40), and Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58-59). In this, they experienced the same treatment from the Jews as did the prophets before them (Matt 5:12; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess 2:15), and Jesus as well.

SPIRITUAL COLLAPSE PRECEDES MORAL DECLINE. In this it is confirmed that a spiritual collapse always precedes a moral decline. It was so in this Gentile world, when they, although “*they knew God, they glorified Him not as God*” (Rom 1:21). Additionally, they “*did not like to retain God in their knowledge*” (Rom 1:28). As a result God “*gave them over to a reprobate mind,*” and morality at once began to plummet into unimaginable depths (Rom 1:24-27; 29-32). The same thing happened among the Jews. When Israel made it clear that they would not hearken to God’s voice, and would not submit to Him, He “*gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts: and they walked in their own counsels*” (Psa 81:12).

The same holds true during the time of the New Covenant. Corruption in religion proves to be the prelude to moral decline. That is why spiritual Babylon is said to be “*the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*” (Rev 17:5). When the religion of a people is not pure, the fabric of that society will deteriorate. Until spiritual strength is attained, moral weakness is inevitable, and will grow “*worse and worse*” (2 Tim 3:13).

A TESTIMONY AGAINST THEM. “. . . and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, *for a testimony against them* .” Jesus also said these same words to His disciples in Matthew 10:17-18. Modern versions omit the word “*against,*” reading that they would be brought

before dignitaries “*as a testimony to them,*” NASB or “*as witnesses to them.*” NIV However, we know from the history recorded in Acts that no spiritual awakening resulted from a testimony to the kings of the earth. Rulers receiving testimony include Pilate (John 18:37), Herod (Mk 6:14; Lk 23:8-9), Agrippa (Acts 26:2-28), Felix (Acts 24:22-27), Festus (Acts 26:24-26), and Caesar (Acts 27:24).

At this point Jesus is not speaking of the success of the Gospel, but of the opposition the disciples will face in the declaring of it. The expression “*for a testimony against them*” accents that opposition. In other words, they will be a “*savor of death unto death*” to some, as well as “*life unto life*” to others/ (2 Cor 2:16).

“**10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.**” Other versions read, “*must first be preached,*” ASV “*has first to be given,*” BBE and “*has to be proclaimed first.*” CJB

THE GOSPEL. This is not the good news of what men can be, or what is available to them. It is the good news of what has actually been accomplished, not what can be achieved. It is news, or tidings, of something that has already occurred – something that has been received by God and is honored in heaven. The Gospel is not the proclamation of a goal for men, but of Divine provision for them. It is not a word about what men should do, but about what God through Christ has done.

By its very nature, the Gospel cannot be used to promote purely human interests, or to generate wealth, or make a name for the individual. It is not a word about men, but the record God has given of his Son (1 John 5:10-11). These days, there is not a whole lot of this kind of proclamation. That is one of the reasons for the moral and spiritual deficiencies that exist in the professing church.

There is a single message that is properly called “*Gospel,*” or “*glad tidings of good things*” (Rom 10:15). It is not a Gospel, but **the** Gospel! It is the only message in which Divine power is resident (Rom 10:16) – a power that is in order to salvation.

MUST. The words “*must first*” are especially strong. The word “*must*” comes from a word meaning “it is necessary.” THAYER **This can be the necessity of circumstance** – like taking action to avoid danger, i.e., “*ye should have hearkened unto me*” (Acts 27:21) . **It can be the necessity of a commandment** – like “*he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*” (Heb 11:6). **Here, however, it is the “must” of Divine decree** – the carrying out of a Divine purpose, like “*Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead*” (Acts 17:3). There are numerous examples of this latter definition, in which a Divine decree mandates what will take place.

- “*He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer . . . and be killed, and be raised again . . .*” (Matt 16:21)
- “*. . . all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet*” (Matt 24:6).
- “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30).
- “*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring. . .*” (John 10:16).
- “*For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet*” (1 Cor 15:25).
- “*For this corruptible must put on incorruption . . .*” (1 Cor 15:53).
- “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ . . .*” (2 Cor 5:10).

- “*Seeing therefore it remaineth that some **must** enter therein . . .*” (Heb 4:6).

These are matters in which man’s volitional capacity plays no foundational part. This is a matter of Divine government, or of the heavens ruling. When Jesus says the Gospel “*must first be preached among all nations,*” He is not declaring what men are to do, but what God **will** do. He is not saying, for example, that Jerusalem will not be destroyed unless men finish this work, or that His coming and the end of the world will be delayed until men get to the business of declaring the Gospel. He does not mean that if men work harder to preach the Gospel, then He will come sooner. Some men do teach this, but it is only because they are ignorant – and that is a condition that is intolerable in the time when “*all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” can be accessed in Christ Jesus (Col 2:2-3).

FIRST. On the Divine agenda, before the signs that Jesus has mentioned take place, the Gospel will first be preached among all nations. That must happen first! If we consider the destruction of Jerusalem, which in the equation, the Gospel must first be preached to all nations. If this is true, it will have to be accomplished between 33 AD and 70 AD – 37 years! Is that possible? Well, if God is in the picture it is! Some time before Jerusalem was destroyed – at least 15-20 years – Paul wrote of “*the gospel, which ye have heard, and which **was preached to every creature which is under heaven ; whereof I Paul am made a minister***” (Col 1:23). Paul wrote to the Romans, testifying that their faith was being spoken about “*throughout the whole world*” (Rom 1:8). The Thessalonians were told their faith had “*spread abroad*” (1 Thess 1:8).

The Prophets foretold that not only would the message be heralded throughout the world, but that the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth. “. . . *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*” (Isa 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). Daniel prophesied of a time when the Kingdom of God would fill the whole earth (Dan 2:35,44). The Psalmist said, “*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord*” (Psa 22:27). Paul told of the grafting of Israel into their own tree, and of the consequent spread of the truth which would be likened to “*life from the dead*” (Rom 11:12,15).

It is apparent that opposition to, and hatred of, the Gospel cannot stop its proclamation. God does not even allow such opposition to surface until the Gospel is first preached. That was true when John the Baptist preached, when Jesus preached, when the twelve apostles preached, and when Paul preached. First the preaching, then the trouble!

“ 11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”

From the world’s point of view, Christ’s disciples were not trained speakers. In fact, they would not qualify as professors in most Bible Colleges and Seminaries. They would be totally unimpressive to the average pulpit committee. If anyone in our time saw, what they conceived to be, the smallest amount of potential in them, they would require that they have some additional education, and obtain some acceptable credentials. That is not only what professed Christian leaders **would** do, it is presently being widely practiced throughout the land.

Yet, here we have the Head of the church speaking – the One who determines the course of events in this world. He did not select His disciples from the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, sanhedrin, lawyers, or chief priests. When He chose Paul, he separated him from his mother’s womb – before he was a Pharisee (Gal 1:15). When He called Paul, it was not because he was a Pharisee, for he counted those credentials to be only “*dung*” in comparison to knowing Christ (Phil 3:8). Paul’s qualification related more to him living in all good conscience, than

because of him being raised up at the feet of Gamaliel. I say these things to emphasize that Jesus did not think as the clerics of our day. For me, that means they are wrong.

TAKE NO THOUGHT BEFOREHAND. It was not a question of whether or not the disciples would be brought before councils, and rulers, and kings. That was going to happen. Therefore Jesus says “*when they arrest you and deliver you up.*” NKJV A person given to fretting might set himself to prepare what to say at such a time. However, Jesus does not allow the disciples to do that. They were not to spend time worrying beforehand, NKJV or being anxious NASB about what they would say. Luke says that when they were summoned before these dignitaries, the occasion would “*turn to you for a testimony,*” or *lead to an opportunity for your testimony*” NASB (Lk 21:14). That is, **God would so orchestrate the occasion that they would be given opportunity to speak what they had seen and heard.** The *King of kings* would not allow under-rulers to put them at a disadvantage, so they would not know what to say.

NEITHER PREMEDITATE. The disciples were not to use their minds and abilities of thought to mull over what they might say when called before men of social and political prominence. They were not to “*premeditate*” about such things, or “*meditate*” about it beforehand, thinking that would prepare them for the occasion. One translation reads, “*nor prepare your discourse.*” DARBY

For some, this is a most confusing instruction, for elsewhere Paul told Timothy to “*hold fast the form of sound words*” (2 Tim 1:13), and Titus to show “*incorruptness*” in doctrine, using “*sound speech that cannot be condemned*” (Tit 2:7-8). He also told Timothy to “*meditate*” on what he wrote to him (1 Tim 4:15), and take heed not only to himself, but “*the doctrine*” as well (1 Tim 4:16). That appears to require some form of preparation and meditation.

However, Jesus is not telling His disciples not to meditate on the truth, but not to meditate on **what they would say** under circumstances of which they had little or no prior knowledge. They were rather to devote themselves to keeping, or maintaining Christ’s Word (John 14:23), letting it dwell richly in their hearts (Col 3:16). He reminded them of the necessity of His word abiding in them (John 15:7). All of that requires extended thought, or meditation.

Jesus is here speaking of faith, which can reach into the unknown and settle the heart. Preparedness for the occasion He mentions consists of abiding in Christ (John 15:4, living by faith (Heb 10:38), walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), and maintaining fellowship with Jesus (1 Cor 1:9). By maintaining that stance, men will be available, as it were, for Divine direction.

SPEAK WHAT IS GIVEN TO YOU. “*... whatsoever shall be given you in that hour .*”

Luke reads, “*For I will give you a mouth of wisdom*” (Lk 21:15). This reflects the nature of spiritual life. When we speak, it must always be from within the context of where we **are** , not where we once **were** , or where we **hope** to be. Giving an answer not only requires correct words, but a correct frame of mind and spirit. It is one thing to be interrogated before you one is beaten. It is another to be asked to answer after you have been scourged. In being given what is appropriate, the Lord will take all things into consideration, so that even at that time, the disciples would not be tempted above their ability. What would be given to them would include what was in their own treasury, discreetly illuminated the Spirit (Matt 13:52)..

IT IS THE SPIRIT WHO IS SPEAKING. Although the words came out of their mouths, and even their hearts, it was the Spirit speaking through them. The Spirit would not side-step their minds, for Luke says they would have a “*mouth of wisdom*” – and that has to do with

perception. The Spirit will direct them from within, where He would be dwelling. He would speak out of the context of the “*communion of the Holy Spirit*” (2 Cor 13:14). The Spirit would come along side of them, and enter into the work with them. What a blessed assurance!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 140

“ Mark 13:12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13 And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. ”

(Mark 13:12-13; Matt 24:10-13; Lk 21:16-19)

INTRODUCTION

In His inimitable way, Jesus is instructing His disciples concerning future events. Here is the Master Teacher, who has a firm grasp on reality, knows all things, and is operating in strict accord with God's eternal purpose. He does not speak as a mere motivator. He gives no obvious credence to the concept of positive speaking, or carefully speaking to avoid saying anything negative. He does not speak to avoid causing something bad to happen because of His words – a wholly erroneous concept that is being taught by many of our day. In order for the Lord to speak in such a manner, there can be no question about the certainty of the things He is saying. The events and circumstances of which He is speaking are not mere possibilities. This being the case, either Jesus is speaking as a prognosticator – One who sees into the future – or as the One who is managing the future. Either He foresees the wicked one running rampant and uncontrolled in the earth, or He is opening up certain Divine appointments that will involve the display and seeming triumph of the powers of darkness. The various Gospel accounts of this discourse will confirm that Jesus is speaking of a set of circumstances that are under strict control. If that was not the case, any admonition to be faithful, steadfast, or persevering would be pointless, for all of that presumes an environment that is being managed, and an outcome that is sure. Those who are familiar with Scripture will recognize at once that this is the a characteristic of all admonitions – they presume an appointed outcome. The enemy has been appointed to wrath, and his efforts will be suddenly terminated. The righteous have not been appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation, and therefore their faith and faithfulness will triumph. Notwithstanding the certainty of these things, and the clarity with which they are consistently proclaimed, it requires considerable effort for men to arrive at the point where godliness makes sense, and iniquity in all of its varied forms becomes totally unreasonable. It is the very nature of *“the good fight of faith”* to mature faith in the crucible of conflict. In this way the nature of the flesh and the wickedness of the world are lifted from the context of philosophy, and are actually perceived.

“ Mark 13:12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. ”

At the time Jesus is speaking these things, it does not appear as though any enemy can

possibly triumph over Him or his disciples. For three years the disciples have witnessed the Lord's total domination of the circumstances. Not a single one of the many plots to kill Him have come to any degree of fruition. Not long before this very discourse His enemies "*sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people*" (Mk 12:12). At the threshold of His ministry it is written, "*therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him.*" And again, "*Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him*" (John 5:17-18). Another time, Jesus did not walk in Judea because "*the Jews sought to kill Him*" (John 7:1). Again it is written, "*Then they sought to take Him: but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come*" (John 7:30). All of their malicious plans fell to the ground as all of their attempts were utterly frustrated. His enemies even "*sought to stone Him,*" but never lifted so much as a single stone to do so (John 11:8). Time and time again His foes were frustrated in their attempts to touch Him. The disciples themselves were never in danger. There was never an initiative launched against them. The worst thing they faced was a discussion with scribes about why they could not cast a demon out of an oppressed young boy (Mk 9:16-19).

Keep in mind, that the disciples were all keenly aware of the safety they had been enjoying – for over three consecutive and uninterrupted years! Jesus has begun telling them He was going to be betrayed, delivered, killed, and rise the third day (Mk 8:31; 9:31). However, they have not yet grasped what He had said. About half way through His ministry, Jesus had even told them they would be "*hated*" and "*persecuted*" (Matt 10:22-23). He had said this when He sent them out to preach, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons (Matt 10:7-8). At that time, they took nothing with them, but were supplied all of their needs as they went about preaching (Matt 10:9-10). They did not experience opposition, but appeared triumphant in every circumstance.

Now, Jesus unveils circumstances that will require an adjustment in their thinking. They would not be insulated from opposition – even aggressive and seemingly successful opposition. The kingdom of darkness would not be discouraged by the spread of the Gospel.

BETRAYAL AMONG BRETHREN. Perhaps you have heard it said that "blood is thicker than water" – that is, family relationships are thought to be the closest of all, and dominate over all others. Jesus now explodes that myth, showing that there is a superior relationship that, in some circumstances, is not honored in the family setting. Luke points out that Jesus is not just speaking about other families: "*And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends*" (Luke 21:16a). This should not be surprising. Such oppositions have occurred throughout the history of God's people: Cain and Abel (Gen 4:8), Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 21:9), Jacob and Esau (Gen 27:41), and Joseph and his brethren (Gen 37:5).

Micah spoke of a man's enemies being members of his own house (Mic 7:4), and Jesus verified that this condition occurs among His disciples (Matt 10:36). The change that occurs in identity with God, and especially in regeneration, is so significant that it often destroys even natural ties. While we do not desire this for anyone, these are the facts in the case.

CHILDREN AGGRESSIVE AGAINST PARENTS. Again, this is a departure from "*natural affection,*" and it is forced because of the contrariness of the flesh to the Spirit. Jesus said a father would be against his son, the son against his father, a mother against her daughter, a daughter against her mother, a mother in law against her daughter in law, and a daughter in law against her mother in law (Luke 12:53). This is not something we seek, nor is it something that we culture. It is, however, a stark reality of spiritual life to which some are subjected. It ought to be noted that those

in Christ are not aggressive in the matter of being “*against*.” The actual opposition comes from the unbeliever, for God has “*called us to peace*” (1 Cor 7:15). At no point does the person in Jesus wrestle “*against flesh and blood*” (Eph 6:12). However, that is not true of those who live under the dominion of the devil.

MANY WILL BE OFFENDED. Matthew accounts for this oppression by saying, “*then shall many be offended.*” That is what will provoke them to “*betray one another*” and “*hate one another*” (Matt 24:10). Here, the word “*offended*” does **not** mean the people are hurt by the conduct of the believer, or caused to have hurt feelings – although that does occur. In this case, the word “*offended*” has to do with the individual’s attitude toward Christ, and speaks of a consequent falling away from Him. Hence, other versions read, “*will fall away,*” NASB “*will turn away from the faith,*” NIV and “*lose faith.*” GWN In other words, the most fierce opposition will come from those who were themselves once followers of the truth. That condition is what causes such times to be “*perilous times*” (2 Tim 3:1). This does not exclude the opposition of the world in general, but rather accents some of the effects of spiritual life within the religious community.

“ **13a** *And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake . . .*”

YOU! Jesus is careful to point out that He is not speaking only of the future. His own disciples will undergo what He is speaking about – even though until that time they had no such experience. This is an aspect of spiritual life of which the saints must be apprised.

HATED OF ALL MEN. The hatred of the saints of God would transcend all other detestation. Times would degenerate to such a condition that the best of all people would be despised the most. This condition would confirm the nature of sin and the *fallenness* of the human race. Jesus once told His disciples, “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you*” (John 15:18). In His intercessory prayer for His disciples, Jesus said to the Father, “*I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:14). And what was “*the world*” that had hated them? Neither Jesus nor His disciples had traveled outside the confines of the land of the Jews. The hatred they had faced came largely from the Jewish community – from those who claimed to be the children of Abraham and the followers of Moses. Such people had more of a hatred for Jesus than for Pilate, who had killed some of them (Lk 13:1), and Herod, who corrupted them with his views, all the while representing himself as their friend (Mk 8:15).

The point to be seen here is that religious hatred is the worst and most dangerous of all. While there are many who fall into gross sin and immorality, there are far more who exchange their souls for a watered down and compromising form of religion. Actually, the experience of the hatred of wicked people is a confirmation of one’s acceptance by God. It is in that sense that such hatred becomes a blessing (Matt 5:11-12).

FOR MY NAME’S SAKE. Other versions read, “*on account of My name,*” NASB “*because of Me,*” NIV and “*because you are committed to Me.*” GWN That is, they will not be hated simply because of their oddity, or even ascetic form of life – i.e., because they abstain from this or that. Men may very well “*think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*” (1 Pet 4:4). But the root of the matter is one’s association with the Lord Jesus Christ. There are all kinds of people who are of the world, yet do not indulge excessively in dissipation, drunkenness, and the likes. The world can easily tolerate them, as long as they have a fundamental affinity with this present evil world. However, a confessed preference for Jesus changes the whole matter, inducing hatred from the world.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF HATRED. Matthew provides the environment of this hatred,

accenting that it is coming primarily from religious people. In His Gospel He states that Jesus added, “*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many*” (Matt 24:11). There will, then, be competitive forms of *Christianity* that will set the stage for this environment of hatred. Additionally, because of the abounding nature of iniquity, particularly in the religious community, “*the love of many shall wax cold*” (Matt 24:12).

Those two conditions – 1 corrupt preaching and teaching, and 2 the deterioration of a love for Christ and the truth – will spark the hatred and opposition of which Jesus is speaking. They will set the stage for the outbreak of unparalleled opposition.

In view of this circumstance, what can be said of those who, in the name of Jesus, cater to the world, seeking their favor? What of those who actually adopt the manners of the world, dressing, talking, and acting in a way that courts the favor of the world? Even under the Law, the Lord forbade the people to adopt the appearances of the ungodly (Lev 19:27-28; 21:5). Whatever may be said concerning fashions and fads, the child of God must determine whether or not the message is being delivered that they are of this world. At some point, the believer must decide whether he blends with the enemy or with the saints. It is an intensely personal thing, but it is something that must be confronted and resolved. Every person blends with the environment that opposes the saints, or the one that respects them.

SOME WILL BE KILLED. In Luke’s account, Jesus adds that some of them will even be put to death: “*And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death*” (Luke 21:16). One of the very people to whom Jesus was speaking, would be the first one of the apostles to be martyred. James, himself a member of the inner circle of disciples, would be killed with the sword by Herod – and it would actually **please** the Jews (Acts 12:2-3). Eventually, all of them would be martyred for their faith, with the exception of John. Remember, these were among the premier men of all time. Their very names are inscribed in the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem, which is the glorified church (Rev 21:14). Yet, in this world, they were among those who were “*hated above all men.*” Paul says the apostles were set forth “*last,*” and “*appointed unto death*” (1 Cor 4:9).

NOT A HAIR WILL PERISH. Yet, in Luke’s narrative Jesus adds, “*But there shall not an hair of your head perish*” (Luke 21:18). That is, they will never be out from under Divine control. No hair will fall out at random, or owing to their enemies. They will finish their work.

“ 11 . . . but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

I was raised in a religious heritage that emphasized this verse. Yet, by looking at the group to which I belonged, no one would ever have suspected this was actually the truth. It was a movement noted for its degeneration, unfaithfulness, compromise, and division. And, indeed, it did not stand alone in this regard. I say this only to emphasize that this word is not a mere platitude or cliché to be spouted as a slogan or an official position. Jesus is speaking of being saved or not being saved. I hardly see how anything can be of greater importance.

HE THAT SHALL ENDURE. And what is it that is to be endured? Is Jesus saying that if we just maintain our religious identity we will be saved? Is He speaking of avoiding the temptation to leave the church, or lapse into immorality, or avoiding publically denying Christ? Indeed, that is not the case at all! He is rather speaking of enduring the hatred, and the betrayal, the opposition of our enemies, and even being subjected to death – all for the name of Christ, or because of Him. The person who does not “*endure*” is the one who caves in to the pressure. It is the one who does not maintain a clear identify with Christ, but becomes lukewarm, and finally cold in his affection for the

Lord.

The one who “endures” is the one who stands “against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11). It is the one who fights “the good fight of faith” and lays “hold on eternal life” (1 Tim 6:12). This is the person who consistently resists the devil (James 4:7), and denies “ungodliness and worldly lusts” while living “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit 2:12). Enduring people are those who run with patience the race that is set before them (Heb 12:2). They are the ones who “endure all things” (1 Cor 13:7), “endure hardness as a good soldier” (2 Tim 2:3), and “endure afflictions” brought on because of their spiritual stance (2 Tim 4:5). They even “endure chastening,” not fainting when the Lord rebukes them (Heb 12:5-7). They pass the test by enduring temptation (James 1:12; 5:11). They go into the furnace of affliction, and they come out of it. They walk through the desert, and enter the promised land. They go up the mountain of trial, and come down from it in faith. They enter the ark of safety and they remain in it. They keep wrestling, fighting, running, and looking. They do not run from opposition, but quit themselves like men (1 Cor 16:13). They continue to “abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). They continue to press toward the mark for the prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14). Such people are the enduring ones.

UNTO THE END. And how long do these people endure? It is “unto the end!” Ultimately, that is the time of the harvest – “the end of the world” (Matt 13:39). It is when the angels will come and “sever the wicked from among the just” (Matt 13:49). It is “the end of the world” (Matt 24:3). It is when the exalted Christ will “deliver up the kingdom to the Father” (1 Cor 15:24). Until that time – “the end” – enduring, or perseverance, includes the following. 1– Holding fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope (Heb 3:6). 2– Holding the beginning of our confidence steadfast (Heb 3:14). 3– Showing the same diligence to the full assurance of hope (Heb 6:11).

Because of the absolute requirement of enduring unto the end, it seems to me that this should be regularly declared to the church. This is not to be done from Sinai, as though it was a heartless requirement of an austere God. Rather, it serves to alert to the saints to the true nature of spiritual warfare. Satan, the world, and the flesh are relentless in their attacks, and that requires vigilance and perseverance on the part of the targets of their initiative.

Technically speaking, “the end” refers to the testing the individual, as stated in James 1:12: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

SHALL BE SAVED. And what shall be the experience of those who “endure unto the end” ? Our blessed Lord removes all doubt about the importance of enduring, persevering, and continuing in the faith. Salvation is the issue here – they “shall be saved.” Not from tribulation, for that is the very thing through which they endure. This is not speaking of temporary deliverance, for some of them will be “killed.” Being “saved” is receiving “the crown of life” that is promised to overcomers (Rev 2:10). That “crown,” or being “saved,” is never disassociated from the trying of one’s faith. In this text, Jesus speaks of some extraordinary trials, and yet salvation is still associated with those challenges. This should promote great sobriety.

POSSESSING YOUR SOUL. Luke states the matter in different words, yet with the same import. “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). Those who do **not** endure have, in fact, exchanged their souls for ease and convenience. The “patience” of Luke 21:19 is the endurance of Mark 13:13. It is preferring the salvation of God over ease in this world. It is valuing a crown of life more than the acceptance of men.

Those who live by faith and walk in the Spirit will become increasingly aware of the hostility that exists between the flesh and the Spirit, the world and heaven, and the children of the wicked one and the children of the God. The crown of life is worthy every effort to obtain it.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 141

“ Mark 13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: 15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: 16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.” (Mark 13:14-18; Matt 24:14-20; Lk 21:20-23)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is teaching His disciples about the future: the destruction of the Temple, His own coming, and the end of the world (Matt 24:3; M k 13:4). His approach directly contradicts a heresy that is being perpetrated in our day – namely, that we can create our own future with our words, speaking it into existence. **There are things regarding the future of any generation over which they have no influence.** The only alternative is for men to prepare themselves for what is coming. Jesus has already mentioned global conflicts and disruptions in the natural order – things that cannot be averted. He has also mentioned the rise of false prophets and Christs. These are related to two of the things Jesus covered in our text – things that pertain to our own generation: the coming of the Lord and the end of the world. It is a transgression of unspeakable enormity for any professing Christian to love his life as though Jesus was not coming again, and the world was never coming to an end. Yet this is happening all around us as people claiming identity with Christ and His church are more absorbed in this present evil world than *“the world to come.”* In this present time, the individual who sets his affection on things above, and labors to enter eternal rest is a social oddity – even within the professing church. Such poor souls have either never heard the words of Jesus, or have forgotten them: *“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal”* (John 12:25). However, in view of our text, those words make perfect sense. For the disciples, the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent, and would occur in their lifetime. Jesus solemnly warns them to prepare for it, to be alert, and ready to take appropriate action. That same preparation is required for every generation, for there is no such thing as a generation that is shielded from all calamity, free from all danger, and at liberty to settle down in this world.

“ Mark 13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains.”

WHEN YE SHALL SEE. Jesus calls His disciples to a posture of alertness – one in which they will not be distracted or found unawares. It is related to another word He spoke: *“be ye also ready”* (Matt 24:44). The words *“when ye shall see”* presume they will be looking, firmly convinced that what Jesus is saying will come to pass. They are not to allow themselves to live in such a manner as is conducive to being at home in this world, and thus forgetting these words.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION. The NIV reads, “*the abomination that causes desolation.*” Matthew relates the prophecy to the defilement of “*the holy place*” (Matt 24:15). Mark refers to the same thing with the words, “*standing where it ought not.*” The reference is to the Temple, which would, as a result of the defilement, be destroyed.

Jesus gives them a specific word that will be fulfilled in their time – a word spoken by Daniel the prophet. The prophet referred to this desolation three times: 1 “*... the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate*” (Dan 9:27). 2 “*... and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate*” (Dan 11:31). 3 “*... the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days*” (Dan 12:11). This abomination had an initial fulfillment in 168-167 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes erected an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offering and sacrificed a pig upon it. The fulfillment of which Jesus now speaks took place in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. At that time, Josephus says they brought idols into the Temple, placing them over the Eastern gate, and sacrificing to them. JEWISH WARS 6.6.1

Luke speaks of the matter from yet another vantage point. “*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh*” (Luke 21:20). Luke accents the defilement of the city of Jerusalem itself, the place where God had placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36). Matthew and Mark place the stress upon the Temple. Josephus also recounts how that during the besiegement by Rome, an army of Jewish Zealots fought within the Temple courts, filling it with dead bodies of their own fellow citizens. They came feigning to help the Jews, but instead sided with the Romans, fighting their own people.

UNDERSTAND! “*Let the reader understand!*” NKJV That is, this is not a mere historical occurrence. There is more to be seen here. First, Jesus is declaring the destruction of the Temple. That would take place when it was profaned, and the city of Jerusalem would then fall as well. In this text, profanation was the prelude to destruction – the sign of rejection. Just as the dominance of Israel’s enemies was a sign they had provoked God (Judges 2:14), so the sacking of Jerusalem was a sign of God’s rejection of them. Jesus said their house (the Temple) would be left desolate because they rejected the Lord’s Christ (Matt 23:38), and this prophecy was the fulfillment of the word.

Also, according to Daniel, this desolation would be associated with the cessation of the sacrifices (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). The Temple and its sacrifices were rendered obsolete by the atoning death of Jesus, and God would not allow them to continue. Thus, when extraordinary defilement took place, it was the confirmation that the destruction was at hand.

There is a principle to be seen here that is confirmed throughout history. The spread of defilement into sacred realms is the prelude to their demise. It is the sign that the degenerating domain, for the time, is irrecoverable. This was true of the world of Noah’s time. The moral degeneration of that time was the prelude to its destruction. In one sense, it was the cause of the judgment. From an even higher view, it was a sign that God had given that generation up because of their rejection of himself (Rom 1:24,26). This circumstance is what makes religious decline so arresting. It is an indication of Divine rejection, and is preliminary to its appointed fall. Spiritual Babylon cannot be recovered. Its fall is determined.

FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS. Those who remained in Judea until the appointed time, must then vacate the area quickly. There would be no safe haven there. Matthew gives the same admonition (Matt 24:16), and Luke does as well (Lk 21:21) – “*flee to the mountains,*” the high places. The Psalmist reminds us that Jerusalem was surrounded by mountains (Psa

125:2). Now they would become a place of safety rather than sights to behold. Luke provides some additional words spoken by the Lord: “*Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto*” (Luke 21:21). At The time of its imminent destruction, Jerusalem was to be vacated by the discerning, and not entered into by those who were in other countries. The principle to be seen is this: When a place or body of people is in a state of deterioration and decline, that is not the time to be joined to them. Flee from such places! Avoid them!

“ 15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: 16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.”

There comes a time when absolutely no safety is afforded in the cursed realm. Until the appointed time of which Jesus warned His disciples, people could live in Jerusalem, walking about in it, and coming into the city from other countries. Indeed, several years after this prophecy, Peter went up to Jerusalem (Acts 11:2), there was the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:22), John Mark went back to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13), Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem (Acts 15:2), and Paul himself went to Jerusalem (Acts 18:21; 19:21). Yet, Kingdom laborers could not afford to forget the words of the Lord Jesus. There was coming a time when the only acceptable action was to get out of Jerusalem, doing so with haste.

You must remember the sacredness of Jerusalem and the Temple to the Jews. This word did not pertain to a place that was sentimental because of family associations or natural ties. For the disciples, it would be associated with the ministry of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and His ascension back to glory. It would be related to the day of Pentecost, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the staggering multiplication of disciples. Notwithstanding those holy associations, the city would be judged for its rejection of Christ, which was the capstone of their transgression – the sin that would bring the wrath of God upon the city and the Temple. From an even higher point of view, this city would have to give place to “*the Jerusalem that is above,*” which is “*the mother of us all*” (Gal 4:26).

DO NOT GO BACK INTO THE HOUSE! Picture a person on the housetop, perhaps praying as Peter did when he was at the house of Simon the tanner (Acts 10:9). There comes a time when that person beholds the Roman armies surrounding the city (Lk 21:20). Before the Romans actually captured Jerusalem, they laid siege to the city – a military initiative that lasted over four years. Numerous attacks, strategies, and negotiations took place during this time. Jesus’ solemn words enjoined the disciples to get out of Jerusalem as soon as it was surrounded, not waiting until the enemy actually entered into the city. At that point, no thought was to be given to enter the house again to salvage some of their goods. This was a time to escape, not to think of saving some of their possessions.

DO NOT GET YOUR GARMENTS! If a person was in the field working, he was not to return to the house to get his garments. These were outer garments, laid aside when one was working. At this time, convenience is not to even be considered. This was a time to run for your life, with no regard for ordinary amenities and conveniences.

Earlier, Jesus had taught His disciples not to become absorbed in life as it is lived in this world. “*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*” (Matt 6:31). Now He speaks to them of a time when His words will make perfect sense – when what you have to wear will not even be a valid

consideration. If they had not learned to regard such conveniences properly before that time, it would be exceedingly difficult for them to do what He now says to them. There will come a time when we must release our grip upon everything men hold of value in this world. At that time, there is a sense in which we will have no choice in the matter – not if we are thinking soundly. There are at least three occasions when this will be true. (1) In the time of great temporal judgments or calamities. At such times, the real value of the things of this world can be seen more clearly. There is more of an interest in preserving life than in keeping things. (2) When we meet our appointment with death. It becomes more readily apparent at this time that life in this world, and the possessions we have managed to accumulate, cannot be maintained. (3) The coming of the Lord. As this time draws near, it appears there will be a period of time when it will become increasingly apparent that the world is unstable and the end is near. There will come a point when there will no longer be any provision for preparing for the coming of the Lord. This is made clear in the parable of the ten virgins.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED. In order for the words of the Lord to have an compelling impact upon the disciples, they must obtain a proper view of their homes, their possessions, and their garments. They certainly cannot adopt a view of religion that accents the things that are gained in this world. When you believe what Jesus has said here, it gives even more strength to the words of John, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world”* (1 John 5:17).

We also learn about the futility of false religion, where God is not the One being served, and self-interests become prominent. That is what had taken place among the Jews, and it results in the terrible judgment against Jerusalem of which Jesus is now speaking. You can rest assured that the traditions of the elders and the burdens of the Jewish lawyers would obtain no value at all during the destruction of Jerusalem. At that time, it was evident they were powerless.

“ 17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 18 and pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.”

There is a certain practicality to godliness and spiritual mindedness that is revealed in these words. They also make known the tenderness of the Savior, who knew very well that the judgment of Jerusalem was richly deserving. Yet, He was mindful of the hardships of that time that would be exerted upon those who had faith in Him. They would not be absolutely free from all concerns. It also seems apparent to me that His words would be an incentive to be alert to the possibility of a door escape that could be provided before the dreadful judgment came.

The first thing to see here is that the judgment of Jerusalem could not be averted. Its doom was sealed in the bag of Divine purpose. When the people rejected the Lord’s Christ, not knowing the time of their *“visitation”* (Lk 19:44), they crossed the line of Divine forbearance and longsuffering – just as surely as the sinners of Noah’s day (Gen 6:3).

WOE TO THEM THAT ARE WITH CHILD. Other versions read, *“How dreadful it will be,”* NIV *“And alas for those,”* RSV *“it will be hard,”* BBE *“What a terrible time,”* CJB and *“How horrible it will be.”* GWN A woman who is *“with child”* is one who is carrying the child in her womb, not yet having given birth. Travail, or labor pains, are said to come upon the woman who is *“with child”* (1 Thess 5:3). Obviously, hasty travel would be difficult for an expectant mother. Jesus gives no suggestion that special provisions will be made for such women, although I do not doubt that instances of extraordinary care and provision occurred. But in this word, special provision is not the point, but special action.

WOE TO THEM THAT GIVE SUCK. Other versions read, “*nursing babies*,” NKJV “*nursing mothers*,” NIV and “*with babies at the breast*.” NJB Mothers who must hold and nurse their little children because of their helpless infancy, would have a difficult time fleeing to the mountains. Not only must they hasten out of the city, they must ascend up into mountainous regions in order to save themselves and their infants.

All of this was brought on by a city whose leaders provoked them to reject their Savior, deny Him, and deliver Him up to be crucified. And do you doubt that “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?*” (Heb 10:31). Do not imagine that in great judgments there are not innocent souls that suffer! Do you think that there were no expectant mothers or infants in the flood, or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?

It certainly is not that these words are intended to promote fear and anxiety. They are spoken in a full awareness of the fact that we are to “*be careful for nothing*” (Phil 4:6). Rather, our Lord’s words are to promote sobriety and preparation. The saints of God are not to live naively as though they were never intended to face adversity, or be moved to flee from danger.

PRAY ABOUT YOUR FLIGHT. This is an especially needful word. “*Pray that this will not take place in the winter*,” NIV when there are even more difficulties associated with escape. Matthew adds something else, “*But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day*” (Matt 24:20), when they would be subjected to even further limitations. He does not say they are slaves to the Sabbath, but leads them to believe they were not intended to conduct their lives in a crisis as though it did not exist. The point is that their minds will be occupied with getting into the mountains, and thus there would be a temptation to actually neglect the Lord. Rather than praying for strength in such an occasion, He tells them to pray the time when they must flee to the mountains would not take place on the Sabbath day.

SOMETHING TO CONSIDER. There is such a thing as unusual occasions when the ordinary pursuits of life should be suspended – at least for those who are aware of such times. We have an example of such as time in Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians. Certain questions had arisen there concerning marriage. In Paul’s admonition, he suggested that the present time was not one in which undue thought should be given to marriage. “*I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife*” (1 Cor 7:26-27). He makes it clear that he is not talking about committing sin: “*But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you*” (1 Cor 7:28). That is, at that time, marriage would complicate life because of the present circumstances – “*distress*,” “*crisis*,” NIV or “*necessity*.” YLT We are not provided with the specific nature of the crisis, whether it was a calamity, persecution, or the defection from Christ that was taking place there. This is the reason Paul said to the unmarried and widows, “*if it is good for them that they abide even as I*” (1 Cor 7:9). It was not that he advocated a single life over a married one. Rather, it was that under certain circumstances it requires more personal devotion and determinedness than is required under ordinary circumstances. He is also careful to say he is not stating a law, but is appealing to their wisdom and sensitivity. This is precisely the kind of instruction Jesus is giving to His disciples.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 142

“ Mark 13:19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. 20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. 21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: 22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.”

(Mark 13:19-15; Matt 24:21-25; Lk 21:22-24)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is answering a threefold question that has been asked by Peter, James, John, and Andrew: “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt 24:3). This is not a mere classroom setting. The disciples have sensed from what Jesus has said that difficult and trying times are ahead. They have asked for signs that they might better prepare themselves for the inevitable – and that is what He is addressing, the inevitable – things that cannot be aborted or altered. The only thing to do is to prepare for them, and to respond appropriately. The very nature of this text forbids its distortion. Jesus is speaking of specific things, pointed circumstances, and necessary responses. These are words that dare not be addressed philosophically, indifferently, or with a mind to form a uniquely human doctrine. What is more, Jesus is speaking of a time that is strictly controlled by heaven, and with an interest for “*the elect*.” All of these factors combine to form an urgent and compelling word. The very manner in which Jesus is speaking calls out for a sober mind and a hearing that is marked by godly intention. Nothing about these words suggests that they can be ignored, or treated as though they are too deep, or have nothing to do with any specific generation. They are bathed in illuminating light, clothed with the garment of relevancy, and held in the setting of urgency. We do well to carefully consider them, and respond appropriately.

“ Mark 13:19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.”

IN THOSE DAYS. Jesus has focused the attention of His disciples on a specific period of time – “*those days*.” This has particular reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, “*the holy city*” (Neh 11:1; Isa 52:1; Matt 4:5; 27:53). It will be the time of “*the abomination of desolation*” of which Daniel spoke, when the most holy place will be invaded by the enemies of God, and polluted by blood and idolatrous sacrifice (v 14). It will be a time when escape from Jerusalem is absolutely required, with no time to gather personal possessions (vs 15-16). It will be a time of inconvenience, when those who are with child or are nursing children, will be at a disadvantage; a time when winter will be a handicap, and the Sabbath day will be a complication (v 17-18; Matt 24:20). It will be the time when

Jerusalem will be compassed about with enemies, and desolation is near (Lk 21:20). All of these circumstances are cast in stone, and there is no way to change them. The only thing to do is properly prepare for them. Time spent trying to avert them or change them is wasted time, and will yield no benefit.

A vital part of spiritual wisdom is being able to detect such times and take appropriate action. Those who live as though such things could not possibly take place have greatly handicapped themselves, putting themselves at a great disadvantage.

UNPARALLELED AFFLICTION. The days of which Jesus speaks will be marked by affliction, the likes of which has never before been seen – even from the beginning of the creation. Now, there have been great afflictions in the history of the world. They include the flood (Gen 6-8), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), the plagues against Egypt (Ex 7-12), the drowning of the army of Egypt in the Red Sea (Ex 14), the slaughter of the nations that occupied Canaan (Josh 12:6-24), the destruction of Nineveh (Zeph 2:13-15), the overthrow of Babylon (Isa 21:9-10; Jer 50:2-3), and others. What was it that made the destruction of Jerusalem worse than those judgements? Those destructions were all fierce, and there was no element of mercy in them. How is it possible for anything to be worse?

Those prior judgments, though extensive beyond imagination, were all against the heathen, and those who had no acquaintance of or covenant with, the living God. None of them were against a place where God had placed His name, or where extensive revelation had been given. But that is not the case in the destruction of Jerusalem. This was against the people of God, who were in covenant with God, and who had been visited with the Dayspring from on high. This city had received the highest privileges, seen the Lord's Christ, and heard words of eternal life. A city blessed beyond measure would be cursed beyond measure! Never before nor since has such a judgment been poured out upon a people who have been vouchsafed so much from God!

This certainly casts light on Peter's statement, "*For the time is come that judgment **must begin at the house of God** : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*" (1 Pet 4:17). This is an account that must be considered by every slumbering and slothful person who claims to be a Christian, and every dead and static church! Keep in mind that this took place **after** Jesus died, was raised from the dead, and was enthroned in glory. It took place **after** the inauguration of the New Covenant, the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit, and the time of salvation by grace through faith. It is clear that none of these things changed the nature of God, or the manner in which He ultimately deals with hardheartedness.

THE DAYS OF VENGEANCE AND WRATH. Luke records these words, spoken by Jesus on the occasion of reference. "*For these be **the days of vengeance** , that all things which are written may be fulfilled . . .for there shall be great distress in the land, and **wrath upon this people** "* (Luke 21:22-23). God told Israel, "*Vengeance belongeth to Me*" (Deut 32:35). And again, "*I will render vengeance to Mine enemies*" (Deut 32:41). The Psalmist said that vengeance belonged to God (Psa 94:1). To the church it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine; I will repay*" (Rom 12:19). And again the church is told, "*Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people*" (Heb 10:30). A representation of God that hides this aspect of His nature is one that is dangerous beyond description, for God will not and cannot change. God **will** judge His people, and Peter reminds us that His judgment **begins** with the house of God. If that is difficult to receive, consider what Jesus is saying in this text. The Romans, who executed the judgment in question, were certainly not a righteous people. They were idolaters, ruthless, and held no respect for God, His law, or His people. Eventually, God would judge them like He did Babylon. However, He

would first judge His people. That is where His judgment would begin, for they had been given the greatest advantage. And how will the Lord react to a lifeless and wandering church? What will He do in response to those who have once heard and believed, yet are described as those who “*turn from the holy commandment*” (2 Pet 2:21)? What of those whose love has waxed cold (Matt 24:12), or have left their first love (Rev 2:4)? Let all such people know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31)!

“ 20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days.”

As long as time exists, Divine wrath will never rage interminably or without restraint. It will, to some degree, be mingled with mercy. Speaking of His dealings with Israel, of which our text is one, the Lord said, “*In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer*” (Isa 54:8). Again He said, “*for in My wrath I smote thee, but in My favor have I had mercy on thee*” (Isa 60:10). As long as there is time, this is the Lord’s manner, for “*there remaineth a remnant according to the election of grace*” (Rom 11:5), and that condition requires that He “*remember mercy,*” even when He is “*in wrath*” (Hab 3:2). There is coming a time, following the passing of the heavens and the earth, when God’s wrath will be “*poured out without mixture*” (Rev 14:10).

EXCEPT. This is a word that identifies an exclusion or some condition that modifies a circumstance. In this text, it is a word that describes God’s control of the condition. Wrath was being poured out, and God’s vengeance was being expressed. However, it was bounded by Divine purpose, and would not do more than it was intended to do.

SHORTENED THE DAYS. That is, the days of vengeance would be “*cut short,*” or abruptly terminated by the hand of the Lord. According to appearance, it would not look as though such a thing was possible, but would rather appear as though the enemy was wreaking havoc without any control or restraint. Luke says of the judgment of reference, “*there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*” (Luke 21:23-24). What terrible days they were! Over 1,300,000 died in the Roman invasion. They were, indeed, “*the days of vengeance,*” and they came upon the people because they “*did not recognize the time*” of their “*visitation*” NASB (Lk 19:44). Yet, in a singular display of His mercy, God shortened the days, moving the Romans to stop the carnage, and take no further delight in what they were doing. The devil, who a subordinate to God, had to call off his troops. He no doubt had in mind to utterly destroy the people of God, but the Lord would not allow him to do it.

FOR THE ELECT’S SAKE. Here is the reason for the Lord shortening the days, allowing Israel to recover: “*for the elect’s sake.*” Paul describes such people as the “*remnant according to election*” (Rom 11:5). These were the godly, whom the Lord had reserved for Himself as He did those seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal in the days of Elijah (Rom 11:4; 1 Kgs 19:18). The days were shortened for **their** sakes. Lest we be confused by the views of men, Jesus defines them more precisely: “*whom He hath chosen.*” It is for **their** sakes, Jesus, says, that the Lord “*hath shortened the days.*” He was not moved by pity for the young, or old, or mothers, or gifted, but for the sake of the elect, whom He had chosen.

In the days of the flood, after all flesh had been destroyed, and every living thing died, except for what was in the ark, “*God remembered Noah*” – the one whom He had chosen (Gen 8:1). When God delivered Lot out of Sodom, it was because He “*remembered Abraham*” whom He

had chosen (Gen 19:29). When Israel was groaning under their affliction in Egypt, “*God remembered His covenant with Abraham,*” whom He had chosen (Ex 2:24; 6:5). The Psalmist said that God cared for wayward Israel in the wilderness because “*He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant,*” whom He had chosen (Psa 105:42). He regarded their affliction and heard their cry because “*He remembered for them His covenant*” (Psa 106:45).

There is a people for whom the Lord is governing this world! It is not the people who should be saved, but the ones called “*the elect*” who He has chosen. Isaiah the prophet spoke of these people, and said the Lord preserved the nation of Israel because of them. “*Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah*” (Isa 1:9). Paul appeals to this word of Isaiah, associating it with the Lord finishing the work He has started on the earth, and bringing it to a righteous conclusion. “*For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha*” (Rom 9:28-29). There were no survivors that remained in Sodom and Gomorrah. However, that is why Israel has survived to this day – it is because of the remnant, the seed that God has left for Himself, and from which He will eventually reclaim the nation for His own glory.

And how is it that the church has survived all of these years? It has been bombarded with false prophets, persecutions, and all manner of opposition. It has not remained because of the organizers, church builders, or institutional gurus. It is rather owing to the remnant – the godly people who have separated themselves from the world owing to their perception of God’s choice of them. That remnant is the reason for God’s staggering patience.

“21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: 22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.”

You can sense the priority Jesus is giving to alertness and sobriety. “*Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many . . . take heed unto yourselves . . . he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved . . . let him that readeth understand . . . pray . . . believe him not . . . take ye heed*” (Mark 13:6,7,9,13,14,18,21,23). Vigilance is the watchword for all generations.

IF ANY MAN. “*Look, here is the Christ!*” “*Look, there He is!*” NIV There will be those who will say they have discovered “*Christ*” – the anointed One, or the One through whom all human deficiencies are addressed. They will call men away from the strait and narrow way to a quest of “*some new thing*” – something that neither Jesus nor the apostles affirmed. But these offer nothing of substance, only the ways of the world garbed with religious pretension.

BELIEVE HIM NOT. For those who know Christ, any claim to finding something or someone better is to be simply rejected. Do not believe him! Do not listen to him, or treat his words as though they were in any sense worthy of your attention.

FALSE CHRISTS AND FALSE PROPHETS. This would be a Christ that is defined by men, not the Gospel. He offers something men want, not something they need. He majors on this world, not the one to come. The abundance of these spurious messengers reveals a Satanic initiative – like spewing out a flood to drown the church (Rev 12:15). His aim is to turn the saints aside to lesser and unprofitable things, and to a Christ that has no power, and does not prepare men to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

SIGNS AND WONDERS WILL BE SHOWN. From Satan's perspective, this deluge of signs and wonders is designed to deceive the elect. From the heavenly point of view, it is calculated to sift out the tares, and discover those whose hearts are sullied with sin. Jesus said they would "*show signs and wonder,*" employing methodologies that are not natural. Matthew says they will be "*great signs*" (Matt 24:24). These are calculated to "*seduce,*" deceive, NIV or lead astray. NASB The wicked one will be given license to do this from heaven, for Satan cannot work such things at will. This parallels Paul's statement about God sending "*strong delusion*" to those who do not receive the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10-12). This being the case, we can expect a faithless generation to be the seed-bed for all kinds of false prophets, charlatans, and those who make merchandise of people (2 Pet 2:3).

IF IT WERE POSSIBLE. The onslaught of lies will be powerful enough that, if it was possible, the very elect of God would be deceived. Jesus said of His sheep, who are the elect, "*And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers*" (John 10:5). God knows the identity of these people, but they themselves must come to know it also. Thus it is written, "*the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*" (2 Tim 2:19). That is, the only way the individual can make his calling and election sure to himself, is to depart from iniquity, adding the various graces that are appropriated by faith: virtue (moral integrity or excellence), knowledge (a grasp of truth), temperance (self control, or keeping under the body), patience (perseverance or endurance), godliness (God-likeness), brotherly kindness (expressions of brother love), and charity (a profound love for God, Christ, the truth, and the saints). The addition of these qualities is declared to be nothing less than becoming a partaker of the Divine nature, and is said to be fueled by the promises (2 Pet 1:4). **Where this is not taking place, delusion is inevitable, and cannot be avoided.** Those who trust their intellectual capacities and fleshly discipline will end up in the ditch, helpless victims of false Christs and false prophets.

Let it be clear that "*the elect*" **cannot** be deceived. However, the only way one can have any degree of confidence that he is such a person is to give heed to the promises, adding the virtues, of which God has spoken, to their lives. In so doing, they are fulfilling this word which follows the admonition of Peter. "*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do **these things**, ye shall never fall*" (2 Pet 1:10). The words "*never fall*" describe the condition to which Jesus refers when He said "*if it were possible.*"

I HAVE FORETOLD YOU. Other versions read, "*told you all things beforehand,*" NKJV "*told you everything in advance,*" NASB "*told you everything ahead of time.*" NIV The reason for this foretelling is to ready the saints for what is coming **so they can prepare themselves.** These are some of the signs that pertain to every generation. The receiving of the love of the truth, strong faith, spiritual growth, and an increasing change from glory unto glory are appointed means of survival. However, where these things are not taking place, surviving the onslaught of delusion is not remotely possible. I do not believe these things are commonly comprehended.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 143

“ Mark 13:24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. ”

(Mark 13:24-27; Matt 24:26-31; Lk 21:25-27)

INTRODUCTION

Although the hour in which Jesus will be betrayed is fast approaching, and His consequent death in which He will be made sin and cursed by God, Jesus is speaking to His disciples concerning the judgment of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The very fact that He is addressing these subjects at this time confirms their importance. Jesus never spoke aimlessly, or engaged in profitless and meaningless exchanges with men. It seems to me that one of the unquestionable evidences of unbelief is a disinterest in the words to which we are now being exposed. It is inconceivable that a person could have any significant faith in Christ and yet be able to ignore these words. The sobriety with which they are spoken, and the tones of urgency and alertness that are found in them forbids them to be ignored or treated as though they were only relevant for specific people living at a certain time. The fact that evil men have managed to confuse people concerning the last times is no reason for texts like this to be thrown into the arena of human opinion, or treated as though they were nothing more than matters beyond our understanding. Jesus is not even capable of speaking things that are irrelevant or have nothing to do with God's eternal purpose. Such speaking falls into the category of vanity, which can in no way be associated with Jesus. The relevancy and cruciality of the words Jesus now speaks are very obvious. The coming of which He speaks can only refer to one event, and cannot possibly have a dual application or meaning. The fact that He speaks these words here confirms that they are in some way related to the destruction of Jerusalem. It should be obvious that the association does not have to do with the time its destruction.

“ Mark 13:24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.”

AFTER THAT TRIBULATION. Jesus makes a sudden leap from the destruction of Jerusalem until another time, when disruption will be on a global level, as compared with a regional one. Matthew provides the bridge to the subject of Christ's coming. After warning His disciples to not give heed to those who say they know where Jesus can be found, he records the Lord saying,

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt 24:27). That is, the next time Jesus is actually seen, *“every eye shall see Him”* (Rev 1:7). **There is no such thing as a private or secret return of the glorified Savior.** The fact that He is *“glorified”* renders it impossible for Him to in any way leave heaven without it being known throughout the universe. Those who would have His glory in any way or at any time concealed after His enthronement have only betrayed their ignorance.

The phrase *“those days”* is associated with the destruction of Jerusalem itself, and the time during which it would be trodden down by the Gentiles. The destruction itself extended over several years, and the invasion of Jerusalem by Gentiles has already continued for approximately 2,000 years. Jesus said, *“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”* (Luke 21:24). Paul referred to this period as the time when *“the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,”* or *“the full number of the Gentiles has come in”* (Rom 11:25). Earlier, when Jesus was leaving the Temple, He said, *“For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Matt 23:39). These words indicated that the ending of those days would be related to Israel engaging in an earnest quest for the Savior they rejected when He walked among them. Paul also dealt with the turning of Israel to the Lord (Rom 11:11-29; 2 Cor 3:16).

Matthew also refers to the time *“immediately after the tribulation of those days”* (Matt 24:29). The word *“immediately”* is not to be understood as referring to time. It rather signifies that the next matter to be considered would relate to the return of Jesus. Now, therefore, Jesus turns our attention to matters relating directly to His return.

A TIME OF GREAT DARKNESS. The language here is to be taken in a figurative sense, and describes a moral and spiritual darkness that descends upon the earth. Following the destruction of Jerusalem a great cloud of spiritual darkness pervaded the earth, commencing around 400 A.D., and continuing with relatively few interruptions until this day. This condition was the direct result of many falling from the faith as Jesus said: *“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”* (Matt 24:12). This is the *“falling away”* of which Paul wrote (1 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-4). Peter also spoke of such a time (2 Pet 2:1-2, and John as well (1 John 2:18; 4:1-3). This darkness is of such a subtle nature, most of those living in it do not even know they are in the dark.

DISTURBANCE IN HIGHER REALMS. Jesus now traces the source of this darkness to great agitation and conflict in higher realms – *“the powers that are in heaven.”* A specific upheaval of this sort is revealed in the book of Daniel. There the overthrow of the Persian Empire, and its replacement by the Grecian Empire is credited to a fierce conflict that took place between two principalities that governed those nations (Dan 10:20). Social and national agitation will be experienced, and it will be amidst an environment of moral and spiritual darkness or ignorance. **In other words, the conditions will largely be the result of truth falling in the street, and the church failing to be the pillar and ground of the truth.** When the love of professing Christendom waxed cold, and it turned from truth to fables, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, it unleashed a wave of delusion and danger that staggers the mind. There is no human laws or form of political power than can manage to stay the overflowing of the trouble. On the surface, it looks like a world out of control, but it is not. It is rather a world that has repudiated its Maker and refused its Savior.

In Luke’s account of this, He relates the impact of these events upon men. *“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking*

after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:26). Notice, all of these effects are traced back to the shaking of “*the powers of heaven.*” Such things as natural disasters ought not to be traced to a mythical global warming, but to the shaking and disruption of heavenly powers. Just as surely as such shaking has caused political turmoil, so it can cause natural instability.

Keep in mind that Jesus is giving the disciples “*signs*” that are signposts for the elect. The presence of these things is intended to promote sobriety, vigilance, and readiness.

“ 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.”

THEN. Remember, Jesus has warned of those who will say they know secret places where Jesus can be seen. Here Jesus accents that His appearing will be so evident that even in the midst of turmoil, disruption, and fear, not a soul will miss His manifestation.

THEY SHALL SEE. Rather than Christ’s return escaping their attention, as when He first appeared on earth, “*they shall see!*” Furthermore, everyone will know who it is that they are seeing – “*the Son of Man.*” John refers to Christ’s return in this way, also mentioning the association of the clouds with that occasion. “*Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen*” (Rev 1:7). Not only will all souls know who they are beholding, they will at once recall their response to Him., Saints will be shouting with joy, and all who rejected and opposed Him will become acutely aware of what they have done, yet will not be able to do a thing about it. Matthew says , “*and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn*” (Matt 24:30b).

Matthew also says that the appearing of Christ will be a sign – the **ultimate** sign: “*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven*” (Matt 14:30a). There will be sufficient time for a reaction among those who failed to receive Christ. The Revelation paints a most vivid picture of that time, when the entire natural order will be shaken down. “*And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne , and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*” (Rev 6:14-17).

WITH GREAT POWER AND GLORY. There is no sense in which the return of Jesus will be attended by obscurity, or shrouded with mystery. He will not come to sneak His people out of the world undetected. What glory would that bring to Him – to have His people remain basically unknown and unrecognized when they leave the world that hated and maligned them?

The fact that He will return “*with great power and glory*” means that His return cannot possibly be hidden. Both Matthew and Mark also make a point of saying the Son of Man will be seen coming “*with power and great glory*” (Matt 24:30; Lk 21:27). This is not said to be a trait of one of His comings, but of His **coming** (singular). There is not a statement in all of Scripture that suggests Jesus is coming more than one more time. There are eighty-two references to Christ’s return. None of them suggest multiple returns. The singular words “*coming,*” “*come,*” “*appearing,*” and “*show*” are used in these references. None of them say He is coming to reign. They do say He will **come** “*to reward every man according to His works*” (Matt

16:27). It is also said He will **come** to bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and to make manifest the counsels of the heart (1 Cor 4:5). It is written that He will judge the living and the dead “*at His appearing*” (2 Tim 4:1). Those who “*love His appearing*” will receive “*a crown of righteousness*” at that time (2 Cor 4:9). Jesus said when He comes He will be ashamed of those who were ashamed of Him (Lk 9:26). Paul taught that “*when He shall come*,” Jesus will punish the wicked and reward the righteous (2 Thess 1:9-10). John declared that when Jesus is seen, the sons of God will “*be like Him*,” for they will “*see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2).

All of this requires that Jesus come in “*great power and glory*,” with no part of His Person hidden. It is at that time that God will show Him, unveiling to the assembled universe what He is right now: “*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality*” (1 Tim 6:15-16).

The manner in which the return of the Lord is chronicled accents the magnitude of the glory in which He will appear. Jesus Himself said, “*For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels*” (Matt 16:27). Again He said, “*When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of his glory*” (Matt 25:31). Once again He said, “*He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels*” (Luke 9:26). The glory of the Father, together with the glory of all the holy angels will accompany the Son when He comes in all of His own magnificent glory.

This is the next event on which the children of God are to set their minds. They are not to look for a rapture, but for Christ's appearing! They are not to shape their thinking by the considerations of an antichrist and the mark of the beast, but rather around the time when Jesus will come in power and great glory. That is the next thing on the Divine agenda! While a falling away and revealing of the man of sin are very real happenings, they are not integral to the purpose of God itself. That is why they cannot be at the center of our reasoning.

“ 27 And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.”

AND THEN. Now Jesus elaborates on what will happen when He **appears** in power and great glory – His own glory, the glory of the Father, and the glory of the holy angels. Five times we read of Jesus' “*appearing*” (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1,8; Tit 2:13; 1 Pet 1:7). Six times we read of the time when He will “*appear*” (Matt 24:30; Col 3:4; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2). The word “*appear*” means to become apparent or be made manifest – to make visible or known what was formerly unknown. THAYER There is no possible way that this word can be applied to a secret rapture in which the saints are gathered and removed from the world. This is important to see, because Jesus now states that the gathering of the saints will take place when He **appears**, or comes in great power and glory, neither of which can be hidden when they are made known. In this world, faith can perceive Christ's glory while unbelief cannot. But when Jesus comes in great power and glory, faith will not be required to see Him. He will be apparent and known to “*every eye*” (Rev 1:7).

HE SHALL SEND HIS ANGELS. What a regal picture of the Lord Jesus Christ! The angels are said to be “*His*.” Peter says of the exaltation of Christ, “*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him*” (1 Pet 3:22). When He came into the world as a Babe, God said, “*Let all the angels of God worship Him*” (Heb 1:6). And, is it possible that the angels are subject to Jesus, but men are not? How can the greater be under Jesus, but the lesser is not? Angels know their Master, but men do not. However, that does not change the fact that all men are presently subject to the exalted Christ.

THE GATHERING OF THE ELECT. Here Jesus speaks of the angels being sent to gather

the elect. At another time He said that they would “*first*” gather out of the Kingdom “*all things that offend, and them, that do iniquity*” (Matt 13:41). This, He taught, would be the fulfillment of the parable the tares of the field in which Jesus said the owner said, “*Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together **first** the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn*” (Matt 13:30). Here, however, Jesus focuses on “*the elect*” – the ones God has chosen in Christ Jesus, that they should be “*holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Eph 1:4). These are the ones God knows, for “*the Lord knoweth them that are His*” (2 Tim 2:19). Of course, the angels know them also, for they have been appointed to minister to these people during their earthly sojourn (Heb 1:13-14).

FROM THE FOUR WINDS. The phrase, “*from the four winds,*” emphasizes that “*His elect*” are scattered upon the earth. They were not given an earthly country as Israel, but have rather been dispersed among “*every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*” (Rev 5:9). According to circumstance, it appears as though they have been blown about in the world like the early believers who were “*scattered*” because they were pilgrims in this world (Acts 8:1,4; 1 Pet 2:11). The angels, however, will not miss one of these precious ones to whom they faithfully ministered while they remained in the world that was dominated by their adversary the devil (1 John 5:19).

FROM THE UTTERMOST PART OF EARTH. Other versions read, “*the farthest end of the earth,*” NASB “*the ends of the earth,*” NIV and “*the farthest bounds of the earth,*” AMPLIFIED Matthew reads, “*from the four winds,*” omitting the reference to “*earth*” (Matt 24:31). These are ones who are “*alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord*” (1 Thess 4:15,17). They are the ones who will not be raised from the dead, but will be “*changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*” (1 Cor 15:51-52). From the remotest part of the earth, whether in the desert like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26), or Caesarea like Cornelius (Acts 10:1), in prison like Onesimus (Phile 1:10), or in Rome in Caesar’s household (Phil 4:22), they will be gathered. They will be found and gathered from every nation, and every social strata. They will be gathered from fields (Matt 24:40), grinding mills (Matt 24:41), and even the bed chambers (Lk 17:36). The “*reapers,*” who are the angels, will gather the wheat from the Lord’s field, and bring them into the everlasting garner, leaving all of the chaff behind. For the first time, the elect will be “*every whit whole,*” possessing no weakness.

FROM THE UTTERMOST PART OF HEAVEN. Think of the millions, perhaps billions, of those who lived by faith who have left this world. Some were murdered like Abel (Gen 4:6). Other died of diseases like Elisha (2 Kgs 13:14). Two were translated from the earth, namely Enoch and Elisha (Heb 11:5; 2 Kgs 2:11). Some may have died under the chastening rod of God that their spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor 5:5; 11:32). Ponder all of the infants that have died natural deaths, or those who were slaughtered, like the infants in Egypt (Ex 1:16,22; Acts 7:19), and those around Bethlehem (Matt 2:16). There will be those who passed from this life under vicious assaults by the devil, like the prophets who were slain by Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4,13), or the godly who refused deliverance, choosing death over life (Heb 11:35). The martyrs who are presently under the altar will be gathered (Rev 6:9), together with Lazarus (Lk 16:22), and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Lk 13:28). What a marvelous gathering of “*His elect*” that will be!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 144

“ Mark 13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. 30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.”

(Mark 13:28-31; Matt 24:32-35; Lk 21:28-33)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is confirming to His disciples the importance of being knowledgeable of last things – whether it is the then coming destruction of Jerusalem, or the end of the world and His coming. These are matters that are of great consequence, for they revealed that life in this world – even in an ordained religious setting – is not the determined objective of God. Knowing how to love in this world is not the main thing, and men ought to cease from saying that it is. This does not mean our lives now are not important, but rather accents how essential it is that they be lived in view of what is coming. Those who have a spiritual grasp of the future, and maintain that hold, will order their lives so they will not be caught unawares. Men who emphasize life in this world, with its varied relationships, are not giving due heed to the revealed future. If, for example, we knew that a devastating tornado was about to sweep our home away, what sense would it make engage in a remodeling project? If the home was going to be severely damaged in its present state, but it was known that it would survive, we would fortify it so it would weather the storm. People who know they will die within a short time, if they are of sound mind, live differently than those who imagine the future is secure. So it is that Jesus develops two pivotal considerations: the destruction of Jerusalem and His coming and the end of the world that shall occur at that time. We will find that there is a sense in which these are related. It goes without saying that we are dealing with important matters. The tone of Jesus’ words can be heard by those of tender heart. This is not a subject that allows for speculation and human opinion. The reason for this exclusion is that we are dealing with matters that have been determined by God and cannot possibly be altered or nullified.

“ Mark 13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near.”

THERE IS LEARNING TO BE DONE. Both Matthew and Mark represent Jesus as saying, “*Now learn*” (Matt 24:32). Luke records that Jesus “*spake to them a parable.*” The intended purpose was for the disciples to “*learn*” something vital. Unlike when Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, this saying was not intended to hide the truth (Lk 8:10). Here is a Kingdom principle that

has eluded many: **a teaching Jesus is to be understood!** Jesus has come, we are told, “*to give us an understanding*” (1 John 5:20). In view of this, how does one account for the gross ignorance that is found within the Christian community? How is it that there are so many unlearned, when Jesus has told us to “*learn*”? He invites the weary and heavy laden to come to Him in order that they might “*learn*” (Matt 11:29).

And, what does it mean to “*learn*”? As used in Scripture, to “*learn*” means “to increase one’s knowledge,” THAYER and “direct one’s mind to something producing an external effect.” FRIBERG “to understand, comprehend.” LIDDELL-SCOTT In the English, to “*learn*” means to “gain knowledge or understanding of.” WEBSTER In other words, learning involves gaining knowledge that can be handled or used profitably. A person who “*learns*” to swim, can get in deep water and move about without drowning. A person who “*learns*” carpentry can construct something out of wood. A person who “*learns*” from Jesus can take His words and shape his life by them, preparing for the future, and capitalizing on the resources available for the present.

The epistles speak of learning “*doctrine*” (Rom 16:17), “*Christ*” (Eph 4:20), “*to be content*” (Phil 4:11), “*to show piety*” (1 Tim 5:4), and “*to maintain good works for necessary uses*” (Tit 3:14). We are even told that Jesus, in His earthly life, “*learned obedience*” (Heb 5:8). If we knew nothing more about learning that what is said in these texts, we should be convinced that war should be made against ignorance. Every child of God is to be determined to come out of the category of the “*unlearned*,” for that is a class of people that are in jeopardy – prone to wrest, or twist, the Word of the Lord (2 Pet 3:16).

THE FIG TREE HAS A PURPOSE. One purpose of the fig tree was to produce fruit. Not long before the time of our text, Jesus had cursed a fig tree because it looked as though it should have had fruit, yet did not (Mk 11:13-14). However, this is **not** the point of this parable. Here the signs of life that will follow the cold of winter are the point. Matthew and Mark say, “*when her branch is tender, and putteth forth her leaves*” (Matt 24:32). Luke reads, “*Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth*” (Luke 21:29-30).

Thus we see that the tree was not only for fruit, but also provided an index to the future. That means that men gave heed to this tree **before** fruit was ever a consideration. A time of refreshment and productivity was coming. Solomon used this figure also. “*For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*” (Song of Solomon 2:11-13).

THERE ARE SIGNS IN THE TREE OF APPROACHING TIMES. The point is that the heat of the sun caused the sap that was dormant in the winter to course through the branches of the tree, so that tender shoots began to spring out, and foliage sprouted throughout the tree. It was this sudden burst of life to which Jesus referred. The presence of that foliage was confirmation that “*summer is near.*” Matthew says, “*summer is nigh*” (Matt 24:32). Luke reads, “*summer is now nigh at hand*” (Lk 21:29). Thus, the fig tree was a sort of forecaster of the summer season, confirming that the cold of winter was about over, and the time of fruitbearing and harvest was fast approaching. Seeing this, knowledgeable people would tend to the fig tree in order to give it the advantage. They would also adjust their lives for the coming heat of summer, during which they would conduct their lives differently. People who had especial interest in the seasons, whether farmers or merchants, would watch for the signs of the coming summer, having a special interest in the trees.

One of the marks of a degenerating society is its failure to see the signs of the times. Jesus said of the generation among whom He walked, “*When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair*

weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? ” (Matt 16:2-3). What do you suppose His assessment is of our generation – particularly in America, and specifically among the churches?

There is a very real need for men like those of Issachar who “*had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do*” (1 Chron 12:32). Even in Esther’s time, Ahasuerus the king depended on “*wise men, which knew the times*” (Est 1:13). A lack of understanding, particular regarding the things of God and the signs of the times, is a sign of real weakness.

“ 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.”

In His masterful way, the Lord now summons men of all ages to give heed to what He has said. He will speak in such a way as to profit the people to whom He is speaking, as well as those more than two millennia later, who will also read His words.

IN LIKE MANNER. Other versions read, “*So you also,*” NKJV “*Even so, you too.*” NASB Matthew and Luke read, “*So likewise*” (Matt 24:33; Lk 21:31). There **is** a correlation between what is seen and what is **not** seen. Jesus now appeals to that correlation, knowing that it is an ordained one, created intentionally by the Lord who “*hath made all things for Himself*” (Prov 16:4) – even the greening fig tree! In other words, let them not fall into the category of people of whom Jesus said, “*for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*” (Luke 16:8). It is not comely for businessmen to be more discerning in business than believers are in the things of God! It is not right for the craftsman to be more excellent in his dealings with his peers than the children of God are with one another. Why should a weatherman be more diligent and inquiring in things pertaining to weather than professed believers are in the things of the Spirit. Oh, there sorely needs to be a great awareness of the type of thinking that is “*in like manner!*”

WHEN YE SEE. “*When ye see these things come to pass,*” or “*happening,*” NKJV or “*taking place.*” NRSV Just as surely as the signs of coming summer can be seen in the greening fig tree, so the approaching of the times of which Jesus is speaking can be seen in the earth. You cannot see them inadvertently, but must look for them. Remember the signs He has mentions. 1 Increased deception (v 5). 2 Political and national upheaval (vs 6-7). 3 Natural calamities (v 8). 4 Increased persecution (v 9-13). 5 Religious defilement (v 13). 6 The city of Jerusalem destroyed (vs 14b-20). 7 False Christs (v 21-22). 8 Spiritual darkness/ignorance (v 24). 9 Disruption of heavenly principalities and powers (v 25).

The purpose for these signs, therefore, was that they might be seen, and the appropriate action taken. If that is the case, then no place can be made for an ignorance of them. Jesus does **not** say “*If ye see,*” but “***When ye see!***” That accentuates two stark realities. First, these signs **will** take place. Second, the people of God are **expected** to see them. The approach that many teachers have taken to the coming of the Lord has veiled both of these things, thus causing the people of God to live in ignorance of something in which God has made no provision for ignorance. A failure to behold the signs God has ordained, and of which we have been apprised, confirms that an inordinate distance exists between the people and their God. If these signs have been provided to give the advantage to the saints, then what must be said of those who cannot see them, and have no heart to do so.

KNOW THAT IT IS NIGH. In the case of the destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord had given very specific signs. Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies (Lk 21:20). The enemies would dig a trench around Jerusalem, building an embankment over which they would enter the city (Lk 19:43).

An abomination would stand in the Holy Place that would result in desolation (Matt 24:15). There would be great distress in the land, and wrath upon the people (Lk 21:23). When these signs began taking place, the destruction would be at hand

Also, following those signs, Jesus said He would be seen coming in great power and glory with His angels, who would gather together the elect (vs 26-27). **The signs, then, cannot be limited to the destruction of Jerusalem**, for Jesus did not appear in all of His glory at that time, nor was the glory of the Father seen, or the holy angels, nor were the elect gathered. **Men are to be as aware of the appointed demise of this present evil world as the believers of the first century were to be of the destruction of Jerusalem.**

Luke also ties these signs to the return of the Lord by preceding Christ's parable of the fig tree with these words: "*And when these things **begin** to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; **for your redemption draweth nigh***" (Luke 21:28). Again, this cannot refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. When the signs of its destruction were seen, Jesus did not tell His disciples to lift up their heads, but to flee to the mountains (13:14). He did not tell them redemption was drawing nigh, but rather said, "*these be the days of vengeance*" (Lk 21:22).

It was with a mind to the need of alertness that Paul wrote to the church in Rome, "*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation **nearer** than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*" (Rom 13:11-12). If it is true that no man knows the day or the hour when Jesus will come, how can spiritual sleep and slumber possibly be justified? What kind of spirit is it that moves people to become absorbed with this world? It certainly is not one that comes from God! It is a sin of gargantuan proportions to preach and teach in Jesus' name as though this world was not scheduled for destruction.

“ 30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.”

VERILY. Other versions read "*assuredly,*" NKJV "*truly,*" NASB "*I tell you the truth,*" NIV "*Amen,*" DOUAY "*I can guarantee this truth,*" GWN and "*surely.*" AMPLIFIED The word "*verily*" is a translation of the Greek word "*amaan*" (amen). The word means "firm, faithful . . . surely, and of a truth." THAYER The idea is that the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and the coming of Jesus are cast in stone. They cannot be changed, postponed, hastened, or rendered null and void. The reason why the destruction of Jerusalem is joined with the end of the world and the coming of the Lord is **not** that it was to occur simultaneously with them. Rather, the plundering of the holy city provided an **example** of Divine appointment and certitude. It was something that was announced well in advance, and with sufficient detail to be able to unquestionably detect when it was at hand. Yet, with all of this information, Satan and all of his hosts could do nothing about it. The scribes and Pharisees with all of their self-professed expertise could not stop it from happening, or stall it for so much as one millisecond.

In the Gospel, Jesus uses this word more than one hundred times, thus confirming the manner in which He spoke and taught. He did not deal with possibilities, or probabilities, but with certainties. When it comes to such matters, there is only one option placed before men: **PREPARE!** Any other response is unacceptable.

THIS GENERATION. Jesus states that a certain generation would not pass until "*all these things be done.*" This is the remark that has led many to think the destruction of Jerusalem was the only thing in consideration. That generation was involved. When speaking of the

decimation of Jerusalem Jesus said, “*All these things shall come upon **this** generation*” (Matt 23:36). However, the words of Jesus were not limited to the destruction of the holy city. That would require that Jesus come in all of His glory at that time, and the elect be gathered from both heaven and earth, for that was one of the signs: “*the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt 24:30).

To be sure, the generation living at that time would not pass until Jerusalem was destroyed, which was approximately forty years after Jesus said these words. However, that is not the only generation that existed. For example, the generation of the Jews themselves also existed – and they would not pass from the earth until all of these words – including those of the coming of the Son of man and the gathering of the elect – were fulfilled.

There is also the matter of the generation of Jesus – His “*seed*,” which are more numerous than the children of the married – that is, the Israelites who were married to God (Jer 31:32; Isa 54:5). Christ’s generation is referred as “*the children*” that God gave to Him (Heb 2:13). This being the case, Jesus will have a people in this world until the signs He has revealed have all been fulfilled – and those signs included His return in all of His glory, and the gathering “*together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven*” (Mark 13:27). Satan will make every effort to remove them, sending out a destroying flood to remove them from the earth (Rev 12:15-16) – attempting to do with a moral flood what God did to his offspring in the flood of Noah’s time. But the devil will not be able to do so. This world was made for the culturing of the people of God – a project that displays the power and effectiveness of the great love of God and His marvelous grace. It is only when the purpose of God concerning His people has been completed that the earth as it is will have no further purpose.

HEAVEN AND EARTH. Thus, in a fitting conclusion of this thought, Jesus reminds His disciples that the same thing that was determined to happen to Jerusalem has also been purposed for the heavens and the earth. Jerusalem had been defiled by wayward Jews, and finally by heathen abominations entering into the Temple. **The fact that it was destroyed revealed that God will not allow contaminated things to remain.** They must be brought to an end. Therefore, the heavens and the earth, having been defiled by the race for whom they were made, have been consigned to vanity (Rom 8:20-22). They cannot continue because that is the Divine judgment against whatever is defiled. Thus the destruction of Jerusalem was like a confirmation that the greater contamination – the world – will also be destroyed.

The truth is if ANYTHING passes away, everything of the order to which it belongs will also pass away. A portion of the defiled cannot be preserved. It must all be destroyed. That is the reason why God said, “*I make **all** things new*” – and that includes His people (Rev 21:5; 2 Cor 5:17). **MY WORDS SHALL NOT PASS AWAY.** Ultimately, men will face every word that Jesus spoke. That is why Jesus said to His critics, “*the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). Men really have no option open to them except to give heed to what Jesus says. If anyone chooses to fail in this regard, He will be to them the Stone that will “*grind him to powder*” (Matt 21:44). There is Divine certitude in everything Jesus said.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 145

“ Mark 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left His house, and gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: 36 Lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” (Mark 13:32-37; Matt 24:36-42; Lk 21:34-36)

INTRODUCTION

We know from Christ’s intercessory prayer prior to His betrayal, that His mind was set on the glory He would receive upon His return to heaven. *“And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was”* (John 17:5), and *“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me . . .”* (John 17:24). This quest – particularly as it regards His disciples beholding His glory – is driving the discourse He is now delivering to His disciples. His return is the time when they will behold Him in all of His glory, and it is imperative that they be ready to see it. At that time, all of the glory that is in the world will be overshadowed and engulfed by the glory of Christ. Those who are not prepared for that event will lose everything that is unrelated to Christ’s glory – and He has nothing to offer, nor is there any benefit in Him, that is unrelated to His glory. As Jesus speaks, we become keenly aware of the priority of our readiness for His return. It is imperative that our lives be lived within the acute awareness of the Lord’s return. That is not a matter for human speculation and the formation of lifeless dogma. For men, it may appear as though it is important to maintain an official theological position concerning the coming of the Lord. However, it is even more important to **prepare** for His coming, for it is a Divine appointment. As men engage in preparing themselves for the return of their Lord, they will find it will shape their perception of His return itself. It is only when men detach themselves from this doctrine, that corrupted views gain strength and attractiveness. This is owing to the uniquely sanctifying effects of faith, and its association with the hope that is an anchor for the soul (Heb 6:19).

“ Mark 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”

THAT DAY AND THAT HOUR. This reveals the precision with which Divine appointments are made. For example, the Lord referred to the time when Isaac would be born as *“the time appointed”* (Gen 18:14). Again, when God smote the Egyptian cattle, it was said to have been at a

“set time” He had “appointed” (Ex 9:5). After Habakkuk had been given a vision of the invasion of the Chaldeans, God told him it would be fulfilled at “an appointed time” (Hab 2:3). So it is with the coming of the Son of Man. It will be at an appointed time – a specific day and hour. That very revelation confirms that there is no way this day can be caused to come sooner or later. It is not subject to change, for men have no influence over the time in which it will take place. When Peter admonishes believers, “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet 3:12), he does not mean that we are causing the day to come sooner. Rather, faith leaps over the boundaries of time and enables us to live in view of the coming of that day as though it will be in the next moment. Our expectation is not driven by the awareness of **when** the day will come. Rather, it is driven by persuasion of its reality, and our intense longing for it.

KNOWN ONLY TO THE FATHER. It is not difficult to understand why men do not know the day or the hour of the Lord’s return. The reason why angels do not know can also be seen in the fact that it has not been revealed to them. Divine appointments are not posted on a kind of heavenly bulletin board for everyone there to know. But how is it that the Son, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, does not know – for Jesus Himself includes the Son among those who know neither the day nor the hour: i.e., “neither the Son.”

When it comes to the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we are **not** dealing with someone who **cannot** know. Rather, this is an area in which Jesus has **chosen** to limit the scope of His knowledge. He has consented to maintain His present ministry without this piece of knowledge. And why has he chosen to do this? It is because this is an aspect of His fellowship with His people – a fellowship of expectation or anticipation. He joins with all the creation in looking forward to the time when He will be fully known, death will be destroyed, and His people will be gathered unto Himself. He joins in the chorus of expectation that is being sung in tones of travail by the people to whom He is betrothed, and will soon be His bride. We have been called into the fellowship of Jesus (1 Cor 1:9), and hope or expectation is an aspect of that fellowship.

But why does this condition exist – this circumstance of Jesus not knowing the day or hour of His return? There is a reason for this situation – a reason that has to do with our salvation. In a sense, this enables Him to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb 4:15). In this case, the infirmity is **not knowing** – living in expectation of a glorious consummation without knowing exactly when it will occur. See, for us to safely negotiate through life without this morsel of knowledge, we need a certain kind of grace – a grace that will keep hope alive, even though we know not the day nor the hour when it will be realized. We need a faith that will sustain us under that circumstance, enabling us to forge forward, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If we do not obtain that kind of faith, we will soon become fatigued, discouraged, and possibly faint in the way. Right here is where the Savior **not** knowing the day or the hour of His return comes in. He also knows by experience what it is to long for something without knowing precisely when it will occur. He is anticipating the joining of His bride to Himself with a great longing. He knows that when His enemies are openly subdued and put publically under His feet – that will be the time He will be joined to His bride. Even though He has this great longing, and has chosen to forfeit the knowledge of the time it will take place, yet He faithfully maintains His ministry, keeping his saints, making intercession for them, and bringing them to glory.

WATCH AND PRAY. Keep looking and keep praying! Both of these activities sharpen the mind and sensitize the spirit. These activities are necessary because of the nature of spiritual life. In order for men to live by faith and walk in the Spirit, their hearts must be correctly focused. The fact

that they are “*saved by hope*” (Rom 8:24), means that the future is a primary consideration. It is not possible to live by faith (Rom 1:17) and be absorbed by things that can be seen. Watching looks to the future, and prayer maintains an association with heaven. Both of these tend to mitigate the influence of the present and the distraction of the seen.

YOU DO NOT KNOW THE TIME. In view of this unalterable circumstance, it is a waste of time to indulge in speculation about the time of Christ’s return. The inclination to engage in such activity is a temptation from the wicked one, for it can yield no certain information. The salvation of God is an economy of faith. That is why “*the just shall live by faith*” (Heb 10:38). We are therefore to live in view of the Lord’s coming, understanding that the appointed time cannot be known. Yet, it could not possibly be more certain. The day of the Lord shall come! That confines us to faith, which is the cognitive principle of the Kingdom.

“ 34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left His house, and gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.”

A MAN TAKING A FAR JOURNEY. Having completed His mission to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17-18), Jesus left this world and returned to heaven. This was required because “*the just shall live by faith*” (Gal 3:11). Luke says the Lord was like a Nobleman who “*went into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return*” (Lk 19:12). This sets the tone for living unto the Lord. Life is lived out with the Lord being absent from the immediate scene. Within the framework of things that can be seen, we are “*absent from the Lord*” (2 Cor 5:6). This gives the advantage to faith, which enables the individual to see “*Him who is invisible*” (Heb 11:27). The life of faith must be lived out without the sensible presence of the Lord. This circumstance will unveil the seriousness of the individual, and will eventually eliminate all pretenders.

HE LEFT HIS HOUSE AND GAVE AUTHORITY TO HIS SERVANTS. Matthew covers this statement with the parable of the talents. In this parable, the Lord says the man “*called His servants and delivered to them His goods.*” He did this in strict accord with the ability of each servant, then “*took His journey*” (Matt 25:14-30). Luke depicts it by giving the parable of the pounds, in which the master charges his servants, “*Occupy till I come*” (Lk 19:12-17). Mark states that “*the Son of man*” was like a man who “*gave authority to His servants*” – authority to handle His goods, investing and distributing them appropriately. This is a very exact description of stewardship. It involves handling the things that belong to Jesus while He is away, and doing so in strict accord with His will, being ready to give a strict account of how those spiritual commodities were handled. Each individual is invested with what is required to administer the things that have been put into his hand.

TO EVERY MAN HIS WORK. The goods of the Master, and the authority given to His servants to handle them, translate into a “*work*” – something to be accomplished. This is stated in a number of ways in apostolic doctrine. The twelfth chapter of Romans portrays it as God dealing to every person in Christ “*a measure of faith.*” This is also referred to as “*the grace that is given to us,*” and translates into such works as prophesying, ministering, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy (Rom 12:3-8). These are all areas of responsibility involving what actually belongs to Jesus. In other words, insightful proclamation, teaching exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy are His goods for the church.

The twelfth chapter of First Corinthians speaks of this same activity as “*spiritual gifts*” being given to the church by the administration of the Holy Spirit. There is a diversity of gifts given, all of which work together for the common good of the body of Christ. (1 Cor 12:1-

28). There is also a ranking of these gifts, with the teaching gifts being given the priority (1 Cor 12:28).

The fourth chapter of Ephesians speaks of the gifts that Jesus has given to the church, accentuating the teaching ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. The objective of these works is to build up the saints so they can each fulfill their ministry. Then the body will become mature, and each member will be "*filled with all the fulness of God,*" which is God's revealed objective for them (Eph 4:11-19).

The fourth chapter of First Peter speaks of this distribution of work as being made "*stewards of the manifold grace of God.*" Speaking and ministering are mentioned, both of which are to be done according to "*the ability which God giveth*" (1 Pet 4:10-11).

Jesus has placed such things – His goods – in the hands of men, enduing them with the ability to perform the specified works. When He comes again, He will require them to account for how they did that work.

It should be very apparent to you that this whole arrangement differs significantly from the average perception of the work of the church. However, what Jesus has said to His disciples – only four of them – is intended for all of His body, "*which is the church*" (Col 1:24). Those disciples were actually the church in the embryo.

THE PORTER IS TO WATCH. The "*porter*" is the "*doorkeeper.*" NKJV This is the person who monitors the entrance of people into Divine favor. John the Baptist was such a monitor, and Jesus referred to him as "*the porter*" who opened the door for Jesus Himself (John 10:3). As a faithful "*porter,*" John would not open the door for "*the Pharisees and Sadducees*" who came to his baptism (Matt 3:7-9). On the day of Pentecost, when Peter was the keeper of the door, he specified who could enter (Acts 2:38). Philip did the same with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37), and Paul with the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:30-31).

The doorkeeper is now told to "*watch*" – that is, to conduct his ministry in view of the imminent return of the Lord. He is not to become infected with the virus of institutionalism, so that he forgets that the house belongs to Jesus, as well as the various ministries and functions that have been placed within it. Thus, the porter is "*commanded*" to "*watch.*"

“ 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

THEREFORE WATCH! Jesus mentions the word "*watch*" four times in our text (vs 33,34,35,37). Two different words are used. In the 33rd verse, the word translated "*watch*" means to be sleepless, keep awake, be circumspect and attentive. STRONG'S In the remaining verses, the word translated "*watch*" means to give strict attention to, be cautious, and take heed lest one be overtaken by calamity. STRONG'S The first meaning has to do with our posture – the manner in which we look at life. The second has to do with how we proceed in life, or handle the various responsibilities and opportunities that are placed before us. On the one hand, we are to avoid falling into a spiritual sleep – becoming unaware of the approaching return of our Lord, and the stewardship He has delivered to us. On the other hand, we must be able to evaluate the circumstances we confront in view of the return of our Lord.

A religion that draws men into a state where they lose the awareness of their

responsibility to the Lord is the pinnacle of falsehood. If the objective of salvation is to reconcile us **to God** (Col 1:20-21), bring us into fellowship **with the Son** (1 Cor 1:9), and enable us to walk **in the light** (1 John 1:7), then living without due regard for the Lord and a sense of the nearness of His return is a monumental transgression.

YOU DO NOT KNOW WHEN HE IS COMING. In the world, it is sometimes thought that what you do not know will not hurt you, because it is really irrelevant. Therefore, if a person does not have a detailed knowledge of the history of our country, he can still live in it with relative safety. However, when it comes to spiritual life, if a person does **not** know the details of a matter – particularly when they pertain to Christ Himself – it is in order to promote a heightened sense of responsibility. The return of our Lord is a case in point. The fact that God has not revealed when Jesus will return by no means suggests that it is not important. Nor, indeed, does this mean that we are to engage in a quest to know that time. Rather, this circumstance assists believers live “unto” the One “*who died for them and rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15). The fact that Jesus might suddenly appear is conducive to sober-mindedness.

In view of this circumstance, what can be said of professed leaders of the flock who do not keep the people of God aware of the appointed return of Jesus? What can be said of those who cause the people to become absorbed with life in this world, causing them to be unprepared for the coming of the Lord? I do not think it is possible to state the seriousness of such a thing.

BEING FOUND ASLEEP. The Lord will come “*suddenly,*” or without providing time for preparation. While Scripture indicates there will be a period of awareness that the hour of Christ’s return is upon men (Rev 6:16; 1 Thess 5:3), there will, at that time, be **no** provision to make themselves ready to face the Lord. Paul spoke of this when he wrote of the children of the night being overtaken by the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:4-5).

David spoke of this condition as sleeping “*the sleep of death*” (Psa 13:3). This is a state in which men grow more and more obtuse and insensitive, until they are “*suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy*” (Prov 29:1). It is no wonder that Paul admonishes us, “*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober*” (1 Thess 5:6). Paul challenges a lethargic church, “*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*” (Eph 5:14). He also wrote this stirring word: “*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*” (Rom 13:11-12). He knew that no hope of survival is held out to those who are spiritually asleep when Jesus returns. Salvation is an economy that promotes alertness, vigilance, and circumspection. Dullness and insensitivity are completely out of order.

Jesus confirmed the seriousness of being found unaware when He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem. It was then, approximately forty years after these words were spoken, that a destruction came suddenly, when the people could do nothing about it. At that time, Jesus said, the people who did not flee the city as Jesus said, would cry out in hopelessness, saying to the mountains, “*Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us!*” (Lk 23:28-30).

THE WORD TO EVERYONE IS “WATCH!” Here is a word for everyone. “*Watch!*” And what is it for which we are to watch? Technically, it is not the coming of the Lord itself, for we do not know the Day or the hour. That is a day for which we long and eagerly wait. However, Jesus has given us indications of the approaching of the day, and we are to pay heed to those “*signs.*” When they are perceived, they will promote sobriety, vigilance, and “*holiness, without which no man shall*

see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). In other words, we are to discern “*the signs of the times*” (*Matt 16:3*), and not be lulled into complacency. Nothing must be permitted to dull our awareness of ultimate things – things that will accompany the return of Christ.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 146

“Mark 14:1 *After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. 2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.”*

(Mark 14:1-2; Matt 26:1-5; Lk 22:1-7)

INTRODUCTION

The time appointed by God before the foundation of the world is at the door, and the activities in Jerusalem, particularly among the religious leaders, are focused on a single objective. This is something Jesus will do only once. There will be no rehearsal for the event, and the destiny of humanity hinges on this single act. The will of the Father is to be fulfilled as well – a purpose that had been cast in stone before the worlds were created. Yet, Jesus is a Man with perfect composure. He has answered earnest, and not so earnest, inquiries. He has cleansed the Temple of defiling buyers and sellers. He has beheld how men cast their money into the Temple treasury, and has drawn attention to a particular widow, whom, He said, gave more than all of the others. Then, having been approached by Peter, Andrew, James, and John, He has taught them concerning certain signs that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem, His own second coming, and the end of the world. All of this has been a remarkable display of His nature – a nature that would soon be devoted to interceding for those who come to God through Him. He will be no less considerate in His intercession than He was during this most critical hour. In fact, His grace will be even more prominent. He will be no less effective in dealing with the crises that will face His people than He was in facing His own. He will dispense to trusting souls all of the grace required to meet their appointments, just as He was given strength and grace to meet His unique appointment. That is something you want to see in the record of His closing hours – the composure with which He fulfilled the Father’s will. That peace – His peace – is precisely what He dispenses to those who have a lesser work to do, but which still requires all of the strength they have.

“Mark 14:1a *After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread . . .”*

Mark has concluded the period prior to this statement with Jesus’ discourse to four of His disciples concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, His coming, and the end of the world (Matt 24:3).

END OF THE AGE/AGES VERSUS END OF THE WORLD. Most of the modern versions use the expression “*end of the age*” instead of “*end of the world.*” The word “*world*” is translated from the Greek word **αιων/noj**, one meaning of which is “*age,*” or, more precisely, “*a period of existence.*” LIDDELL-SCOTT Lexically, it also defined as “*the material universe.*” THAYER

However, lest we be led only to think of this in terms of a period of time, it must be remembered that time, in the strictest sense, is defined by the existence of the world. Thus the Scriptures often speak of when “*the world began*” (Lk 1:70; John 9:32; Acts 3:21; 2 Tim 1:9), and “*the end of the world*” (Matt 13:39,49; 28:20). While, from the standpoint of time, this can be considered an “*age*,” I do not believe this word generally leaves a proper impression. The term “*the world*” properly takes us to the definitive beginning of Genesis 1:1, when the material universe was created. Peter also defines the conclusion of all things by the destruction of the material universe (2 Pet 3:10-12). In my judgment, “the end of the age” does not carry the same impact as “*the end of the world*.”

AFTER TWO DAYS. Mark goes directly from the Olivet discourse to a period defined as “*two days before the Passover*.” Luke records, “*Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover*” (Luke 22:1). Matthew records a number of things that took place between the discourse, concluding the record of those events, with Jesus saying, “*Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified*” (Matt 26:2). In order to accent the aggressiveness of Christ’s teaching, and how active He was until the time of His betrayal, I want to briefly review Matthew’s account of what Jesus did during the periods of time prior to these “*two days*.” Here are some things said and done by Jesus after Mark 13:37 and before Mark 14:1.

AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH. Jesus declared His coming would be “*as the days of Noah were*,” saying the people would be “*eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark*.” They did not know “*until the flood came, and took them all away*.” When Jesus comes, the taking away would be very precise. Two would be in the field, only one would be taken. Two women would be grinding at the mill, only one would be taken (Matt 24:37-42).

WATCH LIKE THE MANAGER OF A HOUSE. Jesus likened watching for His return to the head of a house who, if he knew when the thief would come, would diligently watch, and not allow his house to “*broken up*.” (Matt 24:43-44).

WATCH LIKE A RESPONSIBLE STEWARD. A faithful and wise steward who had been made the head of the household, Jesus said, would be diligent to feed and care for the house while the master was away. If he was found “*doing*” his work when the master came, he would be made ruler over the goods, instead of a mere steward. If he was thought his master was delaying his coming, and began to smite his fellow servants and indulge in eating and drinking, the Lord would cut him off, and put him with the hypocrites, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 24:45-51).

WATCHING LIKE WISE VIRGINS. The Lord also likened waiting for His return to ten virgins who “*went out to meet the bridegroom*.” Five were wise, and made provision for a long wait. Five were foolish, and made no such provisions. While the Bridegroom tarried, the oil in the lamps was finally consumed while they all fell asleep. When they awakened, only the five who brought extra oil were allowed to be with the Bridegroom. Jesus warned His disciples to watch for His return, because they did not know the hour in which He would come (Matt 25:1-13).

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS. The Lord likened the Kingdom of God to a man “*traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods*.” According to the ability of each, he gave five talents to one, two talents to another, and one to another. Then he took his journey. While he was gone, two of the men increased the amount given to them, while one buried his in the ground, considering it too much of a risk to invest it. He reasoned that the master was an austere man. When the master returned, the faithful stewards were awarded abundantly. The unfaithful steward saw his talent taken from him and given to the one who had increased his talents from five to ten. That servant was then cast “*into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and*

gnashing of teeth” (Matt 25:30).

THE SEPARATION OF THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS. Matthew then records Christ’s arresting words concerning the separation of the sheep from the goats – the saved from the lost – identifying the telling sign of His sheep as having a care for His brethren, and the mark of the goats as neglecting His brethren (Matt 25:31-46).

“ 1b . . . and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death”

Matthew identifies this time with all of the “sayings” recorded in Matthew 24 and 25. “*And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified*” (Matt 26:1-2). According to Matthew’s account, the words of Jesus were uninterrupted from Matthew 24:4 through 25:46. This being the case, all of these sayings were spoken to four men: Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Mk 13:3). If this is true, it provides a sterling example of the eagerness of Jesus to teach those who want to “*learn from*” Him (Matt 11:28).

THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES. Jesus had repeatedly told His disciples of the intentions that would be carried out by “*the chief priests and scribes*” (Matt 16:21; 20:18; Mk 8:31; 10:33; Lk 9:22). These men were at the heart of the Jewish system – the priests administering the ordinances, and the scribes handling the Scriptures. Yet these two groups, who should have been the first to recognize the promised Messiah, were instead the first to reject Him. But now, only because their hour had come, they aggressively seek a means to capture Jesus. Here is where a much larger gathering commenced, that would finally include “*Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel*” (Acts 4:27). Unknown to them, they were gathering together to do what God’s hand and counsel “*determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:28). They were fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, “*He is despised and rejected of men*” (Isa 53:3) – not just any men, but the choice men of the chosen race!

Matthew tells us that “*chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people,*” assembled together “*in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas*” (Matt 26:3). I cannot help but notice how the office of the high priest had degenerated. Here we are told that he was living in a “*palace,*” which by proper interpretation was a mansion: “*The dwellings of the higher classes usually had two (courts), one exterior, between the door and the street; the other interior, surrounded by the buildings of the dwelling itself. The latter is mentioned Matthew 26:3.*” THAYER

SOUGHT HOW TO TAKE HIM BY CRAFT. These enemies knew that, because of the people, they could not simply arrest Jesus. Because of His many good works, He was popular among the citizenry. Prior to this, the presence of the people had thwarted their efforts, “*because His hour was not yet come*” (John 7:30). A short time before the events of our text, these very men had “*sought to take hold on Him, but feared the people,*” so abandoned their plans (Mk 12:12; Matt 21:46). Now, however, since the time appointed by God is approaching, He releases them, so to speak, to do their will.

Even now, however, they must be creative in the manner in which they seize Jesus. Mark says they sought how to take Him “*by craft,*” “*trickery,*” NKJV “*stealth,*” NASB or “*in some sly way.*” NIV This would mean something similar to snaring a bird, or some other animal, by means of a decoy. In other words, they were seeking to lure Jesus into some situation where they could capture Him without the people knowing it. Matthew says they “*consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety*” – which is translated from the same word (Matt 26:4).

This confirms the inability of those in the grip of the wicked one to learn. Although they had been outsmarted by Jesus every single time they tried to trap Him, yet they continued to think they were able to outmaneuver Him. Of course, they had no idea they were operating under the government of the God of heaven, who had established the boundaries within which they were confined.

AND PUT HIM TO DEATH. Their aim was to rid themselves of Jesus of Nazareth. His presence had impacted upon their “*place*” within the Jewish nation (John 11:48). Christ’s presence is always disruptive to the enemies of God. However, what would really happen when Jesus died was totally hidden to these wicked men. By means of this death, which they thought they were accomplishing, Satan would be destroyed (Heb 2:14), principalities and powers would be plundered (Col 2:15), sin would be put away (Heb 9:26), peace would be made (Col 1:20), we were reconciled to God (Rom 5:10), and death was abolished (2 Tim 1:10). How well Paul was moved to state the case: “. . . *the hidden wisdom . . . Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Cor 2:7-8).

SATAN ENTERS JUDAS. At this time, when the “*hour*” for the “*power of darkness*” came to pass (Lk 22:53), Satan is said to have entered into Judas. “*And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve*” (Luke 22:2-3). Arriving when they were discussing how to take Jesus subtly, Judas “*communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them.*” They were glad to hear this, and covenanted with Judas “*to give him money.*” He then “*promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude*” (Lk 22:5-6). When once a space was made for Satan to work, he seized upon the opportunity.

“**2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.**” Matthew records nearly the same words, the text reading “*among the people*” rather than “*of the people.*” Here we see the Satanic shrewdness of the leaders as they discuss how to lure Jesus into a compromising situation where they can have Him killed.

David frequently spoke of the wicked laying snares for the righteous. Many of his statements find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ Jesus. “*They also that seek after my life lay snares for me . . . they commune of laying snares privily . . . The wicked have laid a snare for me . . . The proud have hid a snare for me . . . In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me*” (Psa 38:12; 64:5; 119:110; 140:5; 142:3).

SOMETHING TO BE SEEN. When God delivered Jesus into to the hands of His enemies, and even to the devil himself, they appeared to become invincible, finally crucifying the Lord of glory. However, their apparent success was not owing to their ability, but to the lowering of hedge around Jesus. In the case of Jesus, the purpose was to take away the sins of the world through Him laying down His life. There are, however, other times when God has lowered the hedge around His people. The primary example of this is Job (Job 1:10,12; 2:6). In that trial, it appeared as though Job was powerless and his enemies were impregnable. But they were not. A similar case is that of Paul, who received a thorn in the flesh, in which it appeared as though he was nearly helpless (2 Cor 12:7). There were also seemingly endless trials in which the foe appeared all powerful (2 Cor 11:23-28). However, as in the case of Jesus Himself, they could do not more than God appointed to be done.

There is also the matter of correction, when the Lord chastens his children “*with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men*” (2 Sam 7:14). Jesus referred to this as being delivered “*to the tormentors*” (Matt 18:34-35). Here too, however, it God who is Lord over all, and it is His will that is ultimately being fulfilled.

I mention these things because the Lord Jesus was fully conscious of this Divine manner. Even though the suffering and death that was before Him was grievous, He knew His Father was over all. That is why He could set His eyes on “*the joy that was set before Him*” (Heb 12:2), enduring the cross and despising the shame – while His enemies gloated in their seeming victory. It is also why He could maintain such composure leading up to His death.

NOT ON THE FEAST DAY. The “*Feast Day*” of reference is “*the Passover*” (Lk 22:1). This was the feast young Jesus attended with His parents at the age of twelve (Lk 2:41-42). It is generally considered that “*the feast of the Jews*” mentioned in John 5:1 was the second Passover Jesus attended. John also mentions that another Passover that was “*at hand*” when Jesus fed the five thousand (John 6:4), which is probably the third Jesus is said to have attended. This being true, our text is now the fourth Passover mentioned during the lifetime of Jesus. That would mean Jesus went to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of the Passover every year during His ministry. It also ought to be noted that Jesus attended several of these special feasts. He attended “*the Feast of Tabernacles*” (John 7:2-10). He was also present during “*The Feast of Dedication*” (John 10:22). This was not a Feast instituted under the Law, but was a celebration of the dedication of the Temple during the days of Judas Maccabaeus in December of 165 B.C. It was during this occasion that Jesus delivered the discourse on the Good Shepherd. During these occasions, Jesus often wrought miracles, which were duly noted by the people. His enemies knew that a city filled with such people could cause trouble for them.

LEST THERE BE AN UPROAR AMONG THE PEOPLE. Many Jews gathered at these feasts. During the ministry of Jesus, it appears as though they had become accustomed to seeing Him there. Often they would seek Him, and ask concerning Him. For example, at the Feast of Dedication, “*the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, Where is He?*” (John 7:11). The same thing occurred as people began to gather for the Feast of the Passover that is mentioned in our text: “*Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that He will not come to the feast?*” (John 11:56). In fact, John specifically states that some people came to this feast in expectation of seeing Jesus. “*On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem*” (John 12:12). That was, in fact, the occasion of the Triumphal entry of Jesus, when He rode on a colt into the city, amidst the shouts and praises of the people.

Now the enemies of Jesus are reasoning with the popularity of Jesus in mind. They reason that if they seize Jesus during the Feast, it will cause an uproar among the people. Thus they say, “*Not on the feast day!*” However, they are not orchestrating the events. Soon one of Jesus’ own disciples will confront them, offering to hand Jesus over to them away from the people. This was the hand of God through which He would deliver Jesus up “*for us all*” (Rom 8:32). The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God was at work here (Acts 2:23). Rather than avoiding the Feast day, Jesus would be offered as “*our Passover*” during the very Feast they sought to avoid.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 147

“Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head. 4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? 5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.”

(Mark 14:3-5; Matt 26:6-9; John 12:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

As the time when Jesus will lay down His life draws near, the expressions of the people are taking a different form – one that is more in keeping with the reason He was sent into the world. Previous to this, in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the cries of the people were more lofty: *“Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest”* (Mk 11:9-10). Four of His disciples had asked Him about the decimation of the Temple, His coming, and the end of the world (Matt 24:3; Mk 13:3-4). In all of this Jesus was being readied for *“the hour”* in which He would make reconciliation for the sins of the world. The events were being orchestrated to minister to the Son, and also in order that He might speak more pointedly of things pertaining to His death and resurrection. As Jesus moves toward those closing hours, He does not withdraw from the public, but remains active. Yet, His predilection for His disciples and those who loved Him is every evident. He is spending His time in the Temple (Mk 11:11,15-16,27; 12:35; 13:1), and with His disciples and those who love Him (Mk 11:11; 13:3; 14:3). As He draws nearer to the appointed hour, He will be even more particular about those with whom He spends His time, confining Himself to the twelve, and finally, following Judas’ departure, the eleven. We learn from this that there does come a time when trafficking among the ungodly is no longer appropriate. Even as with our Lord, there are occasions that call for holy associations, when the distractions of the ungodly, no matter how needful they may appear, are no longer appropriate. Blessed is the person who can detect them.

“Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.”

BEING IN BETHANY. Both Matthew and Mark speak of this event as taking place **after** He had arrived in Bethany. Mark says, *“being in Bethany,”* and Matthew says *“when Jesus was in Bethany”* (Matt 26:6). John’s account of the event says that Jesus came to Bethany *“six days before the Passover”* (John 12:1). Some have thought this to be a contradiction, for Mark says this was *“two days”* before the Passover (14:1). However, John is defining when Jesus first went into Bethany, then records this event as taking place after His arrival there. John does provide considerably more details concerning the days of Jesus prior to His death (John 12:1-19:15 – i.e., 8-

1/3 chapters, or 40% of the Gospel of John).

SIMON THE LEPER. This is intended to distinguish this man from Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:39-40), Simon the Canaanite (Matt 10:4), Simon the Lord's half brother (Matt 13:55), Simon of Cyrene (Matt 27:32), and Simon Peter (Matt 16:16). He was not a leper at the time, for it was unlawful to eat with a leper, for they were not permitted to be in the public (Lev 13:46; Num 5:2). He had no doubt been healed of his leprosy by the Lord or one of His disciples.

John says that a special supper was made for Jesus, adding that Martha served, and that Lazarus was at the table with Jesus (John 12:2). This does not suggest they were at Martha's house, as in Lk 10:38. She was rather serving the meal in Simon's house, inferring they might have been related. Some suggest that Lazarus had been raised from the dead sometime within the previous thirty days. It is certain it was only a short time before this that Jesus brought him back from the dead. This very supper was probably a recognition of that great miracle. If this is the case, the people had no idea that Jesus was on the verge of His death.

HE SAT AT MEAT. Behold the calmness and serenity of the Lord. He thankfully ate a meal while on the verge of His death! The peace that this reveals is most remarkable – and yet this is the very peace that Jesus gives to His disciples (John 14:27).

THERE CAME A WOMAN. This is not the same incident recorded by Luke. His account regards a sinful woman who came into the house of Simon the Pharisee, not Simon the leper (Lk 7:36-37). Luke's record also covered a period during which John the Baptist was still baptizing the people (John 7:29). That incident also preceded Jesus going throughout "*every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God*" (Lk 8:1). Jesus did not do such preaching following this event. Therefore, it is obvious that this is a different account.

John tells us that this woman was Mary, the sister of Lazarus (John 12:3). Not a syllable of Scripture suggests she was a "*sinner*" like the woman of Luke's account.

AN ALABASTER BOX OF OINTMENT. Both Matthew and Mark state that the woman brought an "alabaster box." Matthew says it contained "*very precious ointment*" (Matt 26:7). Mark says "*ointment of spikenard very precious.*" John says "*a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly*" (John 12:3). Alabaster is a type of marble, white in color, and nearly transparent. It was frequently used in old time for preserving various kinds of ointment. The words "*precious*" and "*costly*" indicate that the contents were of great value, and exceedingly difficult to obtain. Spikenard was made from a herb that grew in the Indies, and was distinguished for its agreeable smell. A "*pound*" was equivalent to about ½ liter, being equal to a little less than a pint. This was, then, a highly rare and costly perfume, given totally to Jesus.

Mark says "*she brake the box,*" or "*broke the jar.*" NIV That means the contents were not recoverable – everything in the container was expended on Jesus. Matthew and Mark say she "*poured it on His head*" (Matt 26:7). John says Mary "*anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair*" (John 12:3). John's record is only a more detailed account of the anointing, and in no way conflicts with the other Gospel accounts. John's account accents the tenderness of Mary, and therefore provides more detail.

Taking the three accounts together, we get a marvelous picture of the value Mary attached to the Lord Jesus. We know that she was one who eagerly sat at His feet, taking His word in as a treasure to be desired. Jesus said of that occasion that Mary had "*chosen the good*

part” (Lk 10:39-42). Mary was not only unashamed to sit at Jesus’ feet, she also was forward to give Him what was valuable, forfeiting its worth for Him. Additionally, she was not ashamed to pour precious ointment upon Him in public, and even to anoint his feet with that ointment, and then dry them with her hair. Such a display of affection is so noteworthy that John makes special mention of it in giving the record of Lazarus being raised from the dead: “It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick” (John 11:2) Writing his Gospel around fifty years after these events (supposed to be about 85 A.D.), John, as moved by the Holy Spirit, still had a vivid memory of this event.

“ 4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?”

SOME HAD INDIGNATION. Not only was this deed seen by those in the house with Jesus, there was also the smell of the ointment, drawing undeniable attention to what had been done. John says of this event, “and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment” (John 12:3). Thus, a number of things have been noticed. (1) Mary breaks the alabaster box. (2) She poured the ointment on Jesus head. (3) She anointed His feet with the ointment. (4) She dried His feet with her hair. (5) The house is filled with the pungent fragrance of this rare and costly perfume. It was all more than many could take, and thus they began to talk among themselves, giving an assessment of something done to and for Jesus.

Some versions read that they spoke “in anger,” NRSV “angrily said,” CSB “disdained among themselves,” GENEVA “dissatisfied among themselves,” MRD and “displeased within themselves.” YLT The word “indignation” means “to feel pain, grieve,” THAYER “be angry, displeased, express displeasure or vexation.” FRIBERG The English word “indignation” means “intense deep-felt resentment or anger aroused by annoyance at or displeasure with or scorn over something that actually is or is felt to be unjust or unworthy or mean.” WEBSTER Synonyms for this word include “anger, fury, mad, rage, and wrath.” I give these definitions to underscore the strength of the word. What Mary did aggravated many who saw it. It stirred them within as being something that simply was not right. In their judgment, it was foolish, unthoughtful, rash, and stupid. It made them angry that such a thing had even taken place. It was obnoxious, objectionable, detestable, repulsive, and gross. All of that is in this word – a term that accurately depicted the impact of this tender deed upon “some” that saw it: i.e. “there were *some* that had indignation.”

HIS DISCIPLES WERE INDIGNANT. Matthew says this response was registered among Jesus’ disciples: “But when *His* disciples saw it, they had indignation” (Matt 26:8). The entire incident upset the disciples, so that they reasoned and thought foolishly.

During the ministry of Jesus, and prior to the day of Pentecost, the disciples were known to respond inappropriately to certain things. (1) When the woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus garment, and He said “Who touched Me,” His disciples said, “Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?” (Mark 5:31). (2) Before Jesus fed the five thousand, His disciples said, “Send them away” (Mark 6:36). (3) When the people brought little children to Jesus that He should touch them, “His disciples rebuked those that brought them” (Mk 10:14). (4) Once when Jesus said they were going to go into Judaea again, His disciples responded, “Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?” (John 11:8). Such responses were no doubt a grief to Jesus.

WHY THIS WASTE? Other versions read, “Why was this fragrant oil wasted?” NKJV and “Why was the ointment wasted in this way?” NRSV Every version of Scripture uses the word

“wasted” or “waste.” What does the word mean, and what were the disciples saying? In the Greek language, the word from which “waste” is translated means, “utter destruction, a perishing, ruin,” THAYER and “destruction as a result of disregard for the value of something.” FRIBERG The English definition of the word is “squander, consume, to allow to be used inefficiently or become dissipated.” WEBSTER This does not refer to merely discarding something, like throwing it in the garbage can. It refers to rendering something totally useless, like burning it up or pulverizing it. If it is money, it would be spending it all, so that there is nothing left.

So far as those who made this observation were concerned, there could not possibly have been a more foolish thing to do. Mary had squandered a rare and precious commodity, pouring it upon Jesus head, and anointing His feet with it. She had also broken the alabaster box that had contained the ointment, which was also a valuable item. Both the container and what was contained in it had been lost, and there was no way to recover them.

THE REASON FOR THE RESPONSE. Such responses were not common for the disciples, and it is even difficult to identify them. Yet, it is necessary to consider them, and make some observations about them. How is it that someone could be with Jesus so much, and yet think and speak in such a way? It was because their understanding had not yet matured. However, as innocent as this might appear to be, it was nothing less than the mind of the flesh, expressing its hostility against God. As it is written, “*the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom 8:7).

Believers are warned about this mind set, reminding them that if they live “*after the flesh,*” they will “*die*” (Rom 8:5-13). No child of God has passed beyond the ability to be swept up in foolish reasoning. This is owing to the lack of a perfect grasp upon the truth – which grasp will only take place when we are freed from the confines and restrictions of this “*earthen vessel.*” This does not mean that we are always apt to make foolish observations. It does mean that we must arm ourselves with the mind of Christ to reduce that liability.

“5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.”

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOLD. Not content to leave Mary alone, the disciples reasoned on what she had done, offering an alternative to the deed she had wrought. Knowing that the ointment was valuable, they suggested it could have been sold for “*three hundred denarii.*” NKJV A single denarius, or “*pence,*” was equivalent to a day’s wages (Matt 20:2). That being the case, we are speaking of an amount equal to about 82% of a year’s wages. If we considered an average annual wage of \$30,000, that would be an amount equal to about \$25,000. We are not, then, speaking of a fragrance worth one or two hundred dollars. Considering a “*pound of spikenard*” to be roughly equivalent to twelve fluid ounces, that would be perfume valued at about \$2,100 an ounce in today’s currency. Now, just how would you respond to a person pouring \$25,000 worth of perfume on a someone’s head, and then anointing his feet with it? Well, if it was anyone but Jesus, you might consider it better to sell it.

GIVEN TO THE POOR. John tells us that Judas actually made this comment. “*Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*” (John 12:4-5). Putting the Gospel accounts together, it appears as though Judas made this suggestion, and the other disciples picked it up and began to talk among themselves about a more considerate use of the ointment. To the flesh, this seemed like a most reasonable solution. However, that was not the motive that drove Judas, even though it may well have been the one that moved the disciples to so reason. John continues with this editorial comment: “*This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had*

the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:6).

Judas was the treasurer of the disciples, who "*had the bag,*" or "*had the money box*" NKJV (John 13:29). Early in His ministry, after He had fed the five thousand, Jesus referred to Judas as "*a devil*" (diabolos, not demon) – that is, he was Satan in the flesh (John 6:70). In His prayer in Gethsemane, Jesus also referred to Judas as "*the son of perdition*" (John 17:12). On the night of His betrayal, when Jesus spoke to His disciples concerning the benefits that would come upon them, He was careful to say, "*Ye are not all clean*" (John 13:11, and "*I speak not of you all*" (John 13:18). However, the disciples did not yet see this, and so they were influenced by the words of Judas.

Here we are faced with another liability of living "*after the flesh.*" When thoughtless people wander into the forbidden area of the flesh, thinking out of synch with the Lord, they at once become vulnerable to the influences of the wicked. Foolish sayings and causes can be embraced by such people, so that they are often found to speak against the very elect of God, feeling free to unjustly criticize and malign them. No person is exempt from such influence who quenches or grieves the Spirit, choosing to "*live after the flesh*" (Rom 8:12).

THEY MURMURED AGAINST HER. Other versions read, "*They criticized her sharply,*" NKJV "*they were scolding her,*" NASB "*they rebuked her harshly,*" NIV and "*they censured and reproved her*" AMPLIFIED They did not keep their words to themselves, but spoke harshly against Mary, with whom they were very familiar. How it must have grieved her – but still more the Savior, whom she adorned with such sensitivity and sacrificial love. This is the manner of the flesh, which has no regard for the tender of heart, but chooses to speak rashly and critically when it is wholly improper to do so. We do well to remember the words of Jesus concerning the least of those who believe on Him. "*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea*" (Matt 18:6).

THE DEVALUING OF SERVING CHRIST. This was not the last time those who spent their all on Jesus were derided for doing so. Many a servant of Christ who possessed either ability or resources has been criticized for giving their all to Him. There are many people, even ones claiming to be religious, who consider giving one's ability to Christ and the furtherance of His Gospel as a waste of that ability. Ponder a musician devoted to making psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs come alive with their talent. Or, a gifted writer or speaker devoted to communicating the truth of God. What of a person who would "*rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*" (Psa 84:10). Perhaps it is one who chooses to leave the business world and devote himself to a more lowly occupation in order to give more of his time to the Lord. In heaven, such decisions are counted precious, while among those who have a love for this present evil world, they are considered foolish.

Such judgments are also rendered against those who give their resources to the Lord in a manner that does not comport with the worldly mind set. Or, those who choose to spend what the world considers to be an inordinate amount of time with the children of God, and in the hearing and discussion of matters pertaining to life and godliness. Such precious souls are viewed as radical, and even cultic, by those who have ears, yet cannot hear.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 148

“ Mark 14:6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me. 7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. 8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. 9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

(Mark 14:6-9; Matt 26:10-13; John 12:7-8)

INTRODUCTION

While in the house of Simon the leper, Mary had brought an alabaster box of very precious ointment, had broken the container, poured the ointment upon Jesus' head, anointed His feet, and dried them with her hair. Prior to this, during the first part of His ministry, another woman – a sinner – had washed Jesus feet with tears of penitence and thankfulness (Lk 7:38). For her, the presence of the Lord provoked great sorrow for sin, and a great thankfulness for being forgiven (Lk 7:47). This accenting Christ's Saviorhood. Both women anointed His feet with ointment (Lk 7:38; John 12:3). The ointment brought in by the first woman was not said to be precious, nor is it said that she broke the container. The ointment Mary used is declared to be *“very precious,”* and she broke the container. For Mary, the deed was one of great thankfulness and insight, and Jesus will assign a cause to it that was not assigned to the first woman. Both women ministered to Jesus, both were criticized for what they had done, and both were defended by Jesus. **We learn from this that no ministry to Jesus will be overlooked** (Matt 25:40). Even a ministry to one of the least of His followers will be rewarded – down to a cup of cold water (Mk 9:41). As it is written, *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”* (Heb 6:10). All the more, this is true of those who ministered to Jesus Himself – such as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less, and Salome (Mk 15:41); Joanna, Suzanna, and others (Lk 8:3).

“ Mark 14:6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me. 7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always.”

LET HER ALONE! The Lord comes to the defense of those who love and serve Him. It is obvious that Mary was not distracted by the aspersions that were cast at her – at least not in any obvious way. Notwithstanding, when men speak against the godly, for whatever reason, it is troubling to the sensitive soul. Thus David spoke of those who rose up against him as troubling him (Psa 3:1). He also spoke of those who were aggressive against him, but not because of any sin he had committed (Psa 59:3). So the disciples in general, and Judas in particular, have charged Mary with wasting the precious substance she expended upon the Lord. Now, Jesus rises to her defense. *“Let her alone,”* or

“*Leave her alone,*” NIV He demands. Other versions read, “*Let her be in rest,*” TNT confirming that their words did have an effect upon this tender woman.

WHY DO YOU TROUBLE HER? Matthew says that Jesus said these words when “*He understood*” what they were saying (Matt 26:10). This does not suggest He was oblivious to what was going on around Him, then suddenly became aware of it. Rather, it means that He was receiving what Mary was giving, focusing upon her. The words of the disciples then fell upon His ears as an intrusion. Other versions read, “*why are you bothering her?*” NIV “*Why do you molest her?*” DOUAY “*Why do you make trouble for her?*” NAB “*Why are you upsetting her?*” NJB and “*Why criticize her?*” NLT How serious is it to trouble a soul who is absorbed with the Lord’s Christ? What does heaven think of those who introduce agitation when a person is giving their attention to the Lord? What soul is there who would attempt to answer that question? Who is there that would seek to justify making trouble for someone who was pouring themselves out for Jesus? And who of you has not experienced such troubling distractions – often from those who were close to you, as the disciples were to Mary? You may rest assured that Jesus has taken due note of it, and will not let it pass. Often, when such thoughtless souls back away from their actions, it is actually owing to the rebuke of the Lord, though unheard by mortal ear.

SHE HATH WROUGHT A GOOD WORK ON ME. The contrast between the judgment of Mary’s critics and the Lord Jesus is most arresting. They said she had wasted a precious commodity. Jesus said “*She has done a good deed to me.*” NASB Other versions refer to the deed as “*a kind act,*” BBE “*a beautiful thing,*” NIV “*a noble thing,*” CSB “*an excellent act,*” MRD “*a good service.*” NET The Amplified Bible says the act was “*praiseworthy and noble.*”

And what made this deed so “*good,*” “*noble,*” and “*praiseworthy*” ? Rest assured, if this had been done to anyone or anything other than Jesus, it would not have been so described. It was the love that Mary had for Jesus, and the faith that she had in Him, that sanctified what she did. For her, there was nothing too valuable to give to Jesus. Here is an example of a “*good work*” – an expression that is never used in a derogatory sense in Scripture. The expression “*good work*” is used thirteen times in Scripture, and “*good works*” is used sixteen times. No a single one of them is used in a bad or questionable sense. This is a category of works that is recognized by, and honored in, heaven.

YOU HAVE THE POOR WITH YOU ALWAYS. Here is a statement that confirms Jesus did not come to eradicate poverty. Throughout the history of the world, “*the poor*” would maintain a perpetual presence. Therefore Jesus added, “*you can help them anytime you want.*” NIV No bold initiative will ever rid the world of the poor. Their presence is like a constant opportunity to “*do good unto all men*” (Gal 6:10). And yet, this is not the principle work of the people of God. Although this can be a sensitive subject, there remains a tendency in men to overstate the value of ministering to the poor. In recent years there has been a marked shift in missions work to the ministration of temporal needs of those outside of Christ. While such a work must not be criticized, neither must it be given the preeminence. **ME YE HAVE NOT ALWAYS.** In the case of Jesus, men were not going to have many more opportunities to minister to Him. It would not be long until Jesus would be inaccessible to all of them. Within a day or so Jesus would tell His disciples, “*I go away,*” beyond the reach of their senses (John 14:28; 16:7). Until then, the most important activities of men related to their response to Him, and how they ministered to Him. While Jesus did not come into the world “*to be ministered unto*” (Mk 10:45), at this time that activity outranked any purported good done to others. **The essence of true religion relates to the response of men to the Lord Himself.** When they have access to Him and do nothing about it, they may very well have missed an opportunity they will never have again. There is such a thing as seeking the Lord “*while He may be found,*” and calling upon Him “*while He is near*” (Isa 55:6).

Many a poor soul has fallen back into sin, or retrogressed spiritually, simply because they did not avail themselves of the presence of the Lord. When they were, so to speak, conscious that He was in the house, unlike Mary, they failed to do anything about it.

“8 *She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.*”

How does Jesus regard the response of people to Himself? The wicked one attempts to lead people away from this consideration, tempting them to become occupied with themselves or other things. However, Jesus is acutely aware of how people respond to Him. Earlier in His ministry when He was in the house of Simon the leper, another woman had anointed him, and Simon thought inappropriately of the incident. Jesus said to him, *“thou gavest Me no water for My feet . . . thou gavest Me no kiss . . . My head thou didst not anoint”* (Lk 7:44-46). Not only had Jesus taken note of what the woman did, He also was acutely aware of what Simon did **not** do. Now, Jesus reacts in much the same manner in the house of Simon the Pharisee. He has taken due note of what Mary has done, but He has also observed what the others did **not** do. He did not say Mary would not have other opportunities to minister to Him, but that **they** would not have them: *“but Me **YOU** do not have always.”* NKJV

SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD. Notice the value that Jesus places on Mary’s deed. He does not think in terms of the least thing she could have done: i.e. at least she did something. **The person who is covetous is governed by things, and does not view valuables as something to expend on Jesus.** A philanthropist of the world does not think in terms of what he can do for Jesus. A worldly musician does not think of what he can play for Jesus. A speaker who is of the world does not think in terms of what he can say for Jesus. For the widow who cast two mites into the Temple treasury, doing what she **could** involved giving **all** that she had (Mk 12:44). For Mary, it involved pouring all of her costly ointment upon Jesus. For those who want to follow Jesus, it involves denying themselves taking up their cross, and following Jesus (Lk 9:23).

A person who does only a little for Jesus, giving a paltry percentage of themselves and what they have, has **not** done what they could. When we are dealing with Jesus, the “What can I afford” mentality is not acceptable. It would not have been right for Mary to think in this manner, and it is not right for us to do so. Just how does a person evaluate what they **can** do to or for Jesus? Would it really have been appropriate for Mary to consider giving Jesus a portion of her ointment? After all, the Law had not specified how she should dispense her ointment – and Jesus had certainly not spoken to her about the matter.

Here, Mary doing what she **could**, was doing **all** that she could do. It was doing the maximum, not the minimum. How would you go about justifying giving **some** of what you have to Jesus, keeping some of it for yourself, and giving some of it to others? And, how would you go about making such a determination. Now, in Christ, the way we think about Jesus is on this manner: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Gal 2:20). That is equivalent to breaking the container, and pouring our all out for Christ. Paul referred to it as *“being poured out as a drink offering”* NKJV (Phil 2:17). That is doing what you **can** do!

SHE IS COME AFOREHAND. Jesus is now thinking in terms of laying down His life as a ransom for many. Although Mary was probably not aware of the events that would soon transpire, the Holy Spirit moved her to minister to Jesus, sanctifying His body. When Jesus died and was taken

down from the cross, Nicodemus brought about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes, winding Jesus body in linen with the spices (John 19:39-40). After Jesus was buried, women brought sweet spices to anoint His body (Mk 16:1). However, as they tarried in honor of the Sabbath day, Jesus rose from the dead, and they had no opportunity to anoint His body. But before them all, Mary anointed Him for His burial, signifying that Jesus offered Himself to God as a “*sweet-smelling savor*” (Eph 5:2).

At this point, the disciples were more concerned with what Mary did. Jesus was more concerned with what He was going to do, and Mary’s deed blended well with that. He therefore takes a favorable view of what Mary did because of how it harmonized with what He was doing. Whether or not she was conscious of this, or to what degree this was even possible, is not the point. It was her value of Jesus and love for Him that moved her to do what she did. The sanctifying association, however, was made by Jesus, not by Mary. **It was how He viewed her deed that gave it true worth.** Notice how Jesus shifted the attention of His hearers from what Mary did to what He was going to do – “*aforehand.*”

This provides us a sterling example of something that was “*pleasing in the sight*” of the Lord (1 John 3:22). **The deed itself is not the point, but its relationship to what the Lord is doing.** That relationship is determined by the Lord Himself. As for men, when they place a proper value on Jesus, know Him in truth, and are willing to sacrifice themselves for Him, that will move the Lord to view their deeds in association with what He is doing.

“9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

Here we see that there is more to preaching the Gospel than reaching the people – although that is a primary aim. The Gospel also extols Jesus (Rom 16:25) and glorifies God (1 Tim 1:11). Additionally, the righteousness of God is made known through the preaching of the Gospel (Rom 1:17), as well the wisdom of God (1 Cor 2:7). The Gospel also provides a context for the proper evaluation of certain saints, who are given special recognition; i.e. Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, etc. Of course, when the Gospel is not preached, not only are souls not reached, all of the other objectives realized through the preaching of the Gospel also come short of their fulfillment.

WHERESOEVER THIS GOSPEL SHALL BE PREACHED. Some versions read “*the Gospel.*” NASB/NASB/NRSV But this is not a proper representation of the case. The word “*this*” is a proper translation of the word employed here. The word used means “*absolutely, this one.*” THAYER While Jesus is the Center of the Gospel, the deed that Mary did is included with it. It provides a picture of the worth of Jesus Himself, and of the value of “*the body of His flesh*” (Col 1:22). Much is made of Christ’s body. Salvation is traced to “*the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Heb 10:10). It was in “*His own body*” that Jesus bore our sins “*on the tree*” (1 Pet 2:24). In our preaching care must be taken not to so represent Christ as to make His body less significant than it really is. When He came into the world, God prepared a special “*body*” for Him (Heb 10:5). That arrangement was particularly for “*the suffering of death*” (Heb 2:9).

Here, the point is that few people ever made this association prior to Christ’s death. So far as the masses of people were concerned, and even the disciples themselves, Christ’s bodily presence was largely associated with teaching and doing good. However, Mary saw something more in Jesus than this. She attached a value to His Person, and it moved her to do something that Jesus said related to the preparation of His body for burial.

WHAT SHE HATH DONE SHALL BE SPOKEN OF. Now, the preaching of the Gospel is, in part, defined by the inclusion of this deed – a deed that spoke of Christ’s death more than any other deed done unto Him – even the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. No matter where the real Gospel is preached, mention is made of Mary’s deed. Mary had lived out what it means to make one’s boast in the Lord. As it is written, “*But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*” (2 Cor 10:17; 1 Cor 1:31). She did it with a deed, not a word. She did it by giving to the Lord that which was most precious. She did it publically, not privately. She lived out what it means to be thankful. She demonstrated what spiritual insight moves a person to do, and the extent to which there is no shame connected with loving and following Jesus.

Therefore, where the Gospel is preached, mention is made of what Mary did. She displayed her profound love for Jesus when others were not doing so. She did it in a timely manner, when others were obtuse. She even did it in a way that ministered to the Lord Jesus Himself.

FOR A MEMORIAL OF HER. Other versions read, “*in memory of her,*” NASB “*in remembrance of her,*” NRSV and “*remembered and discussed.*” NLT How vividly the truth of Hebrews 6:10 is confirmed in the words of Jesus: “*For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name*” (Heb 6:10). In this case, the “*work and labor of love*” was wrought on the Lord Jesus Himself. Now, wherever the Gospel is preached, there will also be a recollection of what Mary did. Those who fasten their attention upon the Gospel will find the Holy Spirit directing their attention to the “*good work*” of Mary, so they will not overlook what she did. Men will memorialize her because they will be directed by the Lord to do so. This is more than a mere academic exercise. Jesus does not command that this be done, but says it will happen.

Jesus wanted Mary to be remembered **for what she did.** Her deed rose above what others had done. He does not say that the feast Simon the leper held would be declared. Nor, indeed, does He say that the serving of Martha would be declared, or the presence of Lazarus. None of their deeds were despised, to be sure. But it was the deed of Mary that sanctified the moment. It is what she did that moved the Spirit to provide this account. Among men, her deed did not rank high, but it did with Jesus. Thus we see how God has “*chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*” (1 Cor 1:27). Were it not for this fact, no person would receive recognition by the God of heaven. Therefore, this arrangement ought to be a cause for thanksgiving.

GOOD WORKS HONORED. The response of heaven to Mary is a prelude to the recognition that will be given to every person who responded appropriately to Christ. That is precisely why there is coming a time when every faithful servant will receive “*praise from God*” (1 Cor 4:5). This will be a very precise and extensive praise, with nothing being overlooked – just as nothing that Mary did was overlooked. Mention is made of the container she broke – an alabaster box; the value of the ointment – very precious; what she did – poured it upon His head, anointed His feet, and wiped them with her hair. **All Divine recognition will be just that precise.**

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 149

*“ Mark 14:10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them. **11** And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.”*

(Mark 14:10-11; Matt 26:14-16; Luke 22:3-6)

INTRODUCTION

The scene is Jesus at the house of Simon the leper. Mary had expended all of her precious ointment upon Jesus, pouring it on His head, and anointing His feet, while drying them with her hair. In that unique moment, with the odor of the ointment filling the room, Jesus has been anointed for His burial. Knowing what had been done, it was a tender moment for our Lord. He says that wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, Mary will be memorialized for this deed. A variety of feelings have been exposed by Mary's deed. The Master has been no doubt comforted as He prepares to lay down His life, a ransom for many. Others, diverted by the heinous suggestion that the ointment could have been used for better purposes, have leveled criticism at Mary. As is characteristic of Jesus, He has not let their criticism go unnoticed. He has risen to the defense of Mary, and commanded that she be left alone. He identified her work as not only a good one, but one that had to do with the salvation of the world – something of which even the disciples were not yet aware. It is ever true that when men's thinking about the salvation of God are distorted, everything else of consequence is also blurred. It is as though God will not allow men to think correctly about anything if they cannot think properly about His Son. Thus godly thinking not only has a sanctifying effect upon men, but **un** godly thinking has a defiling effect upon them. It is not possible to sidestep these consequences. When we see people advancing in the faith, they have been thinking correctly about Jesus. When we see them in a state of retrogression, or even rebellion, it is because they have **not** been thinking correctly about Christ.

“ Mark 14:10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.”

Now, in order to confirm the wickedness of the devil, and the absolute hardness of those who are under his control, Judas leaves to commit the most heinous deed ever committed by a man – the betrayal of the Son of God into the hands of sinners.

ONE OF THE TWELVE . Judas was a member of the highest ranking men in the history of the human race. The church is the most unique gathering of men, being referred to as the “family” of God, that is named after Christ (Eph 3:15). Within that family, which is built together

“for a habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:22), the twelve apostles are “first” (1 Cor 12:28). Their names are on the foundation stones of the walls of the glorified church (Rev 21:14). Judas was “one” of that sacred number – “*the twelve.*” When referring to the twelve apostles, that expression is used twenty-seven times in Scripture. It is not possible to be part of a more elite and privileged group than “*the twelve.*”

The only possible way to be “*one of the twelve*” was to be chosen by Christ Himself to be an apostle. There were no volunteers. While Jesus was upon earth, no one arrogated this office unto himself. During that time, there were not even any pretenders who made a claim to be an apostle. Jesus chose the twelve after spending a night in prayer – and Judas was one of them (Lk 6:12-16, esp v 16). Mark says that when Jesus chose the twelve “*He called unto Him whom He would,*” ordaining twelve of them “*that they should be with Him, and that He should send them forth to preach*” – and Judas was one of them (Mk 3:13-19, esp v 19). There is absolutely no question concerning the validity of Judas’ apostleship.

If it is true that once Jesus chooses you, or once you are truly with Him, it is not possible to lose your position or status, then Judas will surely be locked into His position, and his future with Jesus will be secure. Yet, as the direct result of what Judas now sets out to do, he will “*fall by transgression,*” in order that he might “*go to his own place*” (Acts 1:25). He will not merely lose a reward or two, but will be altogether excluded from the office of an apostle, and another will take his place. All of this will be done according to Divine appointment (Acts 1:16-21; Psa 109:8).

Judas stands as a powerful refutation of the idea that a person once identified with Jesus cannot fall from favor or be lost. I do not doubt that his record will be brought up on the day of judgment to confirm that there is no justification for embracing such a view.

WENT TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS. It is ironic that the people to whom Judas had to go were Jewish authorities. He could not go to the Roman authorities, for they saw no threat in Jesus – even though, in truth, His kingdom would bring their kingdom down. Later, Pilate would tell the accusing Jews, “*Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law*” (John 18:31). Concerning any judicial judgment against Jesus, Pilate would also say two times, “*I find no fault in Him*” (John 19:4,6). But it was not so with the religious authorities! **This confirms that religious corruption causes men to descend further into reprobation, or Divine rejection, than moral depravity.** This is because corrupt religious thinking tends to sear the conscience, rendering it insensitive to Divine influences.

SATAN ENTERED INTO JUDAS. In this account of Judas going to the chief priests, Mark precedes the record with these words, “*Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve*” (Luke 22:3). Later, when Jesus was with His disciples at the Last Supper, John said, “*And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him*” (John 13:2). In his record of that night, John states that Satan again entered into Judas, provoking him to leave the meal and actually betray Jesus: “*And after the sop Satan entered into him . Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly*” (John 13:27). Thus we see the entrance of Satan as the cause for the very idea of betraying Jesus. The devil put that idea in the heart of Judas, and he received it, cogitated upon it, and made a determination. Then, when the actual deed was going to be carried out, Satan again entered him to bring the deed to its culmination.

All of this underscores the danger of making a place for the devil (Eph 4:27) – something that Judas, through His covetous practices (John 12:6), had done. Giving no place to the devil is another way of saying “*stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Eph 6:11). Giving a

place to the devil is the same as making “*provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof*” (Rom 13:14). The liability of Satan working within men is also seen in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Peter asked Ananias “*why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?*” (Acts 5:3). Like Judas, that couple had made a place for the wicked one. When that happens, as confirmed in Judas, Satan gets “*the advantage of us*” (2 Cor 2:10). **There is no way for a mortal to withstand the assaults of the wicked one if a place is made for him to work.** This is part of the logic that undergirds the reasonableness of holiness.

“ 11a And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money.”

THE CHARACTER OF JUDAS. Judas’ reprehensible act was in perfect keeping with his nature. Although Jesus had chosen Judas to be an apostle, it was only in order to the fulfillment of the Scripture (John 17:12). It was prophesied that the betrayal of the Christ would come from within the circle of His companions. Thus the Psalmist prophesied, “*Yea, Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me*” (Psa 41:9). Again, the Psalmist foretold of the tender association that would exist between the betrayer and the Betrayed: “*For it was not an enemy that reproached Me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated Me that did magnify himself against Me; then I would have hid Myself from him: But it was thou, a man Mine equal, My guide, and Mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company*” (Psa 55:12-14). Peter referred to this very text when he said Judas “*was guide to them that took Jesus*” (Acts 1:16). It is true that David also experienced this kind of betrayal from his own counselor Ahithophel (2 Sam 15:12-12). Yet, the thrust of his words actually applied more to the coming Messiah.

Early in Christ’s ministry, when He fed the five thousand, He was fully aware of the corruption of Judas. At that time Jesus said to His disciples, “*But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.*” (John 6:64). Also, when the disciples said, “*we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God,*” Jesus responded, “*Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” John then adds the words, “*He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for He it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve*” (John 6:69-71).

Now, with no choice but to yield to the one for whom he has made a place, Judas goes to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them, in order that they might fulfill their wicked will.

WHEN THEY HEARD IT. Matthew tells us what Judas said. “*What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?*” (Matt 26:15a). Luke says he “*communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them*” (Luke 22:4). Both Mark and Luke say the leaders “*were glad*” to hear Judas’ proposal (Mk 14:11; Luke 22:5). Some versions read they were “*delighted,*” NIV “*pleased,*” CJB “*rejoiced,*” DARBY “*greatly pleased,*” NRS and “*rejoiced and were delighted.*” AMPLIFIED The word “*glad*” is an especially strong one meaning, “*to rejoice exceedingly.*” THAYER Remember, up to this point the chief priests and their cohorts had been stymied in their attempts to apprehend Jesus (Mk 11:18; 12:12; Lk 20:19; 22:2). How glad they were to see Judas, who appeared to make their job all the easier. Little did they know that they were actually being moved along by “*the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23). They were, in fact, nothing more than ignoble vessels, to be used for dishonorable purposes (2 Tim 2:20). Such people are always “*glad*” when they imagine they will be freed from Divine influences.

THEY PROMISED TO GIVE HIM MONEY. Judas being a covetous man, it was appropriate that he be offered money to betray Jesus. He already occupied a position that could well

have been the envy of thoughtful men. But a covetous heart is not satisfied with being close to Jesus, being taught by Him, and being sent out by Him.

Matthew provides the amount of money that was offered to Judas. “*And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver,*” or “*thirty silver coins*” NIV (Matt 26:15). This is precisely what was prophesied by Zechariah. “*And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver*” (Zech 11:12). Later, Matthew again mentions this money, referring to Judas returning it. There he mentions it was used to purchase the potters’ field, stating that it fulfilled a word spoken by Jeremiah. In that text, however, Matthew’s intent was not to comment on the thirty pieces of silver themselves, but on the purchase that was made with them. That purchase was the thing that fulfilled a compendium of texts written by Jeremiah (Jer 18:2; 19:1-2; 32:8-14).

Mark says, “*they promised to give him money.*” Matthew says, “*they covenanted with him.*” Luke also says “*they covenanted to give him money*” (Lk 22:5). Therefore, an agreement was struck between the avowed enemies of Jesus and one of His own apostles.

Thus Judas contradicted the word of the Jehu to Jehosaphat: “*Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD?*” (2 Chron 19:2). Unlike the sweet Psalmist of Israel, Judas could not say, “*Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies*” (Psa 139:21-22).

Be sure of this, that there are still people who form alliances with the wicked for seemingly personal advantage. However, such pacts do not go unnoticed by heaven, and all who indulge in such practices will be called into account for doing so. Far better to heed the words of Solomon, “*My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not*” (Prov 1:10).

“ 11b . . . And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.”

HE PROMISED. Luke says of Judas’ response to the proposal of the chief priests, “*he promised*” (Lk 22:6). He heartily consented to the arrangement, and thus the offer of thirty pieces of silver was accepted by him.

Matthew says it was “*the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value*” (Matt 27:9) – that is, the chief priests saw Jesus as being worth thirty pieces of silver, and Judas consented that this was a fair price. This is to be compared with the value Mary had attached to Jesus just prior to this, when she poured out upon Him all of her precious ointment. What a staggering comparison of values! Judas valued the ointment at “*three hundred pence*” (Mk 14:5). The value of Jesus? – thirty pieces of silver! Under the Law, that was the value of a slave that had been gored by an ox. “*If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned*” NKJV (Ex 21:32). 300 pence is equivalent to about 85% of a year’s wages. 30 pieces of silver is equivalent to about one week’s wage. That would be a dollar ratio of approximately \$630 to \$25,000. Of course, there are still those who attach very little genuine worth to Jesus. They invest as little as possible in the Son of God – of both their persons and resources.

HE SOUGHT OPPORTUNITY. Mark says Judas “*sought how he might*” betray Jesus. Both Matthew and Luke say that he “*sought opportunity to betray Him*” (Matt 26:16; Lk 22:6). In other words, he had to be diligent, alert, and even aggressive. He would have to work to gain this money, assessing situations, correlating them with perceived possibilities, and making sure that he would, in the end, be able to get his blood money. He was fulfilling the word of Micah concerning the wicked:

“That they may do evil with both hands” (Mic 7:3). He could not be casual in his assignment.

Matthew says Judas went right to work, wasting no time. *“And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.”* David declared that this was a trait of the wicked – diligent pursuit of the things they desire. *“They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep”* (Psa 64:5-6). It is one of the invariable marks of false religion (and that is what we have in the case of both Judas and the chief priests), that they are more eager to satisfy their own corrupt desires than to fulfill the Divine appointment for men. That high appointment is stated in this way: *“That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us”* (Acts 17:27). To the human race, this is like eating of all of the trees of the garden, including the tree of life. Failing to seek after the Lord is like gravitating to the forbidden fruit, listening to the devil, and then imagining that an advantage will be gained from eating the fruit.

It is inherent in human nature to be diligent to pursue what is perceived as being valuable or an advantage. Even a sloth seeks for opportunity to be idle, and to obtain needed resources with little or no effort. Man has been made to be diligent, and that is what he will be – either for what he perceives to be temporal advantages, or for the God who created Him.

We must not forget that the righteous are also to look for opportunities. *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Gal 6:10).

CONVENIENTLY BETRAY HIM. Here *“conveniently”* does not mean with a minimal amount of effort, or casually. This is confirmed by the fact that Judas *“sought how”* he might betray Jesus. The word *“conveniently”* means opportunely, or at the proper time. The NASB reads, *“at an opportune time.”* Other versions read, *“he watched for an opportunity to hand Him over,”* NIV *“looking for the right time and place,”* AMPLIFIED and *“the best way.”* IE

Luke provides a more pointed word on the approach of Judas. He says he *“sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude”* (Luke 22:6). He was apparently privy to the reasoning of the chief priests concerning the best time to take him: *“Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people”* (Mark 14:2). Therefore, Judas had to avoid times when Jesus was with people – which would be exceedingly difficult. During the past few days Jesus has been continually in the public eye. There was the triumphal entry, the cleansing of the Temple, teaching daily in the temple, and healing the lame who came to Him in the temple. Then, there was His presence in Bethany, the raising of Lazarus, and the feast at the house of Simon. Judas would have to work hard to find an opportunity to betray Jesus when He was alone – but he was willing to do so. Now, he would capitalize on his familiarity with Jesus for ignoble purposes. Unbeknownst to Judas, the events that will take place will fulfill God’s *“counsel determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:28). Later, when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Table, He said of the deed of Judas, *“And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed !”* (Luke 22:22). Mark’s Gospel adds, *“good were it for that man if he had never been born”* (Mark 14:21).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 150

“ Mark 14:12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover? 13 And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? 15 And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. 16 And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.”

Mark 14:12-16; Matt 26:17-19; Luke 22:7-13)

INTRODUCTION

At this point, Jesus will spend no more time with the multitudes. He will not return to the Temple. With the single exception of Malchus, there will be no more healings, no more public discourses or questions answered. As the time when He would lay down His life approached, He limited His public exposure to Judaea, then Jerusalem and the Temple, and then Bethany. One can sense that He was gathering all of His powers and focusing them on the commission delivered to Him – to lay down His life and take it up again. The time has now arrived when that, and the preparation of His disciples for it, will be His solitary focus. Among other things, this confirms that meeting the needs of the people was not the reason for Him coming into the world. While He did go about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, there was a higher agenda driving that activity than a mere interest in helping people. His great compassion did move Him to do this, but now all of that must give way to a higher purpose, and meeting the more significant need of humanity. What He is now preparing to do will have an eternal impact. It will influence heaven as well as earth, and God as well as mankind. The events that follow are the ones that must shape our thinking about Jesus, whom we do now know *“after the flesh”* (2 Cor 5:16).

“ Mark 14:12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover?”

THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD. The first day of unleavened bread would begin on the evening of the Thursday of the Passover week (the 14th day of the month Abib (before captivity – Ex 13:4, and Nisan after captivity – Esth 3:7) – Ex 12:6,18; Lev 23:5; Num 9:2-3; 28:16; Josh 5:10; 2 Chron 30:15; 2 Chron 35:1; Ezra 6:19; Ezek 45:21). The Passover occurred on the fourteenth day, and the seven days following it were called the *“feast of unleavened bread”* (Ex 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Lev 23:6) This was the first month of the year,

established as such because of their deliverance from Egypt (Ex 12:2). Commencing with the fifteenth day of the first month, unleavened bread was eaten for seven days, including the day the passover lamb was eaten (Ex 12:15; Lev 23:6). The Jewish year was thus shaped around their deliverance from Egypt. Their first month corresponded to a period in March-April of our months – Springtime, when new life begins to appear.

I cannot help but observe the exactness of the details of the Passover. Those with a penchant for generalities are, in that preference, at variance with the very nature of the Lord. It is a human weakness that the more generality, casualness, and informality that are, the less the heart and mind are involved. I am aware that there is the danger of mere formality, as seen in the scribes, Pharisees, and elders of the Jews. However, mere formality was not the nature of the Passover feast. It was associated with a lively remembrance of a real deliverance.

WHEN THEY KILLED THE PASSOVER. The Israelites killed the passover lamb on the evening before their exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:6). On that first Passover night, death was the theme throughout all of Egypt. Either the firstborn of every house was slain by the angel of the Lord, or a substitute lamb was slain by the Israelites. Now, in the time of our text, fifteen hundred years have passed since the original Passover. Yet, it is still being observed with all of the precision instituted at its beginning. There is no indication that the feast had been updated, modernized, or otherwise corrupted. That circumstance alone is most remarkable.

WHERE SHALL WE GO AND PREPARE? Observe that there is no question in the disciple's minds what Jesus will do at this time. As busy as He was, the thought did not occur to them that he would overlook a holy feast. At this time, they were unaware of the death that He was going to accomplish in Jerusalem (Lk 9:31), even though He had often spoken of it to them (Matt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19,28; 26:2). Now, His disciples know what He is going to do. The only question is **where** it will take place. It is also obvious that they plan on being with Him for the Passover meal.

THAT THOU MAYEST EAT THE PASSOVER. When Israel was delivered from Egypt, they were required to eat the Passover Lamb. They were to eat on the night they were delivered. The lamb was to be roasted with fire, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Ex 12:8). None of it could be eaten raw, nor boiled in water. Further, it had to be roasted whole, with its head, feet, and entrails. All of it was to be consumed. If any of it was not eaten, it was to be burned with fire, with no part of it remaining until the morning – in other words, no evidence of it must remain in Egypt (Ex 12:9-10). It was also to be eaten with haste, with their loins girded for travel, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hands (Ex 12:11).

Now, over 1,500 years later, the feast will be observed, and the Lamb of God will participate in it. This will be the last Passover meal He will ever eat, and He will transform the occasion into a new feast, with the remembrance of another deliverance.

Both Matthew and Mark emphasize that the disciples referred to Jesus Himself eating the passover lamb and meal (Matt 26:17; Mk 14:12). Luke relates that their question was preceded by a word from Jesus: *“Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.”* It was then that the disciples asked, *“Where wilt thou that we prepare?”* (Luke 22:7-8). Luke also adds that this was the time when *“the passover must be killed.”* This expression referred to more than the traditional passover lamb. During this Passover feast, *“Christ our Passover”* would be sacrifice for us all (1 Cor 5:7).

THE FRAMEWORK OF SALVATION'S ACCOMPLISHMENT. Observe how the types and shadows of the Old Covenant are the framework in which the salvation of God would be

accomplished. The holy associations developed under the Law and the Prophets would not be mere literary devices, but would be lived out. The sacrifice of Christ would be carried out in a manner that was conducive to remembrance and edification. That is, the **reason** for His death would be accented rather than the death itself – just as it was with the Passover feast. Even under the Law, God did not intend for observances to be perfunctory – superficial, effortless, and in mere ceremony. All of this will be abundantly confirmed during the Passover these disciples will prepare. It will certainly not be a mere ceremony.

“ 13 And He sendeth forth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.”

HE SENDETH TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES. Matthew makes no mention of the number of disciples Jesus sent to prepare the Passover. Mark says He sent two of them. Luke tells us who they were: “*Peter and John*” (Lk 22:8). These two disciples are often mentioned together. Following the day of Pentecost they went up together to the Temple “*at the hour of prayer.*” During that occasion, they healed a man who was lame from birth, and powerfully preached to the people (Acts 3:1-11). The enemies of the faith took note of Peter and John, concluding that they “*had been with Jesus*” (Acts 4:13). The apostles in Jerusalem also sent Peter and John to the city of Samaria after they had heard of the whole city had received the word of God, which was preached to them by Philip (Acts 8:14).

In Christ, there is not an equality, as ordinarily perceived, among the people. Duties and privileges are vouchsafed to individuals according to Divine discretion, as is confirmed in this text. Further, the disciples seemed to sense this, and therefore inquired concerning the duty at hand. This same mentality surfaced when the selection was made to fill the office vacated by Judas. After they had selected two qualified men, they prayed, “*show whether of these two man Thou hast chosen*” (Acts 1:24). Peter also referred to this manner of the Kingdom when speaking of the Gentiles first hearing the Gospel. “*God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe*” (Acts 15:7).

A significant number of church squabbles and expressions of competitiveness – if not all of them – could be easily resolved if men recognized and yielded to this principle. As the body of Christ grows up into Him in all things (Eph 4:15), it will become readily apparent that certain individuals are being Divinely commissioned for special works.

GO YE INTO THE CITY. The “*city*” of reference is Jerusalem, for there is where the Lord had placed His name, and there is where the Passover feast was held. That is where king Josiah established the feast to be held (2 Kgs 23:23; 2 Chron 35:1). Hezekiah also renewed the celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem (2 Chron 30:1-2,5). Mary and Joseph, together with young Jesus, also went to Jerusalem to observe the Passover (Lk 2:41). During His ministry, Jesus also observed the Passover there (John 2:13,23). At the time of our text, there were also many people who had come out of the country to Jerusalem in readiness for the Passover (John 11:55). It was also prophesied that Jerusalem was the place where a fountain would be opened “*for sin and uncleanness*” – a clear reference to the atoning death of Christ (Zech 13:1). Both Isaiah and Micah prophesied the Gospel would issue forth from Jerusalem (Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2).

There is a principle to be seen here. There is a certain exactness inherent in the Kingdom of God that does not allow men the freedom to alter revealed manners. While I understand that care must be taken not to adopt lifeless routine, care must also be taken not to allow men more liberty than God intends. Some, for example, have chosen to alter certain matters on which the Lord has spoken. Baptism is a case in point. Although it is likened to a burial, and

those who were baptized went down into the water and came out of it, some have felt free to adopt sprinkling and pouring as forms of baptism. Others have approached the Lord's Supper as though **what** men eat and drink at the table was of no consequence. Although the purpose for saints meeting together has been clearly stated to be edification, others have felt they could come together for other purposes. However, you will find no such thinking among the disciples. Their time with Jesus had moved them to think in a different manner, with a strict regard to the will of the Lord Jesus.

THERE SHALL MEET YOU A MAN. Matthew's Gospel, referring to the disciples final destination, reads, "*Go into the city to such a man*" (Matt 26:17). Both Mark and Luke say they would first meet a man who was "*bearing a pitcher of water*" (Mk 14:13; Lk 22:10). This man, Jesus said, would "*meet*" them. Luke says he would meet them when they "*entered into the city.*"

I am impressed with the necessity of alertness in anything Jesus tells His people to do. Peter and John are going into the city of Jerusalem, which was anything but a hamlet. In fact, at this time, the city was probably filled with Jewish pilgrims who had come to observe the Passover feast. Historians estimate that Jerusalem had about 25,000 citizens during the time of Jesus, with the population swelling to well over 100,000 during the Feast days. That means that the population of Jerusalem at the time Peter and John went there was probably between the size of Springfield and Independence Missouri. In that crowd, they would be met by "*a man.*"

FOLLOW HIM. The man who would meet them was not the one to whom they would speak. They were to follow him to the house where he was apparently carrying the pitcher of water. Notice the details Jesus spells out. Their destination would be identified in stages, and would be made known to them while they were in the process of going there.

"14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? 15 And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."

THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE. Peter and John were to follow the man carrying a pitcher of water until he entered a certain house. Then, and only then, they were to address "*the goodman of the house.*" The "*goodman*" was the "*master*" NKJV or "*owner*" NIV of the house.

THE MASTER SAYS. Other versions read, "*the Teacher says,*" NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV. The word from which "*Master*" is translated means instructor or teacher. Some versions read, "*the Rabbi says.*" CSB/MRD/WEYMOUTH. It is interesting, to say the least, that Jesus referred to Himself as "*the Teacher.*" That is an aspect of His Person with which relatively few are acquainted. You do not often confront people who think of Jesus as the Teacher. That, of course, is a term that is the counterpart of "*disciple.*" Jesus Himself urged people who labored and were heavy laden to "*learn*" from Him (Matt 11:28). Paul spoke to the churches about being "*taught by Him*" (Eph 4:21). The Gospels refer to Jesus in this capacity more than forty times.

It is arresting to consider that Jesus did not tell His disciples to refer to Him as the Lord, or the miracle worker, or even as the Prophet from Nazareth. We are not told the name of the "*goodman of the house,*" or if the disciples were acquainted with him. It is sufficient to know that he was instantly obedient, responding whole-heartedly to the word of the Teacher.

I SHALL EAT WITH MY DISCIPLES. The "*guest chamber*" was, what we would call, a "*guest room,*" NKJV or the "*lodging.*" The message is clear – Jesus is going to observe the Passover with

His disciples – not the many who followed Him (John 6:60-61,66), but “*His twelve disciples*” (Matt 10:1; 11:1; 20:17). Later, in his narrative of the Passover meal, Luke refers to the “*disciples*” with Him as “*the twelve apostles*” (Lk 22:15). Here we are seeing a Savior who, in the most critical hour, prefers to be with His disciples. Matthew’s account reads, “*My time is at hand ; I will keep the Passover at thy house with My disciples* ” (Matt 26:18).

We do not know if arrangements had been made before or not. If so, this was a mere formality. If not, we are being exposed to what real followers of Jesus do when His will is made known to them. It seems to me that this is the preferable view.

HE WILL SHOW. Jesus tells Peter and John that the owner of the house will show them “*a large upper room furnished and prepared.*” Other versions read “*furnished and ready,*” NASB “*with a table and seats,*” BBE “*completely furnished,*” GWN “*furnished with couches, all prepared,*” NJB “*already set up,*” NLT and “*furnished [with carpets and with dining couches properly spread] and ready.*” AMPLIFIED The place will be ready, but the feast will not. That will remain to be done. However, the place in which it will be done will require no further preparation.

As is characteristic of the Lord, the place to which He brings people is always ready to receive them. This Divine quality is made known in Jesus’ words concerning another place for which His people are being readied: “*I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:3). This is a glad word to those who have faith.

THERE MAKE READY FOR US. Other versions read, “*Make preparations for us there,*” NIV and “*Get everything ready for us there.*” GWN It appears Jesus did not give them further instructions concerning the preparations. This means that they were familiar with what needed to be done. Their lives had, in fact, been shaped around the ordinances of the Lord.

AND THEY MADE READY THE PASSOVER. Mark says the disciples found everything just as Jesus said, and “*made ready the Passover.*” His instructions, like all of His commands, provided the indications that would confirm they were where they ought to be. Matthew says “*the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them*” (Matt 26:19). I do not believe you will ever find these twelve disciples refusing to do what Jesus required of them. They did not balk like Jonah did at the first. If this assessment is correct, men were being introduced to the extent of being willing in the day of the Redeemer’s power (Psa 110:3). Earlier, when Jesus sent His disciples to get a colt, the owner was willing, as well as the disciples. Now, not only are His disciples again willing, but the owner of the house is as well. This is one of the marks of a genuine disciple – willingness!

We are not sure what was required to make the preparations for the Passover meal. When it was first instituted, preparations required, 1 the killing and roasting of the Passover lamb, 2 the preparation of unleavened bread, and 3 the preparation of bitter herbs. We will learn from what occurred later that 4 the preparing of “*the fruit of the vine*” was also required (Mk 14:25), as well as 5 something into which bread could be dipped, causing it to become “*sop*” (John 13:26). To say the least, considerable was required for the preparations, and Peter and John simply did it. There is no extensive description of the procedures involved. It is simply stated that, unlike king Saul (1 Sam 15:13), they did what the Lord told them to do. It is a blessed day when those addressed by the Lord of glory simply do what He has required.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 151

“ Mark 14:17 And in the evening He cometh with the twelve. 18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me. 19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? 20 And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with Me in the dish. 21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.”

(Mark 14:17-21; Matt 26:19-25; Luke 22:13-14; John 13:1,21-26)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout His life, Jesus was doing His Father’s will – speaking what He had been “taught by” and “seen with” the Father (John 8:28,38), and doing what He had been given to do (John 5:36). He lived out what it means to obey God, going beyond the keeping of the Law to the carrying out of an ordained commission. There is a difference between maintaining a pure life, as ordinarily perceived, and the carrying out of a commission, or fulfilling a work. Jesus’ obedience was “unto death” – i.e., to the accomplishing of a death (Lk 9:31). He was not merely faithful “unto death,” as we are admonished to be (Rev 2:10), but faithful in death itself, laying down His life (John 10:17). In this text we are being exposed to the obedience of Jesus unto death, “even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:8). His obedience is with determination and composure. He does not buck and bolt like an unbroken horse, nor does He require a bit and a bridle to force him to go in the right direction. Although He is headed into an experience that would be bitter and hard beyond comprehension, yet he enters into it with a peace that transcends all natural aptitude. This is the very peace that He gives to His followers – a peace that moves one to go about doing the will of God with a calmness and serenity that arrests our attention. There will come an hour when a burden will be borne, and great grief will be experienced. But until that time, the Savior will not fret about what is coming, but will proceed with calmness and profound thoughtfulness. We do well to take note of the manner in which He conducts Himself, for He is our example.

“ Mark 14:17 And in the evening He cometh with the twelve.”

Peter and John have prepared the room for the observance of the Passover feast, just as the Lord had commanded them. Matthew says they “did as Jesus had appointed them” (Matt 26:19).

IN THE EVENING. Through the Law, the time of the Passover was designated as the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month: “In the fourteenth day of the first month **at even** is the Lord's Passover” (Lev 23:5). There is a precision in Divine appointments that is strange to the

modern-day *Christian*. Through the Jewish people, however, God taught men about exactness, timeliness, and precision. All of this was reflected in the preparations for the Passover meal, as well as in the meal itself.

It is good to seek liberation from all forms of religious generality and casualness. There is a dulling effect in such approaches. Further, this is something that must be seen. In Christ, it is not legislated by Law – although that is what God did under the Old Covenant. Part of the Law being written on the heart is the sensitivity to timeliness and precision. This will be lived out in our text.

HE COMES WITH THE TWELVE. Peter and John had apparently completed the preparations and returned to Jesus and the other ten disciples. This is also a depiction of the nature of obedience. As soon as the commission and or appointment is carried out, the individual returns to the Lord who directed them. This is also the nature of the angelic hosts, as confirmed in Jacob's vision of them ascending and descending upon a ladder "*set up lo earth*" (Gen 28:12). They did their work, then returned to the Lord.

Luke says, "*And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him*" (Luke 22:14). This was not emphasizing "*the hour*" of the time of the Passover, but the "*hour*" in which He would begin to complete His mission to lay down His life and take it up again. Jesus frequently referred to the time of His imminent death as "*the hour*" (Matt 26:45; Mk 14:35,41; John 12:23; ; 16:32; 17:1). This was not a sixty-minute "*hour*," but a fixed window of time during which His work was to be brought to its culmination.

HE EXPRESSES HIS DESIRE. Luke reports that after Jesus had arrived with His disciples, and sat down, He spoke tenderly to them. "*With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*" (Luke 22:15). Other versions accent the strength of the expression: "*with fervent desire*," NKJV "*earnestly desired*," NASB "*eagerly desired*," NIV and "*ardently longed*." NJB Prior to entering His greatest trial, he had a profound longing to be with His disciples – the twelve apostles – not to be alone, but to be with those He had chosen. Those who glibly speak about the ones with whom Jesus preferred to be, do well to take note of this text. **He placed the emphasis on the people who were the closest to Him, not the farthest!** This is still His manner. If you have ever pondered where Jesus is, or where He can be found, consider what He Himself said: "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matt 18:20). This should not surprise us, for the saints are built together "*for a habitation of God through the Spirit*" (Eph 2:22). Paul spoke of one unlearned in the ways of the Lord coming into a assembly where the Lord was truly working among the people. When the secrets of his heart were revealed, he would confess, "*God is truly among you!*" NKJV (1 Cor 14:25). The presence of the Lord is owing to His manner! There is a people among whom, He is certain to be found. Our text shows that this is because of **HIS** preference.

This too is the manner of the Kingdom. On his way to Rome, where Paul would eventually be martyred, he was blessed to spend a week with certain brethren in Puteoli (Acts 28:13-14). After that, more brethren met him at the Forum of Appius, and brought strength and courage to Paul (Acts 28:15).

HE KNEW HIS HOUR HAD COME. John reports that at this time "*Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father.*" What a marvelous summation! It accents the hope in which Jesus lived. At this point, He does not think of the grief that would attend His death, but of His departure from the world, and return to the Father. He was even now considering "*the joy that was set before Him*" (Heb 12:2). Such a consideration carried Him

through His trial, and it will carry you through yours. Satan will attempt to move you to consider your time in the world. The Spirit will move you to consider the time when you will leave it. When received and pondered, this recollection will move you to submit to God and resist the devil. It will neutralize the power of the wicked one.

HE LOVED THEM UNTO THE END. Jesus' preference for His disciples did not wax and wane, or blow hot and cold. John says of this very evening, "*having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end*" (John 13:1). His love for them was not a mere emotion, but a preference to actually be with them. Later in the evening, Jesus will tell His disciples to love one another in the same way He loved them: "*love one another as I have loved you*" (John 13:34). That love is also to be "*unto the end.*"

" 18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. 19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?"

Keep in mind, the disciples have no idea concerning the events that will transpire this night – even though in the last part of His ministry, Jesus repeatedly spoke to them about it – particularly His betrayal (Matt 17:22; 20:18; 26:2). Truth had been declared to them by Him whose words were "*spirit*" and "*life*" (John 6:63) – yet they had neither understood nor recalled. From this we see that Christ's words do not work like magic, or impact automatically upon the hearts of men. There are other factors that enter in, and they must be addressed before His Word has any lasting effect upon men. Some of them include, (1) The obtuseness of the flesh, (2) The hardness of the heart apart from grace, (3) The requirement for illumination, and (4) The working of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus does not wait until all of these matters have been satisfactorily resolved. He speaks anyway, knowing that in due time the Spirit will bring these words to their remembrance. It seems to me that it is comely for us to also learn to speak appropriate words with such an expectation.

AS THEY SAT AND DID EAT. Jesus speaks to His disciples as they were eating the Passover meal – as they were remembering the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt. He speaks when their hearts could have been at their most sensitive moment. Further, we will find that they were all alert and listening at this time, even though their understanding had not yet matured.

This was no ordinary meal, but was a Divinely ordained occasion: "*the Passover.*" Therefore, it was in the midst of obediently observing something ordained by God that Jesus spoke to His disciples. This is still the manner of the King – to speak to us while we are, so to speak, sitting and eating with Him.

ONE OF YOU SHALL BETRAY ME. Jesus reveals to His disciples that someone who is **presently eating** with Him will betray Him – one of His own disciples. He had known "*from the beginning . . . who should betray Him*" (John 6:64). During the first part of His ministry He had said to His disciples, "*Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil*" (John 6:70). Yet, although this had been known all along, Jesus is not unaffected by this knowledge. Sometimes it appears to me that men think that knowing something removes any adverse effect of it upon the soul. How often I have heard people comment about the grievous times in which we are living, "This should not trouble or surprise us. Jesus said this was going to happen" – as though understanding neutered one's sensitivity and feeling.

The record of Jesus will confirm that nothing could be further from the truth. Here is Truth incarnate, who knew all things, and had a perfect understanding of Divine appointments

as well as what was in man (John 2:25). Yet, here is what John says of this very occasion: *“He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me”* (John 13:21). Do not think for one moment that the Divine nature is indifferent toward sin, or can gloss it because the reason for it is known.

THEY WERE SORROWFUL. The impact of Christ’s revelation had an immediate effect upon the disciples. Midway in His ministry, when Jesus revealed that He must suffer many things, be killed, and rise again the third day, Peter remonstrated saying, *“Lord: this shall not be unto Thee”* (Matt 16:22). However, no such response takes place at this time. They had been with Jesus for a little over three years, and their thinking had improved. I know people who have been in the presence of the Lord far longer, and are still objecting in the same way they did many years ago.

IS IT I? The thought of one of His own disciples betraying Jesus brought sorrow among them. But it was not mere melancholy. Each one pondered the possibility of it being one of them. John records, *“Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake”* (John 13:22). The word *“doubting”* means they were perplexed, or at a loss to know what He meant. They could not imagine that one of them would be guilty of such a thing – but Jesus knew, and they seemed to sense it. That is why each one asked if it was him.

FULFILLING THE SCRIPTURE. John tells us that before Jesus said one of them would betray Him, He washed their feet (John 13:4-10). He then told them they were clean – but not all of them, *“For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean”* (John 13:11). He then added *“I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me”* (John 13:18). This was a fulfillment of Psalm 41:8. He also referred to Judas’ treacherous act as the fulfillment of Scripture in John 17:12. At this point, Satan has put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2). Yet, he remains with them, even having His feet washed by the Savior, and hearing of His fervent desire to be with them. Behold how hard sin makes a person! Every sin is potentially damning. That is why it must be confessed and abandoned.

“ 20 And He answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with Me in the dish. 21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.”

IT IS ONE OF THE TWELVE. Jesus had already said that one of them would betray Him (v 21). Yet He accents it again, declaring that it was one *“that dippeth with Me in the dish.”* Another version reads, *“dips bread with Me into the bowl.”* NIV The Jews hold a tradition concerning what was in this dish. Maimonides, a renowned Jew, born in 1135 B.C., and the author of a commentary on Esther, says this dish was called Cheroeth, and says of it, *“the ‘Cheroeth’ is a precept from the words of the Scribes, in remembrance of the clay in which they served in Egypt; and how did they make it? They took dates, or berries, or raisins, and the like, and stamped them, and put vinegar into them, and seasoned them with spices, as clay in straw, and brought it upon the table, in the night of the Passover.”* This custom was not part of the Law, and yet Jesus honored it. It was a way of the Israelites remembering their *“hard bondage”* in Egypt, in which their lives were *“made bitter”* (Ex 1:14; Deut 26:6). Before coming out of Egypt, the Jews were told, *“Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten”* (Ex 13:3). How ironic that in the midst of such a recollection, Judas would join with Jesus in a sacred ceremony. Matthew writes that Judas personally asked Jesus if the betrayer was him. *“Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said”* (Matt 26:25) .

AS IT IS WRITTEN OF HIM. Was the Scripture written because God foresaw Judas would betray Jesus, or did he commit his deed because the Scripture said so? If the Scripture was nothing more than a commentary on something God knew would happen, the deed would not be a fulfilling of Scripture, but the Scripture would be a fulfilling of the deed. **It was what was determined in heaven that drove the circumstance now under consideration.** Luke's record of this very event reads, *"And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined : but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!"* (Luke 22:22). Jesus also said in His prayer in Gethsemane, the deed of Judas was done *"that the Scripture might be fulfilled"* (John 17:12).

It might be countered that this means Judas had no choice in the matter – and, indeed, this is the case. After Jesus had ascended into heaven, and before the day of Pentecost, Peter said of Judas (his betrayal of Jesus, his own death, and his replacement): *"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus"* (Acts 1:16).

A slave to sin. Judas certainly did have a choice – but not in this matter. His choice was involved in pilfering from the treasury throughout the ministry of Jesus (John 12:6), and no doubt other matters that took place when he was with the Lord. His choice was involved in the criticism of Mary, who had poured her precious ointment upon the Savior (John 12:4-6). It is a principle enunciated by Jesus and confirmed by Paul, that committing sin enslaves one to it. *"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin "* (John 8:34). *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (Rom 6:16). By the time of our text, Judas had made choices that led to his enslavement to the devil. Now, he would be used to fulfill what God has determined. His life had shaped him for this dastardly deed.

WOE TO THAT MAN! However, the fact of Judas' enslavement to the devil did not diminish his deed one iota. God will not excuse sin – even if a person has come to the place where he is a bondsman to it. The word *"woe"* means "rejection . . . calling for retributive pain on someone," FRIBERG "how horrible it will be." UBS Judas would be eternally punished for what he did, and there was no way to avoid the punishment. He had crossed a moral line from which no recovery was possible. Those who glibly say that God can forgive any sin, and that men cannot stoop too low for God to lift them up, need to ponder Judas. He is a living contradiction of their theology. Sin gains strength over the person each time it is committed.

IT WERE BETTER THAT HE WAS NEVER BORN. Matthew also records this arresting saying: *"it had been good for that man if he had not been born"* (Matt 26:24). Other versions read *"better for him."* Judas lost his soul over this incident, exchanging it for thirty pieces of silver. Peter said Judas *"by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place"* (Acts 1:25). Another version reads, *"to go where he belongs."* NIV Those who foolishly speak of going around only once, and getting all you can in the process, betray their abysmal ignorance of reality. One moment in the lake of fire will confirm that what Jesus said was true: it would have been better for Judas never to have been born, than to taste of the second death! If an individual is finally separated from the Lord, there will not be no much as a second of satisfaction or enjoyment realized. The recollection of worldly advantages and pleasures will only add to their sorrow – just as it did to the rich man of Lazarus fame (Lk 16:25).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 152

Mark 14:22 “ *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. 23 And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 24 For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 25 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom. 26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.* ”

(Mark 14:22-26; Matt 26:26-30; Luke 22:15; John 13:27-30)

INTRODUCTION

In a grand display of humility, and confirming the nature of spiritual life as well, Jesus has washed the disciples feet. At this point, Judas was still among them, which is itself a staggering confirmation of the hardness of his heart. Toward the close of His ministry, Jesus had revealed He would be “*betrayed*” (Matt 17:22; 20:18). This very evening, when He washed their feet He had told them, “*Ye are not all clean*” (John 13:11). Jesus had spoken concerning His betrayal, and with unparalleled directness. “*One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me*” (14:18). He identified that man as “*one of the twelve, that dippeth with Me in the dish*” (14:20). After announcing that one of them would betray Him, Judas had asked, “*Master, is it I?*” Jesus had responded, “*Yes, it is you*” NIV (Matt 26:25). Now, when Jesus is about to institute the Lord’s Table Judas is still at the table, and will remain there during this sensitive time. Luke records that as the Lord was sanctifying the cup of remembrance He said, “*But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table*” (Luke 22:21). The callousness created by sin is most arresting to consider. Judas will carry out his transgression, throwing aside the roadblocks that are strewn in his way. What we will consider in this text was especially revealed to Paul several years later (1 Cor 11:23-25). It was a part of the Gospel that was particularly to be declared to the churches. It deals with an ongoing activity of the children of God that will continue until Jesus comes to gather His people to Himself. The recollection of the atoning sacrifice of Christ is a sacred trust given to the saved of the Lord.

“ Mark 14:22 *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My body.*”

AS THEY DID EAT. This was no ordinary meal, as some have suggested. This was the Passover meal, which was anything but ordinary or common. It was a meal with special provisions: a roasted lamb (Ex 12:9), unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Ex 12:8), and the fruit of the vine (Mk 14:25). This was not a meal intended to satisfy the appetite. It was a ceremonial meal, designed to promote the remembrance of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Ex 12:26-27). Nothing about this meal was commonplace.

JESUS TOOK BREAD. This was unleavened bread, or bread without the fermentation of yeast, which caused it to rise. Ordinarily, leavened, or raised, bread was eaten. It is only when it was not allowed that it was not eaten. During the Passover and the Feast of unleavened bread, such bread could not be eaten (Ex 12:15; 13:3,7). Peace offerings were made with “*leavened bread*” (Lev 7:13), while blood offerings were made with “*unleavened bread*” (Ex 23:18). First fruit offerings were also made with leavened bread (Lev 23:17).

Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were used in the Passover Feast to assist in recalling the hard bondage the Israelites experienced in Egypt, when all pleasantness was removed from living. Therefore, the unleavened bread of this feast is associated with affliction. “*Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction : for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life*” (Deu 16:3). Note that it also denoted the haste with which they came out of Egypt, when they had no time to prepare bread in the ordinary manner.

HE BLESSED IT. In a deliberate act, not a ceremonial one, Jesus took the bread and blessed it, setting this time apart from all others, and sanctifying the moment for something special. In this blessing, Jesus lifted the meal out of the context of the Passover, and put it into the context of the “*eternal redemption*” He would “*obtain*” for us (Heb 9:12). The blessing was not so much in order to the bread’s consumption, as it was to the provoking of godly recollection.

HE BROKE IT. He also broke the bread, confirming that it was unleavened bread, not made soft and pliable by yeast. This was such a significant act that this occasion would henceforth be known as the time when disciples met “*to break bread*” (Acts 20:7). The disciples’ continuance in this ordinance is referred to as “*breaking of bread*” (Acts 2:42).

TAKE, EAT. Here Jesus changes what is remembered. This Passover Feast would not be wholly dedicated to the recollection of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. Here, eating was not the main thing, but what accompanied the eating. The entire meal was arranged to promote holy recollection: a lamb to denote the death that was required for deliverance, and the bread and bitter herbs denoting the hard bondage from which they were delivered. Now, however, as they eat while engaging their minds, Jesus draws their attention to Himself.

THIS IS MY BODY . Luke reads, “*This is my body which is given for you*” (Lk 22:19) – a kind of mingling of the thoughts of the Lamb and the unleavened bread. The **giving** of His body accentuated the willingness of the Savior, who “*offered Himself without spot to God*” (Heb 9:14). In his reference to this occasion, Paul says it was revealed to him that Jesus added, “*which is broken for you*” (1 Cor 11:24). This breaking emphasizes what was done to Jesus’ body – the beatings, thorns, nails, and spear, when His appearance was so marred (Isa 52:14). Too, His body and soul were torn apart as He made His soul an offering for sin (Isa 53:10). The breaking of the bread also portrays the manner in which Jesus is distributed to each believer, dwelling in their heart by faith (Eph 3:17). **In saying “*This is My body,*” Jesus is not defining the bread, but the thought that is to accompany the eating of it.**

Christ’s body is perfectly depicted by unleavened bread. Just as He was like an unspotted Lamb, so He was free from all corruption or artificiality. His body was a holy and pure body, for “*in Him is no sin*” (1 John 3:5). He “*knew no sin*” (2 Cor 5:21), and “*did no sin*” (1 Pet 2:22).

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. Luke also adds, “*this do in remembrance of Me*” (Lk 22:19).

Paul does the same in First Corinthians 11:24. In the Passover Feast, Israel remembered their deliverance. **At the Lord's Table, we remember the Deliverer!** The focus is not on what happened to us, but on the One who caused it to happen.

It is in the remembrance of Christ in His redemptive capacity that we actually partake of Him and the benefits originating with Him. It is for this reason that Paul writes, *“The bread which we break, is it not the communion [sharing, NASB participation NIV] of the body of Christ?”* (1 Cor 10:16). In this case, is faith reaching backward to a point in time when the sins of the world were *“put away”* (Heb 9:26), we were *“reconciled to God”* (Rom 5:10), and the devil was *“destroyed”* (Heb 2:14). It is in the freshness of these realities that we triumph over the world, have access to grace, and experience Divine fellowship.

“ 23 And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it. 24 And He said unto them, This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.”

HE TOOK THE CUP. Luke says Jesus first *“took the cup, and gave thanks,”* and told the disciples *“Take this and divide it among yourselves “* (Lk 22:17). It appears that this was a larger cup from which each disciple would take a portion – a public cup made private, so to speak. Now, *“after supper,”* Jesus *“likewise”* took the cup (Lk 22:20).

HE GAVE THANKS. In the giving of thanks, Jesus is sanctifying the cup as He did the bread – setting it aside for sacred purposes as well as giving thanks for them. It was Jesus manner to bless whatever was eaten at the time it was distributed. When He fed the four thousand, He gave thanks for the loaves, and later the fish as well (Mk 8:6-7). When He fed the five thousand, He apparently distributed the bread and fish simultaneously, and blessed them at the same time (Mk 6:41). While this is admittedly a technical point, it seems to me that it accents the blessing was in order that what was distributed might fulfill its intended purpose. For the multitudes, that purpose was that they might be fed and not faint from hunger. At this table, it was in order to a focused recollection of the Lord's Christ.

HE GAVE IT TO THEM. Jesus gave the cup to the disciples only after it had been sanctified – blessed by God for its intended use. Thus we see the disciples receiving something from Jesus that had been blessed by God the Father. His thanksgiving to God and word to them served to point their thoughts in the right direction. Again, I want to emphasize that this was a ceremonial meal, and not a common meal. That is, it was associated with remembrance, not with satisfying the needs of the body. It was not given to meet the needs of the body, but was intended to nourish the heart, soul, mind, and strength of the saints.

Matthew also records that Jesus said, *“Drink ye all of it”* (Matt 26:27). This does not mean they were to drink everything in the cup; i.e. *“all of IT.”* Rather, it means that everyone of them was to drink of it: i.e. *“ALL [to drink] of it.”*

THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. Both Matthew and Mark read, *“This is My blood of the New Testament.”* Luke and Paul read, *“This cup is the New Testament in my blood”* (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). Again, Jesus is not defining the cup, but what is to be recalled. The Roman church teaches that the fruit of the vine turns into the blood of Christ – called *“transubstantiation.”* The doctrine teaches that the soul and Divinity of Jesus exist in the bread and the wine, so that all of His Person is in them. They join this teaching with what Jesus said about eating His flesh and drinking His blood in John 6:51-56). Another doctrine held concerning this is *“consubstantiation.”* This teaches that while, what is referred to as *“the elements,”* remain bread and wine, yet in the eating of them the true body and blood of the

Lord are communicated to the participants. The Lutheran church holds to this view.

It is important to note the care with which Jesus speaks. He does not associate His blood with Himself alone, but with the New Testament. All of the records accent this. “*My blood of the New Testament*” (Matt 26:28; Mk 14:23), and “*the New Testament in My blood*” (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). In all cases, the focus is placed on the New Testament, or New Covenant, that was ratified by Christ’s blood, which is called “*the blood of the covenant*” (Heb 10:29), and “*the blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb 13:20).

When. Therefore, we read of “*the cup of blessing*” being the “*communion of the blood of Christ,*” it is with particular regard to the covenant that was sanctified by it. This is **NOT** the means through which we are made “*partakers of Christ,*” something that is specifically linked to the confidence of faith (Heb 3:14). Christ dwelling within us, or becoming an integral part of our life, is never associated with ceremony. That is an association that belongs to the Law. It is to the degree that this is done “*in remembrance*” of Jesus (1 Cor 11:25) that we partake of Him, and not one whit more. Worthiness is associated with remembrance, not ceremony. In fact, a person can go through this action, and be condemned for doing it (1 Cor 11:27).

SHED FOR MANY. Mark says, “*shed for many.*” Matthew reads, “*shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Matt 26:28). Luke says “*shed for you*” (Lk 22:20). The word “*shed*” means “*poured out.*” This accents the role of Jesus Himself in His death, as opposed to seeing it as only a murder (which it was – Acts 7:52; 21:38). However, it was not the mere fact of Christ’s death that saves us, but that He laid down His life – pouring out His soul unto the death (Isa 53:12), and making His soul an offering for sin (Isa 53:10). The shedding of Christ’s blood and the pouring out of His soul refer to the same act of obedience. It ought to be noted that Christ’s blood was not *spilled*, but was shed. Spilling can mean to accidentally or unintentionally cause something to fall. However, everything about Christ’s death had to do with Divine intention, purpose, and willingness on the part of Jesus Himself.

“ 25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”

NO MORE. It is interesting that Jesus refers only to the cup, and not the eating of the bread. Luke and Paul do not refer to this statement. Matthew reads, “*I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine*” (Matt 26:29). The words “*no more*” and “*henceforth*” parallel each another.

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE. The use of this phrase – “*the fruit of the vine*” – is employed by Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Matt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18). These are the only places the expression is used in all of the Scriptures. It confirms that Jesus was not speaking of the contents of the cup actually becoming His blood, for now He refers to the contents of the cup as “*the fruit of the vine,*” and not “*My blood.*” It further confirms that they were not drinking hardened wine, which is not the fruit of the vine, but the result of fermentation. The word “*fruit*” is always associated with the source on which it grew naturally, whether tree (Gen 1:11-12), the ground (Gen 4:3), a vineyard (Lev 25:3), the land (Lev 25:19), the earth (James 5:7), or the vine (Mk 14:25). The word “*wine*” is never applied to the Passover or to the Lord’s Table. Those who so represent the cup have drawn from the wells of human wisdom. It is not likely that the God who forbade wine to priests (Lev 10:9), Nazarites (Num 6:2-3), and kings (Prov 31:4) upon the basis of its propensity to distort judgment (Lev 10:10-11), would employ it to remember His Son. All through the wilderness trek, God did not allow the Israelites to drink any wine or strong drink, doing so in order that they “*might know that I am the Lord your God*” (Deut 29:6). John the Baptist was forbidden to drink wine (Lk 1:15). When Jesus was offered wine mingled with myrrh on the cross, He refused it (Mk 15:22). The only

Scriptural reference that could possibly be taken to mean Jesus drank wine is Matthew 11:19/Luke 7:34. There Jesus responded to those who criticized Him for eating with sinners. He said *“The Son of man came eating and drinking.”* It will be difficult indeed to substantiate that this means Jesus drank hard wine – particularly in view of what was said of wine in the Law. I gather that the reference is to *“new wine,”* which was fresh wine, kept in special bottles. I do not know what purpose is served by saying Jesus drank wine, or that the Bible condones moderate drinking. Moderate drinking – whatever that is meant to connote – is something like playing with a rattlesnake, or forming an alliance with an enemy. It certainly cannot be called abstaining from *“all appearance of evil”* (1 Thess 5:22)

I DRINK IT NEW. Mark reads, *“new in the kingdom of God.”* The Amplified Bible reads, *“when I drink it*

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of a new and a higher quality in God’s kingdom.” Matthew reads, *“new **with you** in My Father’s kingdom”* (Matt 26:29). Here *“new”* means in a new way or manner. The words *“My Father’s kingdom”* suggest that this is speaking of *“the end,”* when, having put down all authority and power, He shall deliver up the Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:24-28). Then, in a fuller and more extensive manner, He shall in some way lead the redeemed in the insightful recollection of their redemption from the land of the enemy. Then we will know as we are known, and will no longer see through a glass darkly (1 Cor 13:12). The fact that Jesus refers to that time indicates that He is looking forward to the time when He will be joined to His bride, who will at that time be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5:27). It is precisely for this reason that this table is associated with the coming of the Lord. *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come”* (1 Cor 11:26). Our recollection of the Lord includes remembering His promise to drink of the fruit of the vine in a new sense with us in the world to come. There is also a sense in which He drinks it with us now, for the cup of blessing is the *“communion of the blood of Christ”* (1 Cor 10:16). This is indicated in Luke’s record of this account: *“until the kingdom of God shall come”* (Lk 22:18).

THEY SUNG A HYMN AND WENT OUT TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. Both Matthew and Mark refer to the singing of a hymn, and their going out into the mount of Olives (Mk 14:26; Matt 26:30). Some feel that the hymn they sung is, what is called, the Hallel, consisting of its second part (Psa 115-118), or possibly Psalm 136. Remember, Jesus was preparing to lay down His life, yet He sang.

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. John says *“He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples”* (John 18:1). We know from Matthew and Mark that this was the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36; Mk 14:32), located on the Mount of Olives. John says that Jesus *“ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples”* (John 18:2). During the final week of His life, Luke says of Jesus *“and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives”* (Luke 21:37). Luke also says this is the place Jesus was *“wont”* to go: that is, it was where he was *“accustomed”* to go with them NKJV (Lk 22:39). Now, the stage is set for Jesus to be betrayed, arrested, and taken to the palace of the high priest to be tried and sentenced to death according to God’s *“determinate counsel”* (Acts 2:23).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 153

Mark 14:27 “ *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. 30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. 31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.* ”

(Mark 14:27-31; Matt 26:26-30; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38)

INTRODUCTION

It is the night during which Jesus would be betrayed, and the events leading to His death will commence. Yet, even though the gravity of this time can scarcely be imagined, Jesus spends an extraordinary evening with His disciples, teaching, preparing, and caring for them as a Shepherd does His sheep. In an act of humility, and in confirmation of the nature of a servant of God, He washed their feet (John 13:4-15). He divulges to John who will betray Him (John 13:24-26). He reveals that He is going away, and will be preparing a place for them (John 13:33-14:6). He reveals that the Holy Spirit will be given to them (John 14:16-17,26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15). He teaches them concerning the Vine and the branches (John 15:1-8). He reveals the Spirit’s convicting ministry (John 16:7-11). He declares the time is coming that they will have access to the Father in His name (John 16:23-28). He prayed His great intercessory prayer (John 17:1-26). In these communications Jesus was revealing the nature of New Covenant life. It is one in which spiritual intelligence and understanding is acquired, and the experience of the world’s rejection, as well as the Because Jesus would put away sin, there would be a dramatic shift in the kind of relationship men would have with God. It would no longer be based upon doing, ceremony, and mere outward conformity. The era of the New Covenant would be one of personal and profound involvement – just as took place that last evening Jesus spent with His disciples. Yes, it would even transcend the closeness of that sacred time.

“ Mark 14:27 *And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.*

OFFENDED. In the closeness and intimacy of that holy hour, Jesus reveals that before that very night is over, all of His disciples – the very ones seated around that table – would be offended because of Him. Instead of “*offended*,” other versions read “*made to stumble*,” NKJV “*fall away*,” NASB “*become deserters*,” NRSV “*turned away from Me*,” BBE “*lose faith in Me*,” CJB “*run away*,” CSB “*abandon Me*,” GWN “*have your faith shaken*.” NAB The word “*offended*” is a strong word meaning “to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way . . . to cause or make to stumble.”

THAYER Other texts that confirm the strength of this word are **Matthew 5:19** (about our eye offending us), **Matthew 13:21** (concerning the one without root falling away), and **Matthew 18:6** (declaring the woe experienced by anyone offending one of these little ones who believe in Christ).

BECAUSE OF ME. This phrase is omitted in most of the later versions. It is, however, included in Matthew's account (Matt 26:31), and is so rendered in the versions excluding it from Mark 14:27. There is no question concerning its validity. Furthermore, this is a critical point. The disciples – “ *all* ” of them – would be “ *offended,* ” or fall away, because of Jesus Himself. It would not be owing to their own lives being threatened, or because an initiative was launched against them by Jews. The attack would come against Jesus, and the disciples would fall away, stumble, and abandon Him because of it.

During His ministry Jesus once said, “ *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me* ” (Matt 11:6). Other versions read, “ *who keeps from stumbling over Me,* ” NASB “ *who does not fall away on account of Me.* ” NIV It is possible to be so wrapped up in oneself that Jesus does not come up to the individual's expectations. That is what prompts statements like, “ *Why did this happen to me?* ” “ *Why doesn't Jesus answer my prayer? I have done everything I know to do.* ” When a person believes only for a while, and then falls away (Lk 8:13), it is because they are offended in Christ. He is perceived as requiring too much, being unreasonable in His demands, or not proving to be everything He said He was. In such responses, the soul has stumbled over Jesus. This is because they have not seen Him as He really is. This is what prompted Cleopas to say, “ *But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done* ” (Luke 24:21).

On the very night Jesus spoke these words, when He was arrested in the garden, it is written, “ *And they all forsook Him, and fled* ” (Mark 14:50). They were offended because of Him. John tells us more of what Jesus said concerning this matter. “ *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me* ” (John 16:32). Being of tender heart, how Jesus must have sorrowed over the contemplation of His disciples forsaking Him – stumbling over Him on that dark night. Yet, He told them what they would do, in order that after He had risen from the dead, they might recall their action and not speak so brashly about what they would and would not do. It is good that we learn from Christ's words about our frailty – i.e. “ *The flesh is weak* ” (Matt 26:41) – instead of having to acknowledge it the hard way.

IT IS WRITTEN. “ *I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.* ” The prophecy is found in Zechariah 13:7, one of the great Messianic affirmations. “ *Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones* ” (Zech 13:7). The “ *sword* ” refers to the administration of Divine justice. In this case, that justice, and even wrath, would be focused upon the Son of God. He would suffer the curse of God and the outpouring of His indignation because He was bearing the sins of the world – sins that God Himself had “ *laid on Him* ” (Isa 53:6). The awful reaction of God Almighty to the sight of sin was confirmed to the ultimate degree when Jesus was “ *made a curse for us* ” (Gal 3:13). The sight of sin, even in His well Beloved Son, awakened the sword of Divine justice and retribution. Men do greatly err in imagining that God can look complacently at sin, tolerating it and bearing long with its presence while men stumble about in the dark as though redemption had somehow caused God to be more tolerant of sin.

The stumbling point was the cross, or death of Jesus. When it appeared hopeless for the flesh, the disciples fled, even though it was God's will that was being done (John 19:11; Acts 2:23). Yet, in His tender mercy, God, having judged sin in Christ, would turn His hand to the scattered disciples, and gather them again to Jesus. For the disciples, this was not a permanent or lengthy scattering, but for the Jews as a nation, the scattering would be significant, and for a lengthy period. Their house would be left "desolate" because of their rejection of Christ (Matt 23:38). Yet, God will gather them again (Rom 11:26-27). God is greatly to be praised for His gracious gathering – placing His hand upon the "little ones."

" 28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. 30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. 31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all."

AFTER THAT I AM RISEN. Jesus had spoken of His resurrection before (Matt 16:21; 17:9,23; Mk 9:9; 14:28; Lk 9:22). Now He mentions it again – but none of the disciples fasten on His words. After He rose from the dead an angel instructed the holy women to go to the disciples and tell them to meet Him in Galilee (Matt 28:7). The angel told the women, "He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee" (Luke 24:6). This confirms the word was not intended for the twelve alone.

I WILL NOT! Peter takes hold of what Jesus has said with his intellect, not his heart. At this time, he did not mix his hearing with faith. When Jesus has said one of them would betray Him, each one of them asked if he was the one who would commit this dreadful deed. But this time Peter does not respond in such a manner. He is willing to concede that the other disciples might very well be offended in Christ, but he is sure he is not in that number. "Even if they all fall away and are caused to stumble and distrust and desert You, yet I will not [do so]!" **AMPLIFIED** His immediate reaction in the garden, when he drew his sword against a legion of soldiers, confirms Peter did not have any known propensity to deny Christ. This was not an area of confirmed weakness in the apostle, and therefore he could not see himself as capable of doing such a thing. This was not a sin that "so easily beset" Peter (Heb 12:1-2). Surely he must have thought the Master's assessment to be wrong. Many a poor soul has imagined that because they do not have a history of this or that weakness, surely it will never be found in them. They see their experience as being more broad than it really is.

Peter raises himself to a level above the other disciples – "even if **they all** fall away." The "all" referred to the other disciples. Within less than three weeks, Jesus will appear to His disciples for the third time and pointedly ask Peter, "lovest thou Me **more than these**?" (John 21:15-17). Was there really the distinction between Peter and the other disciples that he himself had suggested? You may be sure that any genuine distinction was strictly owing to the conferment of a special dispensation of grace upon Peter, and not any natural trait he possessed. That special measure was revealed when Jesus said he would give Peter the keys to the kingdom (Matt 16:19).

EVEN IN THIS NIGHT! To underscore the imminency of the disciples forsaking Him, and the sure involvement of Peter himself in that falling away, Jesus declares something Peter will do before this very evening has concluded. "Truly I tell you, this very night, before a cock crows twice, you will utterly deny Me [disclaiming all connection with Me] three times." **AMPLIFIED** That word must surely have been like a "hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jer 10:4). To think that on this night, when Jesus had washed the disciples feet, and spoken to them in a most tender manner, Peter would not only deny any association with Jesus, but do it three times,

was unthinkable – at least to Peter. But, alas, there would be much more activity on this night than Peter dared to imagine. He spoke within the context of human experience. However, he would experience something on this night that he had never before experienced. Further, Jesus gives Peter a sign so that when he does deny Him, he will be able to recall what the Lord said to him on this night. He will deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows twice. Thus shall he have stooped beneath the status of an unintelligent fowl.

MORE VEHEMENTLY. Peter insists that his assessment of the case is precisely correct – which suggests that Jesus is wrong in what He has said. In the place of “*vehemently*” other versions read “*insistently*,” NASB “*emphatically*,” NIV and “*vehemently and repeatedly*.” AMPLIFIED Matthew provides more of Peter’s reasoning: “*Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny thee*” (Matt 26:35). John relates Peter’s words also, “*I will lay down my life for Thy sake*” (John 13:37). There was no doubt in Peter’s mind concerning the correctness of his words. If the preachers are teachers who present a corrupt view of the power of life and death being in the tongue are correct, Peter’s words will come to pass, for they were not spoken in hypocrisy. He was convinced that what he said was the truth. That night, however, he will find out first-hand that because we are convinced something is the truth and speak it out, that by no means indicates that our words are true, or that they will come to pass. Men do well to divest themselves of any and every theological view that does not stand up in the hour of trial. Faith – true faith – stands bold and erect in the crucible of conflict.

LIKEWISE SAID THEY ALL. The words spoken by Peter were not confined to him. All of the other disciples avowed that what Peter had said was true of them also: “*And they all kept saying the same thing.*” AMPLIFIED None of them – not a single one of them – could believe themselves capable of denying the Lord one time, much less three in the same night.

“ 31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. 34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”

Luke reveals more of the details of that evening. Jesus spoke to Peter concerning activities that were not apparent. Indeed, had Jesus not revealed this circumstance, there is no possible way that any of the disciples would have known about it. In this account we learn that certain things taking place on the earth are driven by unseen influences. Some things really have nothing to do with the works of men – with either rewards or punishment. We do well to learn these things, and add them to our arsenal of knowledge. As Jesus said, “*Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old*” (Matt 13:52). Here is a morsel of spiritual understanding that every communicator of truth must have in his treasury. I have added these remarks because they have immediately to do with Peter’s response and the prophecy of Jesus concerning his three-fold denial of Himself (Lk 22:33-34).

SATAN HAS DESIRED YOU. There are activities that involve the people of God that do not have their genesis in the world. They are not driven by worldly circumstances. They have nothing to do with how we have responded to this or that, or whether or not we are in certain places at certain times. They are independent of the human will or self-conceived plans or desires. They have more to do with whether or not we have been blessed by the Lord, or have been singled out by Him for some special purpose, or because we are precious to Him.

This is not the first time that we have read of Satan setting his eyes upon a particular person. Twice he sought for access to Job, who was “*perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil*” (Job 1:1,6-12; 2:1-7). On both occasions, the Lord gave Satan leave to do what he wanted with Job, placing a limitation on how far he could go (Job 1:12; 2:6). On another occasion, we are given to see “*Joshua the high priest*” standing before the angel of the Lord, and “*Satan standing at his right hand to resist him*” (Zech 3:1). In this case, Satan’s desire was also thwarted, he was rebuked, and Joshua was plucked from the fiery trial, and his iniquity caused to pass from him (Zech 3:1-4).

Now, Jesus informs Peter that Satan has also set his attention on him. The wicked one sees in Peter a certain threat, knowing that Jesus has caused him to be preeminent among men, and has even given to him the keys to the kingdom. While Satan is not omniscient, he does know what God has said to the sons of men, as confirmed by him quoting Scripture (Matt 4:6). We also learn from this that Satan was not content with Judas – he wanted the rest of the apostles also, for the words here indicate that “*you*” is in the plural – all the apostles in general, and Peter in particular: “*that he might sift [all of] you like grain.*” AMPLIFIED

SIFT YOU AS WHEAT. The idea is that Satan desired to tempt Peter in various ways to bring out any weakness that he had – like separating wheat from the chaff. However, with Satan, Peter’s faith was viewed as the chaff that would not be able to stand up under difficult tests and trials. Just as surely as the devil thought Job would cave in under great trials, so Satan was convinced he could overthrow Peter’s faith if given leave to tempt him in extraordinary ways. It is evident that Jesus had been protecting the disciples during his ministry. Now, however, Satan asks for permission to put Peter through the sieve of testing, and all of the other disciples also. He imagines himself, if given permission, to be invincible in his quest.

I HAVE PRAYED FOR YOU. Here is something on which the devil did not reckon. He was not the only one who would speak to God about Peter. Jesus will also speak in his behalf, asking the Father to see to it that Peter’s faith does not fail, fall, or dissipate in the flames of the refiner’s fire. Jesus spoke of those whose faith **did** fail in the time of temptation (Luke 8:13). And, indeed, if Jesus is not active in the situation, Peter’s faith will also fail. The word “*fail*” means **utterly** fail – so that Peter would fall beyond the point of recovery. In praying that Peter’s faith will not fail, Jesus is praying that he will stand up again after he has been knocked down (2 Cor 4:9) – that he will be able to recover himself from the snare of the devil (2 Tim 2:26). We must learn that when we **do** recover, it is not through some automated process, like a rubber ball bouncing back. Our recoveries, renewals, and triumphs are more owing to the activity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. than to our own feeble endeavors.

WHEN YOU ARE CONVERTED. Here recovery is referred to as conversion. To “*convert*” means to “*turn again,*” NIV “*turn back,*” NRSV and “*have returned to Me.*” NKJV When men recover, let them strengthen their brethren by testifying to their renewal, and encouraging them with assurances of grace “*to help in the time of need*” (Heb 4:16). Perhaps some of them are being sifted at the moment, and will gain renewed determination from one who has triumphed by grace.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 154

Mark 14:32 *“And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. 33 And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. 35 And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. 36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt.”*

(Mark 14:32-36; Matt 26:26-30; Luke 22:39-42; John 18:1)

INTRODUCTION

The awesome nature of the events that will transpire at this hour are staggering to consider. In a short time the powers of darkness will be given leave to do their will, permitted to go no further than has been established by the *“determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”* (Acts 2:23). Satan will make every effort to dissuade Jesus from obeying the Father, seeking to work through His humanness. The salvation of the world is at stake, and the eternal purpose of God is in the balance. Is God all-powerful or not? Is His counsel immutable? Can He really do what He has determined, and are His promises faithful and true? Has the enfleshment of the Word put Him at too great a disadvantage? When the powers of darkness are loosed, precisely what will they do? What will they be permitted to do? Will Jesus have to struggle with temptation, for there is no evidence that He had before. He was able to repel the devil with a word in the wilderness – what about now? The record has been given to us to dissolve all doubts, and establish to our hearts that Jesus at His weakest point was more powerful than the devil at his strongest point. From this point on, let there be no doubt about the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been announced to be *“Lord over all”* (Acts 10:36) – and there is no exception to that rule.

Now we will behold Jesus put into the crucible of His greatest trial. He will not address the devil at this time. He will not rebuke the devil, or command demons to depart. He will speak to the Father, having solely to do with Him, thereby setting the tone for the manner in which the fiercest trials are to be addressed.

“Mark 14:32 *And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. 32 And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy.”*

A PLACED NAMED GETHSEMANE. Matthew and Mark refer to this as *“a place”* named Gethsemane (Matt 26:30; Mk 13:32). Matthew tells us it was located in the *“Mount of Olives”*

(Matt 26:30). Luke also tells us this is where Jesus was accustomed to go frequently (Lk 22:39). John tells us it was a “garden” (John 18:1). The word “Gethsemane” means “an oil-press,” and refers to the place where the olives were pressed, causing their rich oil to come forth. It was in this place that the means through which the rich oil of joy and grace would be made accessible to us would be revealed. Here the dark saying of Isaiah would begin to be fulfilled: “*I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment*”. (Isa 63:3). Something of what is involved in denying the human will is seen in the experience of our Lord. Those who insist on living shallow lives, always pampering the flesh and giving in to its whims, will never receive the blessing that comes only after self-will is put to death.

SIT YE HERE. What Jesus was going to experience required that He be alone. Here He could not be surrounded by His disciples, as He was earlier in the evening. He will allow them to come as close as they could, but this time they would not be privy to His prayer, as they were the prayer John records as being prayed earlier (John 17). There does come a time when the follower of Jesus must learn to “sit,” waiting on the Lord.

HE TAKES PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN. Even now, there are some disciples who are given the privilege of coming closer. They are among those who were first called to be apostles, and had been close to Him throughout His ministry (Mk 5:37; 9:2; 13:3 [in the latter text (Mk 13:3), Andrew is included, yet excluded in the Garden]).

We have learned a valuable lesson when we perceive that Jesus does not treat all of His followers the same. There are some who are granted special privileges that are not enjoyed by the masses. This is the Divine manner. Joseph was given more than his brothers. Moses received privileges that were not enjoyed by Aaron and Miriam. Aaron had greater privileges than the rest of the Levites. David was blessed above his brothers. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego received more than the other Hebrew captives. Daniel was given a greater measure than his three companions. Jesus confirmed this truth in one of His parables, speaking of one servant that received more than the others – five talents (Matt 25:15).

HE BEGAN TO BE SORE AMAZED. The expression “*sore amazed*” comes from a word meaning, “to throw into amazement or terror, to alarm thoroughly, to terrify.” THAYER Other versions read “troubled” NKJV “*very distressed,*” NASB “*deeply distressed,*” NIV “*to fear,*” DOUAY “*to be gloomy,*” MRD “*wax abashed,*” TNT and “*struck with terror and amazement.*” AMPLIFIED Matthew says Jesus “*began to be sorrowful,*” using a different word that accents grief. Thusly was Jesus responding to the contemplation of the sins of the world being laid upon Him, and the stroke of Divine wrath being leveled against Him. There is no human language that can fully portray the impact of this consideration upon Jesus. The awfulness of the time when sin would be judged and condemned in Him was disturbing beyond measure. Here was a man who had never once felt the contamination or defilement of a single sin. Never did He have to repent from so much as a single rash word, or a solitary sinful expression of any sort. And yet, He was going to feel the magnitude and weight of the “*the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). In a society in which there is a dulness toward sin, this kind of response is totally strange – to say nothing of Christ’s contemplation of being “*stricken*” and “*afflicted of God*” for the transgressions of the world (Isa 53:4-5; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18). Those who opposed him judged Jesus to be suffering for His own sins (Matt 27:39-44). Yet, they did not have the faintest conception of the judgment that was taking place before their eyes. They saw only the outward sufferings of Jesus, and did not have a single valid notion about what He was suffering within. The forethought of that judgment caused Jesus to be thrown into a

state of terror and complete alarm. Even for Him – the Righteous One – it was a “*fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God*” (Heb 10:31).

HE BEGAN TO BE VERY HEAVY. The words “*very heavy*” are translated from a word meaning “to be upset, distressed, and deeply troubled.” FRIBERG The picture is of a great weight pressing down upon the Savior, from which there was no escape. Other versions read, “*deeply distressed,*” NJKV “*agitated,*” NRSV “*anguish came over Him,*” CJB and “*oppressed in spirit.*” DARBY It is as though His Spirit sought to free itself from His body, which was the appointed vehicle for the removal of the sin of the world. Yet, there was no way of escape made for Him, for this was not a temptation, but the appointed work of the Father. Laying down His life involved Jesus being “*made to be sin for us,*” then being “*made a curse*” for us by God, as the “*sword*” of God fell on Him (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Zech 13:7). For Jesus, this was obedience, but there was not pleasantness in it.

“ 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.”

SAITH UNTO THEM. Jesus did not share these words with the other disciples – only with Peter “*and the two sons of Zebedee*” (Matt 26:37). Matthew also records these words, uttered only to the inner circle of disciples (Matt 26:38). If the other disciples were ever to learn of them, it would be through those who heard them. There are some aspects of the truth that can only be learned that way – from those who, in the more immediate proximity of the Lord, come to see uncommon things. This is why God has placed certain teaching gifts in the church: “*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that . . .*” (1 Cor 12:28). These are not administrative gifts, for such gifts come “*after*” these; i.e. “*helps, governments,*” etc (1 Cor 12:28b). The primary gifts have to do with insight and spiritual understanding – with being privy to things that are intended to be told. Thus, Peter, James, and John heard words the others did not hear – words concerning Christ’s “*sufferings.*”

MY SOUL IS EXCEEDING SORROWFUL. While the preceding words speak of the experience of Jesus (“*began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy*”), these are the words He expressed concerning the experience itself. As is characteristic of Jesus, His words are not an overstatement, nor are they an understatement of the case. They are precise and intended to provoke deeper sustained thought. Those who prefer to cavort about on the surface of truth will not be able to dwell on these words, for they testify of the time when “*deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts*” – a time when the sense of Divine judgment is at hand, and the soul is greatly agitated because of it (Psa 42:7).

This expression is a very weighty one, confirming the limitations of language. Other versions read, “*deeply grieved,*” NASB “*overwhelmed with sorrow,*” NIV “*filled with sadness,*” CJB “*swallowed up in sorrow,*” CSB “*My anguish is so great ,*” GWN “*My soul is crushed with grief,*” NLT and “*oppressed with anguish.*” WEYMOUTH

In this word Jesus is speaking of the dominance of sorrow, grief, and anguish. This is not sorrow mingled with joy – as when He, “*for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame*” (Heb 12:2). In this dreadful hour our blessed Lord was, to the fullest extent, “*pressed on every side*” (2 Cor 4:8). This is when, for the very first time, it is written that “*He feared*” (Heb 5:7) – which is an expression encompassing the words “*sorrowful and very heavy,*” and “*exceedingly sorrowful.*”

It is at this point that Jesus commenced to engage the enemy in His initiative to die –

Christian of our day, one has made decided progress when he arrives at this place.

HE WENT FORWARD A LITTLE. Other versions read, “*a little farther,*” NKJV and “*a little beyond them.*” NASB Luke says He went forward “*about a stone’s cast*” – probably 50-60 feet, adding that “*He was withdrawn from them,*” thus devoting Himself to the matter at hand (Lk 22:41). This was far enough to remain seen, yet not close enough to be heard.

IF IT WERE POSSIBLE. Mark says Jesus “*fell to the ground.*” Matthew says “*He fell on His face*” (Matt 26:39). The words spoken by Jesus are not quoted. Rather, the Spirit provides us an overview of the matter Jesus addressed in His prayer: “*He prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.*” The word “*hour*” refers to a definitive period of time. In this case, it was a time of Divinely appointed duration. From the enemies’ point of view, it was the “*hour*” allotted to the “*power of darkness*” (Lk 22:53). From the standpoint of His own experience, it was the time of His betrayal and ultimate death (Mk 14:41) – a time after which He would “*be glorified*” (John 12:23). Such grief and sorrow (Isa 53:4) attended that time that his soul recoiled from it. If there was any way to save men apart from Him being abandoned and cursed by God, He now pleads for the experience of the hour to “*pass*” from Him, so that He does not have to undergo what lies ahead. Rather than accenting His weakness, this confirms the magnitude of what was required to deliver men from the power of darkness, and translate them into the Kingdom of God’s Son.

“ABBA, FATHER.” Now, the words of Jesus are quoted – that is, **how** He plead for the hour to pass from Him. Here is the sanctified use of the expression “*Abba, Father*” – and the words are **always** used together – never is “*Abba*” used alone. The expression is found three times in Scripture. Once it is used to denote **Jesus’** own expression (Mk 14:36). Once it is used to describe **our** cry to God (Rom 8:15). Once it is employed to describe **the cry of the Spirit** from within us (Gal 4:6). These are the only times this phrase is used in the Bible. Nowhere is there the faintest hint that it is an infantile expression – like “*Daddy,*” or the emotional and unintelligent cry of a baby. This is a cry of dependence, assurance, and acquaintance. It is provoked by personal familiarity with God: i.e. “*all things are possible unto Thee.*”

TAKE AWAY THIS CUP. Mark reads, “*Take away this cup from Me.*” Matthew reads, “*if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me*” (Matt 26:39). Luke reads, “*if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me*” (Lk 22:42). Within the boundaries of God’s ability, authority, and will, Jesus asks for the hour during which He will be made a curse for us to pass from Him. If such a thing is at all possible, it will be possible with God. If men can be saved by any other means, a way will surely be found to avoid what lies ahead of Him. If Jesus being “*made sin,*” “*made a curse,*” and having sin “*condemned in His flesh*” is only an alternative, and Divine wisdom can find another way, Jesus pleads for an alternative way to be taken. “*This cup*” refers to the **experience** of having the iniquities of us all laid upon Him, and the curse that would attend it.

NEVERTHELESS. Notwithstanding the plea, the great Savior senses that there are no other options. This is not merely the best way, it is the **only** way to effectively deal with sin and thus reconcile the world unto God. Here is the hallmark of faith: “*not what I will, but what Thou wilt!*” This was not a selfish will as ordinarily perceived – like wanting ones own way. It was rather desiring to avoid the curse of God, the condemnation of sin within Himself, and being forsaken by God. There is no strictly human experience that can parallel this. For Jesus, God’s will involved **His** sword being awakened against **His** Son (Zech 13:7). Jesus was wholly unwilling to subscribe to any method of saving men that would involve the compromise of the will and character of the Father. Oh, the depth of the struggle Jesus is experiencing!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 155

Mark 14:37 *“And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? 38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. 39 And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. 40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer Him. 41 And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners ”*

(Mark 14:37-41; Matt 26:41-46; Luke 22:43-46)

INTRODUCTION

Our text reveals some of the involvements of Jesus laying down His life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28). The giving of His life culminated at the cross, but it commenced in the garden of Gethsemane. The preparation for this hour was throughout His life, including the time when, at twelve years of age, He said He had to be about His *“Father’s business”* (Lk 2:49). He focused more particularly on this mission immediately following the casting of a demon out of the child of a distraught father (Lk 9:42). Right after this, a little over one year before the time of our text, it is written that Jesus *“steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,”* journeying from the eastern side of Jordan, passing through Jericho, and heading for Bethany, and ultimately Jerusalem. During this trip Jesus appointed seventy, whom He sent *“two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come”* (Luke 10:1). Thus, the moral preparation of Jesus began with the time when He had advanced in wisdom and stature, intensified when He entered into His ministry following His baptism, and became more focused when He set out for His final trip to Jerusalem. Now, in our text, our Lord is going to take hold of the commandment delivered to Him with both hands, preparing Himself to carry out His commission to the finest and most exacting detail. We will see that the closer the hour is, the more fierce is the struggle, requiring all of His energies.

“ Mark 14:37 *And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? 38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.”*

Jesus returns from his first session in prayer – one in which He had said, *Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt*” (v 36). Now, as though seeking some element of encouragement from His disciples, He returns to Peter, James, and John.

JESUS FINDS THEM SLEEPING. I do not doubt that Jesus had spent considerable time during this first session of prayer. We only have a brief summation of His prayer. This is confirmed by the fact that Jesus finds the disciples asleep. It had been a long day, filled with all manner of focused instruction, promises, and prophecies of what was to come. All of this was followed by the marvelous intercessory prayer recorded in John seventeen (John 13-17). The disciples were not sleeping out of boredom or a lack of interest, as will be confirmed.

HE SPEAKS TO PETER. During this first return to the three disciples, Jesus now speaks to Peter. He was the leading figure among the three. Wherever these three men are mentioned together, Peter is always first in the listing (Matt 10:2; 17:1; Mk 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33; Lk 6:14; 8:51; 9:28; Acts 1:13). When Peter and John are mentioned together, Peter is also referred to first (Acts 3:1,3,4,11; 4:13,19; 8:14). Jesus told Peter He was going to give the keys of the Kingdom to him (Matt 16:18-19), and **with privilege comes responsibility**. More is expected from those who receive more. As it is written, “*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*” (Luke 12:48). Therefore, the Lord addresses Peter, not as though he was the only one to whom he was speaking, but because he was the leading one among the three. Those who are leaders are not to be compared with others, for more is expected of them.

WATCHING FOR ONE HOUR. “*Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?*” NKJV Matthew’s account reads, “*What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?*” (Matt 26:40). Notice how Jesus calls Peter by his first name – “*Simon,*” not the new name that He had given to him (John 1:42). There is something to be seen here concerning the difference between the old and the new. Here the apostle was more like the name “*Simon*” than “**Peter.**”

Jesus had told all of the disciples, “*Sit ye here while I pray,*” and had then said to Peter, James, and John, “*tarry ye here, and watch*” (Mk 14:32,34). Luke tells us that the Lord said, “*Pray that ye enter not into temptation,*” saying this before He withdrew from them about a stone’s cast (Lk 22:40-41). Jesus did not expect them to wait for twenty-five years, like Abraham did for Isaac. This was not the kind of waiting in which they would engage for ten days while they waited for the Spirit to come upon them on Pentecost. This was watching for “*one hour*” – one critical hour! It was a watching of fellowship – “*with Me.*”

About the time we begin to think Jesus is more tolerant than He really is, texts like this loom before us. We must not allow ourselves to confuse longsuffering and mercy with toleration and indifference. How would you answer a question like this? – “*Are you sleeping?*” Does it not confirm to your heart that when the Lord blesses you with an unusual amount of grace that He expects you to excel above those who are not so blessed?

We are beholding the heart of the Lord here. He is living out something of what is meant by grieving the Holy Spirit of God. It is the same sort of response that is revealed in the following sayings: “*Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?*” (Matt 8:26). “*O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves?*” (Matt 16:8). “*How is it that ye do not understand?*” (Matt 16:11; Mk 8:21). “*How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?*” (Matt 17:17). There is a kind of holy disappointment when the people of God come short of what they could be – when they are overcome by the weakness of the flesh, or live in a posture of compromise.

WATCH AND PRAY. “*Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation.*” Both Matthew and Mark refer to this saying (Matt 26:41; Mk 14:38). The word “*lest*” means “in order that [denoting the purpose or result].” STRONG’S This confirms that during times of Satanic attack, or when “*the power of darkness*” is given leave to work more extensively, temptation becomes stronger, requiring

a greater degree of vigilance and more intense prayer. Thus Jesus taught us to pray, “*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*” (Matt 6:13). A failure to “*watch and pray*” during such times will inevitably lead to the love of many waxing cold (Matt 24:12).

THE CONTRARIETY OF THE FLESH TO THE SPIRIT. “*The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.*” Matthew also cites this saying (Matt 26:41). The word “*ready*” means “*willing*,” NKJV or predisposed. Prior to Christ’s enthronement, the flesh would prove dominate. Their intentions were noble, but their strength was small. Here, the word “*spirit*” appears to accent their minds, and is not as full a word as it will become when their spirits will be buttressed by the witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:16). “*Weak*” here is dominating.

“ 39 And again He went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.”

AGAIN HE WENT AWAY, AND PRAYED. Matthew says “*He went away again the second time*” (Matt 26:42). He was returning to a labor of travail as He stood on the border of the fulfillment of the commission given to Him, to lay down His life (John 10:17-18). There will be no easy victory this night. Satan will not be dismissed with a mere word, and Jesus will have strive for the mastery. He will employ the weapon of “*all prayer*,” and do so with determination and perseverance. Luke does not record this second visit to His disciples, but simply records Jesus praying until He returns to awaken the disciples and confront Judas and the soldiers from the high priest who accompanied him.

AND SPAKE THE SAME WORDS. Mark makes a point of the fact that Jesus “*prayed, saying the same words .*” NASB Matthew records the words themselves: “*He went away again the second time , and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done*” (Matt 26:39,42). This is the Master praying, and we can learn much from the occasion.

The Christian community has been told by some that prayers that are repeated are a sign of unbelief. This certainly was not the case in our text, for that would have made Jesus a sinner, because unbelief is sin, being evidence of a departure from God (Heb 3:12). Who would dare to charge the Son of God with such folly? Repeated prayers are not sinful prayers, nor do they necessarily fall into the class of the kind of prayers where men think they will be heard “*for their much speaking*” (Matt 6:7).

Jesus taught us to persevere in prayer, and not to faint. He was referring to lifting the same petition over and over until we receive some response (Luke 18:1-8). There are some matters that cannot be successfully addressed with a single petition. Believers are to exercise themselves to distinguish when to continue praying, and when to cease – as Paul did when he prayed concerning the thorn in the flesh that was given to him (2 Cor 12:1-10). Neither, indeed, should we give ear to those who speak without understanding.

AN ANGEL IS DISPATCHED TO STRENGTHEN HIM. Luke records, “*And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him*” (Luke 22:43). Although the time during which this angel appeared is not specified, it appears reasonable that it was during the second or third time Jesus prayed – when His strength began to dissipate. We are nor told how this angel strengthened Jesus, but I do not doubt that it was with words. “*Angels*” had ministered to Jesus when He endured a special temptation at the threshold of His ministry (Matt 4:11; Mk 1:13). Now, a special angel comes to strengthen the Savior as He grappled with temptation. Perhaps this kind of ministration is included in the statement that Jesus was “*seen of angels*” (1 Tim 3:16).

Angels have been known to speak words of comfort to the saints. Included in such holy visitations are Jacob (Gen 31:17), Zechariah the prophet (Zech 4:4), Zechariah the father of John the Baptist (Lk 1:13), Mary the mother of the Lord (Lk 1:30), the shepherds at the birth of Jesus (Lk 2:10), and Peter when he was in prison (Acts 12:8). But never was there a more important angelic ministry than at this time, when the salvation of men was in the balance, and the battle was set in array.

BEING IN AN AGONY. Luke records, “*And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*” (Luke 22:44). The intensity of Christ’s prayers apparently affected His entire constitution – spirit, soul, and body. He was in anguish, as **only** the laying down of His life loomed before Him. On the cross, He would be mindful of “*the joy set before Him*” (Heb 12:2). However, that is not His experience in the Garden. Of this occasion it is written, “*Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared*” (Heb 5:7). No such prayers were offered during His ministry, for He was in charge of the affairs. But this night, He must resign Himself to be “*smitten of God and afflicted*” (Isa 53:4), and to yield Himself to the stroke of the sword of God Almighty (Zech 13:7).

Here, in the Garden, Jesus was offering a sacrifice for Himself first, as the high priest did of old (Heb 7:27). This was the sacrifice of His will, and it was done under great duress, and not during a time of peace and joy. Jesus was living out a word that He Himself spoke, “*whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it*” (Luke 9:24; 17:33). Jesus knew that He could not take back His life unless He first laid it down, submitting to the incontrovertible and irreversible will of God. This was the life laid down in the ultimate way, and at the ultimate time. It was a kind of pattern that precedes any and every involvement in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. There can be no participation in the Divine will unless there is a corresponding forfeiture of self will.

“40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer Him. 41 And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”

HE FOUND THEM ASLEEP AGAIN. After going away the second time, Jesus returns the second time, and again finds them asleep. There is something of the Divine manner to be seen in this record God has given of His Son. **While the Divine will be being worked out, Jesus visits His disciples, to see of their condition.** He has chosen them to be “*with Him*” (Mk 3:14). The Lord, therefore, will check up on them, to see how they are doing in keeping His word to watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.

This appears to be a little known facet of spiritual life. Even though the Lord has precisely told us about being accountable to Him, yet it is evident that professing Christians have not yet been convinced of this. Without guile or ambiguity, we have been told that everyone is appointed to be judged (Heb 9:27), and that we will all “*give an account*” of our stewardship (Lk 16:2). This will be intensely personal, as “*every one of us shall give account of himself to God*” (Rom 14:12). And right here, in this remarkable text, this principle is lived out as Jesus visits His disciples three times within a short period to see how they are doing. It is profitable to ponder how many times He has visited us, and the condition in which He has found us.

The Spirit is not only truthful, but very gracious at this point. The disciples were

sleeping because “*their eyes were heavy.*” Matthew gives the same report (Matt 26:43). Their bodies had grown weary, and it was exceedingly difficult to control them. Luke says that Jesus found them “*sleeping for sorrow,*” or “*exhausted from sorrow*” NIV (Matt 26:45). It had been a difficult night for them! Jesus had told them He was going away (John 14:28). He had even said they would not be able to follow Him (John 16:36). He had divulged that one of them would betray Him (John 13:21). He had told Peter that he would deny Him (Mk 14:30). He had told them that they would be sorrowful (John 16:20). He had even said they would all be offended because of Him (Matt 26:31). Sorrow does have a fatiguing effect upon the soul, as your own experience will attest. It surely did that effect on the disciples on that night.

THEY DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO ANSWER. The disciples sensed that they ought to have something to say, but could not think of anything: “*they did not know what to answer Him.*” NKJV They were, like others who were confounded by the presence of the Lord, “*speechless*” (Dan 10:17; Mk 9:6; Rev 1:17). Whenever a person is perceptive that he is in the presence of the Lord, there is a corresponding awareness of the need to say something – even if it is “*Woe is me!*” (Isa 6:5). Even the devil himself is required to speak when standing before the Lord (Job 1:7; 2:4). A question by the Lord can leave a person “*speechless,*” just as it did the man who appeared at the wedding feast without a wedding garment (Matt 22:12).

HE COMES THE THIRD TIME. Jesus prayed “*the same words*” the third time (Matt 26:44), and then returned to His disciples the third time. While they were not equal to the task He was facing, He had expected them to throw themselves into what he had asked them to do – watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. He has admonished them to avoid temptation by watching and praying. He has asked them why they could not watch with Him for one hour. He has even interpreted their experience, reminding them that the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Surely, after all of that, they will be alert!

TAKE YOUR REST. Alas, however, the third time He apparently finds them asleep again. Notwithstanding, while they have been sleeping, He has gotten the victory. He does not need them to watch with Him any longer. He has poured out His petition in fear, has borne up under the weight of sorrow, and has been strengthened by a holy angel. He is now ready to face the powers of darkness, and to lay down His life in an environment of animosity and hatred.

Now He tells them to take their rest, and yield to the desire to sleep. The hour has come for prayer to cease, and the work that has been appointed to be done. They have not done well in watching and praying, and therefore they will all forsake Him. Peter will deny Him, and even weep bitterly because he did. So He abruptly says, “*It is enough!*” or “*Enough!*” NIV Even though they were unprepared, they will now have to face the events to come as they are. It is only the keeping power of God that will keep them from altogether being crushed by the wicked one.

THE HOUR IS COME. The hour had come – the hour when He would humble Himself more than He ever had before. He would be more humble than when He entered the world as a Babe, for this would be “*unto death,*” whereas the first humbling was unto a birth. This “*hour*” is why He lived. It is why He ministered. It is why He had prayed. Now He is ready to fulfill His mission.

THE SON OF MAN IS BETRAYED. Now the treacherous act of betrayal will take place, coming from the hand of one of His own disciples, just as He had said (Mk 14:18). Now, though Jesus will face the betrayal with sorrow, He will face it with strength as well.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 156

Mark 14:42 *“Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand. 43 And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. 45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed Him.”*

(Mark 14:42-45; Matt 26:46-50; Luke 22:47-48; John 18:2-3)

INTRODUCTION

The prayer of Jesus has been heard, *“in that He feared”* (Heb 5:7). He was not delivered from the appointed work of drinking the awful cup of Divine indignation and laying down His life a ransom for many. However, He was granted strength equal to the occasion, when there *“appeared an angel from, heaven, strengthening Him”* (Lk 22:43). In the Luke text, the word *“strengthen”* is a different Greek word, used only here and Acts 9:19, where Saul was strengthened after fasting and praying for three days. When Jesus told Peter to *“strengthen”* his brethren when he was *“converted,”* the word used meant to confirm or establish (Lk 22:43). THAYER When Paul engaged in *“strengthening all the disciples,”* the word used meant to reestablish, or confirm (Acts 18:23). THAYER When Peter prayed that God would *“strengthen”* the brethren, the word used was yet a different one, meaning to confirm in spiritual knowledge (1 Pet 5:10). THAYER The word used to describe the strength Jesus received from the angel is translated from a word meaning *“to grow strong, to receive strength,”* THAYER *“regain strength,”* FRIBERG and *“to regain strength after a temporary loss.”* LOUW-NIDA The idea here is that the strength of Jesus had been depleted as He was *“in an agony,”* and prayed more earnestly. Now, in a display of the grace of God, and without rest and recuperation, His strength is renewed, and He is brought to the highest level of moral and spiritual aptitude. He did not leave the struggle, but held on until *“He was heard.”* Now, in the fulness of confidence and strength, He will go out to meet the enemy, and face *“the power of darkness.”* When the people of God grow weary and are tempted to withdraw from the battle, they do well to remember the night our Lord was betrayed. At that time God revealed what can be done for the person who walks in spiritual resoluteness and resolve. What follows confirms the effect of the strength Jesus received, establishing to our hearts and minds the superiority of Divine strength.

“ Mark 14:42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand. 43 And immediately, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.”

RISE, LET US GO. His prayer being heard, and strength being received, the time for praying has come to an end. Now is the time to go forward and confront the enemy. There does come a time

when we must leave the room of supplication and enter into the work-room. In this case, the work was laying down His life, in order that He might take it up again (John 10:17-18). Prayer, therefore, was preparatory, and was not an end of itself. The one who was going to betray Him as near, and he would not delay to perform his treachery. John says of this event, "*Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth*" to meet the coming entourage (John 18:4).

Here we learn of the inferiority of the intellect itself. Although highly vaunted by men, the intellect is not adequate – knowing what is coming is not sufficient. There must be a corresponding strength to confront the destiny to which we have been appointed, just as it was with our Lord. He knew what was coming, and that is why He prepared for the occasion with firm and resolute prayer. We too have an appointment with death, and the ultimate confrontation of God Himself (Heb 9:27). The insightful prospect of these appointments can cause great fear in men. Yet, if they will repair to God in fervent prayer and resolve, they will obtain the strength to face these appointments with confidence.

WHILE HE SPAKE. Jesus had no sooner summoned His disciples to get up and go than Judas appeared with those to whom he would betray the Lord. The immediacy of the moment is noteworthy, telling us something about preparation for trial, or carrying out a Divine mandate. It is essential that the preparation be finalized immediately before the trial. Jesus was not prepared for this in His birth, or when He was found in the Temple at twelve years of age. The preparation was not finalized during His ministry when He spent night-long vigils in prayer (Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 6:12). He received the required strength when it was needed, not in escrow. There are trials that cannot be successfully endured depending upon the strength of yesterday, and blessed is the person who recognizes this. It is true that there are trials that come upon us suddenly, but they are of a different order, belonging to the category of things we "*know not*" (Prov 27:1; James 4:14). However, when we come to the matter of death and judgment, or of being tempted, or confronting the hatred of men, it is our business to be in a constant state of preparation. Souls that fall from their steadfastness do so because they were not prepared for the thing that caused them to swerve aside.

A MULTITUDE WITH SWORDS AND STAVES. Judas came with "*a great multitude.*" He did not accompany them, but they accompanied him. **HE** was "*accompanied by a multitude.*" NASB The number of people involved is unknown, but it was a significant number, as indicated by the word "*great,*" which means "many, abundant, much, and plenteous." THAYER Some have estimated the number to be 200-600 men, although the language itself does not indicate this. I do not know that there was ever an occasion when Jesus faced aggression from only one person. There seemed to be an innate awareness of the superiority of Christ's person, even though it was not a perfect awareness. Thus a multitude came to take Him.

This multitude comes armed with "*swords and staves,*" or "*clubs.*" NKJV John says they came "*with lanterns and torches and weapons*" (John 18:3) – and they were coming against only a single Man. However, this was no ordinary man, and they knew it.

FROM THE CHIEF PRIESTS, SCRIBES, AND ELDERS. This "*great multitude*" were sent "*from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.*" Matthew says they were "*from the chief priests and the elders of the people*" (Matt 26:47). John says they were "*a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees*" (John 18:3). Some have affirmed Roman soldiers to have been among this number. I doubt that this is true, for Judas had come from the Jewish authorities, not the Roman ones (Mk 14:10). There is no evidence that the Roman authorities became involved until Jesus was sent to Pilate (Mk 15:1).

These soldiers were doubtless from the "*Captain of the Temple,*" who was known to have consorted with the high priest and the chief priests (Acts 4:1; 5:24). While this was a military office,

it is understood that it pertained to a function of the Levites, who kept order in the Temple. Josephus refers to this function in his writings. Bell Jud., 2, 6, 5:3;12:6 We also know from Scripture that the Levites stationed captains and guards with spears and shields around the Temple (2 Kgs 11:10-11). Also, when the Levites compassed, or surrounded, the king, they did so “*every man with his weapon*” (2 Chron 23:7), confirming there was a kind military branch among them. In this text, the Jews came out against Jesus as a lawbreaker, offender, and rabble-rouser among the people. This confirms they were threatened by His presence and His words, which indicated that their hearts were wed to the world, and their minds corrupted, so they could not receive the truth.

“ 44 And he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely.”

JUDAS KNEW THE PLACE. Concerning this garden, John informs us that Judas “*knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples*” (John 18:2). Luke informs us that during the time preceding this betrayal, Jesus had spent His days in the Temple, and His nights “*in the mount that is called Mount of Olives*” (Lk 21:37). We know the disciples were with Him in the Temple (Matt 24:1; Mk 13:1). There is no reason to doubt that they were also with Him in the Mount of Olives. Not only had Jesus “*resorted*” to this area in the night, however, but often during the day as well (Matt 24:3; Lk 19:29,27; John 8:1).

The tense of the expression “*that betrayed Him*” is more precisely translated in the New American Standard Bible: “*who was betraying Him*” – that is, who was in the act of betraying Him while he was coming. The expression “*betrayed Him*” also connotes this meaning, assigning all of the activities associated with the betrayal to the act itself. This is in perfect accord with the doctrine of scriptures that states the committal of sin is when lust has conceived. In such a case, the sin itself is traced back to the point when the individual was drawn away of their own lust and enticed (James 1:14-15).

Sin must never be treated as though it was a mere mistake, a lack of good judgment, or was committed inadvertently. There is considerable activity that precedes the committing of transgression – activity that reveals a corrupt heart, a love for self, and a failure to live by faith. It is indication that a great falling away has taken place when sin is no longer considered to be serious, and all manner of explanations are offered for its presence. It is ever true that the closer a person is to Christ, the more sin is hated. Also, the further one is from Him, the more sin is tolerated, explained, and overlooked.

HE HAD GIVEN THEM A TOKEN. A “*token*” is a “*signal,*” NKJV or a “*sign.*” NRSV And why was it necessary to give the multitude a “*token*” or “*sign?*” Had Jesus not been a public figure for over three years, and well known among the people? There are some very practical reasons that can be given. First, “*it was night*” (John 13:30), and lanterns and torches would not lighten the area sufficiently to see Jesus clearly. Secondly, it is not likely that those who had actually spent time with Jesus were among the militia that came to arrest Him. Men sent by the Pharisees to apprehend Jesus returned empty handed, reporting, “*Never man spake like this man*” (John 7:32,44-46). Too, the religious leaders feared the people (Mk 12:12; Lk 20:19; 22:2). It is not likely, therefore, that they would have chosen men familiar with the ministry of Jesus to apprehend Him.

The token is noteworthy: a “*kiss!*” As used here, a “*kiss*” is a token of friendship. To this day this expression is common among the people of the East. Such a greeting was expressed when Laban met Jacob (Gen 29:13). Jesus upbraided Simon because he gave Him no kiss when He entered his house (Lk 7:45). When Paul left the brethren from Ephesus, they fell on

his neck and kissed him (Acts 20:37). The kiss of Judas was like the kiss to which Solomon referred: “*the kisses of an enemy are deceitful*” (Prov 27:6). It was like the kiss that Joab gave Amasa when he killed him: “*And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground*” (2 Sam 20:9-10). Of course, such treachery would not have been possible if Jesus did not “*lay down*” His life, submitting to be betrayed by one of His own disciples, and put to death by the very people to whom He had come.

LEAD HIM AWAY SAFELY. Mark records that Judas told the multitude to “*take Him, and lead Him away safely.*” Other versions read, “*seize Him, and lead Him away under guard.*” NASB As used here, “*safely*” means in a manner that prohibited His escape – hence other versions read “*under guard.*” Matthew clarifies that the first meaning – preventing His escape – was the thrust of the statement. He reports Judas saying, “*hold Him fast!*” (Matt 26:48), which is involved in laying hold on Him, or seizing Him.

It must be remember that the primary aim of Judas was not to do Jesus harm, although he surely knew that was the intention of the chief priests, scribes, and elders. However, he was motivated by covetousness. Therefore, when he came to the chief priests to strike a bargain he said, “*What will ye give me , and I will deliver Him unto you?*” (Matt 26:15). Later, Peter would refer to that money as “*the reward of iniquity*” (Acts 1:18).

Judas was “*drawn away of his own lust*” for money to betray the Son of man. However, this was not a sudden thing, for he had been culturing his lust throughout the ministry of Jesus, taking from the treasury of the Lord and His disciples (John 12:6). We learn from this of another dimension of sin that is not considered by transgressors. When a person has nurtured a vice, Satan can enter into the matter, moving the individual to commit sin that extends beyond himself.

“ 45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to Him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed Him.”

AS SOON AS JUDAS CAME. Judas wasted no time in betraying Jesus, doing so “*as soon as he was come,*” leading a multitude carrying swords and clubs. “*Immediately*” NASB he went to Jesus, eager to earn the money he would receive. There is a certain eagerness that accompanies transgression that makes a person willing to press the matter, insisting that what is intended be carried out to the finest detail. Sins that effect other people, like fornication, adultery, theft, and murder all demand aggressiveness, for they cannot be committed casually. Such is the case with covetousness. Highlighting this, Matthew says of the occasion, “*Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him,*” even doing so while Jesus was still speaking privately to the eleven (Luke 22:47). There was a sense in which he had to interrupt Jesus in order to betray Him. However, he was quite willing to do so.

MASTER, MASTER. How grievous the greeting must have sounded to the Lord Jesus: “*Master, Master!*” The word translated “*Master*” is the root word for “*Rabbi.*” The word literally means “*My great One, my honorable Sir.*” THAYER It is a word that is generally applied to a respected teacher (Mk 9:5; John 3:2). What gross hypocrisy was revealed to be in Judas, who would use such a greeting for the One from whom he had learned nothing. Jesus had taught the twelve, of which Judas was one, to serve, not to be grasping (Lk 22:26). Yet, Judas had chosen to pursue his own lust for money, oblivious to all that it involved.

Early in His ministry, Jesus referred to those who feigned honor toward Him. “*Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will*

of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matt 7:21-22). Again He said, "*And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Such people sought to feed their own lusts using the name of Jesus. They were exploiters of the holy name – at least they thought they were.

There remains a body of people who employ the name of Jesus, whether as "*Master, Master,*" or in some other form, only for personal and worldly gain. They are no different than Judas. In fact, they are brothers to Judas who expose Jesus to disgrace, only in order that they might satisfy their own depraved wills. Immoral ministers and church leaders fall into this category. In their sin they have betrayed the Lord, giving His enemies the opportunity to "*blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called*" (James 2:7). There is no adequate way to state the seriousness of such sins – sins committed within the house of God, like that of Ananias and Saphirra, who also fell prey to the sin of covetousness.

FRIEND. Upon kissing the Lord, Matthew tells us that Jesus responded, "*Friend, wherefore art thou come?"* (Matt 26:50). It was not that Jesus was ignorant of what Judas was doing, or that He felt Himself endeared to Judas. He knew he was "*a devil*" (John 6:70), and Jesus has no friendship with the Devil (2 Cor 6:15). The word "*friend,*" as used here, means "comrade, mate, or partner," THAYER "one who is associated with another," FRIBERG and "and "A person who is associated with someone else, though not necessarily involving personal affection." LOUW-NIDA **It is not a term necessarily involving endearment, but one that speaks of being involved in the same work.** The expression was doubtless prompted by the prophecy of Christ's betrayer that is found in the forty-first Psalm: "*Yea, Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me*" (Psa 41:9). A similar prophecy is found in the fifty-fifth Psalm. "*But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company*" (Psa 55:13-14). **Judas used his familiarity with Jesus as a means to betray Him to His enemies** – even though he had, as Peter affirms, "*obtained part of this ministry*" (Acts 1:17). It was that involvement that provoked the use of the word "*Friend.*"

In this expression, some have suggested that Jesus was holding out the scepter of mercy, although nothing in the text suggests this. That supposition involves some other assumptions that are exceedingly difficult to receive. Among them would be the willing reversal of prophetic statements, and Jesus forgetting the Satanic nature of Judas.

Luke provides an additional perspective of this occasion. "*But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"* or, "*are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?"* NKJV (Luke 22:48). Here is the ultimate insult, to oppose the Son of God as though Judas was close to Him and respected Him. There is no more serious sin than to claim identity with Jesus, yet to be "*abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate,*" thereby denying the Lord that one professes to know (Titus 1:16). Thus, in an act of deception, and with alarming aggressiveness, the Son of God is "*betrayed into the hands of sinners*" (Mark 14:41). And yet, Jesus submits to it while He is strong, doing so because this had been appointed for Him.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 157

Mark 14:46 *“And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him. 47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me? 49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. 50 And they all forsook Him, and fled. 51 And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.”*

(Mark 14:46-52; Matt 26:51-54; Luke 22:49-53; John 18:4-7,10-11)

INTRODUCTION

The hour has come for Jesus to lay down His life as He was commanded. He first offers Himself to God, making His will subordinate to the will of His Father. He has now resigned Himself to do something that has never been done before, and will never be done again – make *“one sacrifice for sins forever”* (Heb 10:12). He will not do this while in possession of great strength, but while in a state of *“weakness”* (2 Cor 13:4). However, when the men from the high priest came to arrest Him, He was not in a state of weakness. In fact, He is in charge of the situation. His strength, however, is not exhibited in overcoming the enemy, but in submitting to them. It is seen in His meekness and humility, which, when one has the power to plunder his enemies, are remarkable displays of strength. None of this will be apparent to the disciples of Jesus, and even His enemies will be blinded to the strength of the One they are arresting. His strength will not be taken from Him until He is crucified. There, He will not be permitted to rely on heavenly strength, for He must tread the winepress of the wrath of God alone – while God turns His face from Him as the sins of the world are laid upon Him. However, in our text, it will become apparent that Jesus is in charge of the situation. Knowing that this is an time allotted to the power of darkness, Jesus sheathes His spiritual sword, choosing to do the will of God. Had Jesus not done this, His death would not have been a sacrifice. There came this occasion when, for the first time in His life, sinful and hostile men would put their hands on Him. Furthermore, following His death on the cross, they will never do it again. This was their hour, and the Lord knew it.

“ Mark 14:46 *And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him. 47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.”*

THE SOLDIERS FALL TO THE GROUND. John tells us that Jesus first asked the soldiers whom they were seeking. When they said *“Jesus of Nazareth,”* He said *“I am He,”* and they all *“went backward and fell to the ground.”* The Lord made no threat. He did not raise his hand to strike them. He merely told them who He was, and they staggered backward, falling to the ground. After asking them the second time whom they were seeking, He declared He was Jesus, and told them to let His disciples go, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled (John 18:4-7). He spoke as the Lord, even

though His enemies did not know it.

THEY LAID THEIR HANDS ON HIM. It is at this point that they “*laid their hands on Him,*” no doubt to bind Him tightly as Judas had told them to do (Matt 26:48). We see here the hardness of the unregenerate heart. Even when faced with the Truth incarnate, and while experiencing the impact of the words of His mouth, they still proceeded with their mission – even though they had to get off of the ground to do so. Prior to this, His enemies had “*sought to lay hands on Him,*” but were not able to do so because they feared the people (Matt 21:46; Mk 12:12). John also tells us that earlier in His ministry, His enemies “*sought to take Him, but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour had not come*” (John 7:30). Later they “*sought again to take Him,*” but could not (John 10:39). Now, however, they will be given leave from heaven to lay their hands on Jesus, even though they will have to overcome fear to do so.

THE DISCIPLES ASK IF THEY SHOULD ATTACK. At this point, Luke tells us the disciples saw what was going to happen and asked Jesus, “*Lord, shall we smite with the sword?*” Luke also tells us that when Jesus had entered into the Garden with His disciples He told them, “*the things concerning Me have an end.*” In response, the disciples, ready to defend Jesus, said, “*Lord, behold here are two swords.*” Knowing they did not know the gravity of the hour, the Lord replied, “*It is enough*” (Lk 22:38). Now, it becomes apparent that they took this as justification to launch an initiative against a group of men that greatly outnumbered them.

ONE CUTS OFF THE EAR OF THE HIGH PRIEST’S SERVANT. Mark says that one of the disciples launched the initiative, drawing his sword and cutting off the ear of one of the high priest’s servant. You may be sure, he meant to do more than that. Luke tells us the man cut off the servant’s “*right ear*” (Lk 22:50). John tells us the man wielding the sword was Peter, and the high priest’s servant was named Malchus (John 18:10). I take it that Malchus was one of the men who laid their hands on Jesus. Peter, therefore, rushes fearlessly to defend his Lord.

IF DELIVERANCE WAS RIGHT, THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY. Matthew tells us Jesus told Peter, “*Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword*” (Matt 26:52). Luke tells us that Jesus replied, “*Stop, no more of this!*,” NASB and healed the ear of Malchus (Lk 22:51). Jesus then said to him, “*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?*” (Matt 26:53-54). In a sense, Jesus was speaking hypothetically, because He had already resigned His will to fully embrace the will of the Father. The fulfilling of the Scriptures was more important to Jesus than saving His own life – an attitude that those who walk in fellowship with Jesus will also possess. Notice, that the reason for Jesus’ refusal to seek His own deliverance was in order that the Scriptures might “*be fulfilled.*” When an angel appeared to Jesus in Gethsemane, it was not to fight, but to strengthen Him to lay down His life, thereby fulfilling the Word of God..

JESUS SAYS HE WILL DRINK THE CUP. John says that Jesus said to Peter, “*Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*” (John 18:11). What possible reason could be adduced for refusing to drink a cup that the Father had given Him to drink? Even though Peter’s action made perfect sense to him, it was totally unreasonable to Jesus. He would **not** yield to the thought of **not** doing what He had been commanded to do. Just as He fulfilled “*all righteousness*” when He was baptized (Matt 3:15), so will He do on this dark night. He will throw down this imagination, and take captive His thoughts “*unto obedience*” (2 Cor 10:5). In this He is a pattern for all of us to follow.

Thus Jesus cites several reasons why His disciples must **not** engage in a military

initiative against His captors. All who live by the sword will die by it (Matt 26:52). If deliverance was possible, it would come from heaven, not from earth (Matt 26:53). The Scripture must be fulfilled (Matt 26:54). Jesus was determined to drink the cup that had been given to Him by God the Father (John 18:11). In these answers we catch a glimpse of what is involved in gaining the victory over the world. Among other things, there is a reasoning process that accents the utter foolishness of choosing one's own will over the will of God. This also shows what is involved in taking up our cross every day, refusing to back away from the repercussions that come to us because of our faith.

“ 48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me? 48 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.”

ARE YOU COMING FOR A THIEF? Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention this statement (Matt 26:55; Mk 14:48; Lk 22:52). First Jesus rebuked His disciples for taking the initiative against those coming to arrest Him (Matt 26:52-54; Lk 22:51; John 18:11). Now He rebukes the militia coming to take Him captive. The point Jesus is making is that they had come out to get Him as though He was going to resist them, refusing to be taken. They thought that Jesus, like a robber, would do everything in His power to avoid being captured. If he could not flee, he would fight – at least, that is what they thought.

They came to arrest Jesus as though He had been doing evil in the land. Really, however, He had went about *“doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil”* (Acts 10:38). The only time anyone had seen Jesus angry was when the name of the Lord, or the Temple, had been defiled. He castigated the Pharisees publically for their hypocrisy (Matt 23:13-39), and twice cleansed the Temple of defiling influences (John 2:13-16; Mark 11:15-17). In all three of these occasions, Jesus was not seeking His own. He was not taking for Himself, or promoting His own name. He was rather exhibiting the Divine revulsion at the sight of hypocrisy or religious defilement. Even when He cleansed the Temple, the scribes and chief priests sought how they might destroy Him, for *“they feared Him.”* The people were also *“astonished at His doctrine”* (Mk 11:18). They could tell that Jesus was not a rabble-rouser or insurrectionist like Barabbas (Mk 11:7). Yet now, they come after Him as though He was a common criminal – which they knew He was not. He had once challenged them, *“Which of you convinceth me of sin?”* (John 8:46). None could substantiate such a charge then, and neither could they now.

I WAS DAILY WITH YOU. Jesus reminds them of His public ministry. Substantiating that the soldiers were from the Temple authorities and not the Romans, Jesus says *“I was daily with you in the temple teaching.”* Matthew reads, *“I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple”* (Matt 26:55). Luke also reports that Jesus said *“I was daily with you in the Temple”* (Lk 22:53). Particularly during the last phase of Jesus' ministry, it is written, *“And in the day time He was teaching in the temple ; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives”* (Luke 21:37). Throughout His ministry, when Jesus was in Jerusalem, He was always found in the Temple (John 2:14; 7:28; 8:2,20; 10:23).

When Jesus traveled throughout the land, He was always found in the synagogues, where the people gathered to pray and hear the Word of the Lord (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; ; Mk 1:21,39; 3:1; 6:2; Lk 4:13,16; 6:6; John 6:59).

Jesus' ministry was public, not private. Speaking of Jesus, Paul told Agrippa, *“this thing was not done in a corner”* (Acts 26:26). If anyone wanted to find Jesus, they knew where He could be found – where devout people were prone to gather. Even when He withdrew Himself

from the multitude, word would get out where He was, and the people would gather to Him (Mk 6:33; 9:35; 10:1; Lk 4:42; John 8:2).

Perhaps you have heard people say Jesus preferred to be around publicans and sinners, and that you could find Him in public places, where sinners were prone to gather. This, however, is not what the Scriptures say. In fact, Jesus went on record concerning where He would be: *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matt 18:20). This proneness of Jesus to be in a religious surrounding is what made Him accessible – and that is the point that He is making here. It is as though He said, “Everyday you could have found me. You knew where I would be, and could have inquired at any time, and people could have told you where I was.

YOU DID NOT TAKE ME. Matthew says, *“ye laid no hold on Me”* (Matt 26:54). Luke says, *“ye stretched forth no hands against Me,”* adding *“but this is your hour, and the power of darkness”* (Lk 22:53). It was not that Satan’s forces had overcome, but that God had raised the bar, allotting them a period of time to do their worst. Of course, in all of this, it was really the *“determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”* that was being carried out (Acts 2:23; 4:28). Satan’s plans would come short of what He really desired. His seeming triumph would only last three days. Christ’s victory would be forever!

THE SCRIPTURES MUST BE FULFILLED. What was really taking place was the fulfillment of Scripture – *“ But all of this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled”* (Matt 26:56). Later, Peter would refer to this fulfillment when he said to the Jews, *“But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled”* (Acts 3:18). He mentioned this also in his first epistle (1 Pet 1:11). Notice that Jesus says, *“The Scriptures must be fulfilled.”* That is another way of saying, *“the Scripture cannot be broken ,”* or *“cannot be set aside, or cancelled, or broken, or annulled”* AMPLIFIED (John 10:35).

“ 50 And they all forsook Him, and fled. 51 And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on Him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.”

THEY ALL FORSOOK HIM. Matthew reads, *“Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled”* (Matt 26:56). Earlier, Jesus had told them that this was going to happen on this very night: *“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come , that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me”* (John 16:32). Matthew and Mark say they would be *“offended”* (Matt 26:31; Mk 14:27). Jesus said this would be done in fulfillment of the Scriptures: *“All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad”* (Matt 26:31). When the sword of the wrath of God was awakened against the Shepherd, there would be *“none to help”* Him (Psa 22:11; Isa 63:5). Circumstances would be so structured that no possible credit for the ultimate triumph of Jesus could be traced to men – even chosen men!

From the standpoint of the disciples themselves, they no doubt fled because they were afraid. However, they were afraid because boldness and strength were withdrawn from them in this awful hour. If God would have enabled them, they could have stood against this multitude and utterly defeated them. However, redemption was the objective being fulfilled here, not a display of raw power. There were times where the enemy was publically and in great humiliation overthrown – as in the cases of Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Belshazzar, and others. There are triumphs that are **intended** to be more open – triumphs in which the power

and glory of God can be witnessed by men.

Here, however, a more formidable foe was being faced – one that would be allowed to use his final and most potent weapon. The witnesses of this conflict were not upon earth, but were in the heavenly realms. A member of the angelic host had already been sent to strengthen Jesus. There is no doubt but that the holy angels peered over the ramparts of heaven at this remarkable spectacle. Now the very hosts who had been dismissed with Jesus' word, releasing their hold on their victims, converge upon Him. You may be sure, the holy angels are not watching the disciples, but the Son, for this is not only the hour given to "*the power of darkness,*" but it is also the hour in which Jesus will carry out the command of God in exacting detail. Therefore, no power will be given to the disciples to fight – they will only receive strength to flee. They did not flee because they were cowards, for they were going to battle the multitude with two swords! They fled because they had no strength. They will be gathered in due time. Now, however, their presence is no longer required.

Also, they were able to flee because the word of Jesus was with power, and was therefore honored: "*let these go their way*" (John 18:8). None of the soldiers pursued the disciples as they withdrew themselves from the immediate circumstance. Actually, it was the Father Himself who was behind this, answering the petition Jesus raised earlier: ". . . *I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me . . . I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil*" (John 17:11,15). Were it not for the keeping power of God, the soldiers would have pursued and captured the disciples.

A CERTAIN YOUNG MAN FOLLOWED HIM. Only Mark includes the account of this "*certain young man.*" The word "*naked*" in this narrative does not mean stark naked, or nude, but rather refers to having only the undergarments on. Although not identified, some think this to be John. However, that cannot be so, for the disciples had all fled. Others think it was the gardener, who probably lived in the garden, and was awakened by the sounds. However, it is not likely that such a responsible position would be held by a "*young man,*" or "*youth,*" for so the word means (Thayer). Others believe it was John Mark, who is understood to have penned this Gospel at the dictation of Peter. However reasonable such explanations may appear, and even though I confess I am inclined to the opinion that it was John Mark, the fact of the matter is that we do not know the identity of this person. It is possible that he is mentioned to confirm the danger that was imminent for the disciples had they not fled.

HE LEFT THE LINEN CLOTH AND FLED. Even though these soldiers had went backward and fallen on the ground at the word of Jesus, yet they remained brash and insolent. They saw what they probably perceived to be a sympathizer, and took hold of him, confident that they were in charge. However, even though the young man was scantily clothed, he did not consider the linen cloak he had thrown around him to be worthy of contending for it. He therefore "*left the linen sheet behind and escaped*" NASB wearing only his undergarments.

It is possible for men to fall into circumstances that demand a quick evaluation of what they possess. Is it worth fighting for, or maintaining at all cost? Or, does the circumstance require abandoning it? In this case, as in the incident with Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the best thing to do was to leave the garment and run. Blessed is the person who knows when this is what ought to be done.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 158

Mark 14:53 *“And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. 54 And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together.”*

(Mark 14:53-56; Matt 26:57-60; Luke 22:54-55; John 18:13-16)

INTRODUCTION

The scene is an awesome one in which the powers of darkness have been given leave to converge upon the Son of God – Jesus of Nazareth, who had invaded their Kingdom. He had released multitudes that were under their power, casting out demons with His word (Matt 8:16) and “*the finger of God*” (Lk 11:20). Until this very moment, Satan could not hold a prolonged discussion with Jesus, much less cause harm to come upon Him, or in any way restrict Him. Again, he could not touch Jesus when He was born, when He was two years of age, twelve years of age, or any other time during His life. He had been summarily frustrated in every attempt to raise up enemies against Him, cause Him to sin, or in any way thwart what was He was doing, or stop what He was saying. But during this hour, a judgment has been made in heaven to deliver up Jesus to these very powers. It has been done, Matthew records, “*that the Scriptures might be fulfilled*” (Matt 26:56). Jesus is not merely turned over to the powers of darkness. There is Divine purpose being worked out here – a purpose that had been declared of old. The powers of darkness are really tools in the hands of God – or vessels of dishonor, to be used in the execution of His purpose. Who but God can use His enemies to fulfill His purposes? Satan cannot do such a thing. He cannot employ holy angels to do His work, or those who are living by faith and walking in the Spirit. Yet, God can use Him and His forces at will, giving them leave to express their hatred and malice, yet fully controlling it so that only His purposes are actually fulfilled. Now we will see how Satan will work, when once he is given liberty to move about in stratagem designed to bring an end to Jesus. To show the greatness of Jesus, even at this point, Satan will not throw Him to the ground as He did a demon possessed boy, or strike Him with boils, blindness of dumbness.

“ Mark 14:53 *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.”*

Now that Jesus is, in a way, in the hands of the powers of darkness, what will they do? Jesus did not limit this hour to the execution of the will of the high priest, and the chief priests, scribes, elders, Sadducees and Pharisees. He plainly said, “*but this is your hour, and the power of darkness*” (Lk 22:53). Other versions read, “*when darkness reigns,*” NIV “*and the authority of the dark power,*” BBE “*and the dominion of darkness,*” CSB “*the time for the power of darkness,*” NAB “*the time when Satan's power reigns supreme,*” LIVING “*even the power which*

*darkness gives you!” WILLIAMS and “the power [which] darkness [gives you **has its way**].”*
AMPLIFIED

This is a rather complex circumstance – at least from the human point of view. At this time differing kingdoms are all working simultaneously: God’s Kingdom, Satan’s kingdom, and the kingdom of men. There is heavenly authority at work, Satanic authority, and human authority – and they are all working simultaneously. If you can get high enough, there really is no competition here. God is over all, and He is controlling the powers of darkness, ensuring that they do not step so much as one millimeter beyond His will. Satan is controlling the only ones he can possibly control, which are those who are not living unto God, and are thus opposed to Him. The people, although they think they are only doing their will, are actually under the control of darkness, which is under the control of God. In this way, it is really God’s will that is being carried out – even though, in a limited sense, it was also the will of the people and the will of the powers of darkness. However, because God is over all, this is a circumstance that is controlled by God Himself. He is using personalities in strict keeping with their nature, whether men or wicked spirits. Later, when Peter saw matters clearly, he interpreted the events that commenced on this dark night. *“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”* (Acts 2:23). This same understanding was obtained by the collective church, and is seen in their prayer when faced with opposition: *“For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:27-28).

This did not relieve any of those involved of their guilt, for none of them were forced to act in contradiction of their nature. Rather, they were given leave to do what they wanted. God does not employ dishonorable vessels for honorable purposes, nor can Satan marshal honorable vessels for dishonorable purposes.

Now, we will see the manner in which the powers of darkness will set out to do their will, and how it will be manifested in the men they are controlling. Their actions, while wicked in the extreme, will be coordinated in heaven, and caused to fulfill God’s will. All of this is accomplished with Satan and His powers, as well as those who are being controlled by them, all the while actually doing the will of God.

THEY LED JESUS AWAY TO THE HIGH PRIEST. The *“chief priests”* had sent these soldiers (Matt 26:47; Mk 14:43; John 18:3), and now they return with their prey to the high priest. When Jesus is taken, it is through the hands of religion men. Judas, one of His own disciples, betrayed Him. Jewish chief priests, scribes, elders, and Pharisees plotted out the plan. Jewish soldiers from the chief priests made the arrest. Now, Jesus is led away to the highest position in the Jewish community – the high priest.

Matthew tells us this was *“Caiaphas the high priest”* (Matt 26:57). Luke tells us they brought Jesus to the personal dwelling of the high priest – *“the high priest’s house”* (Lk 22:54). His *“house”* is also identified as a *“palace”* (Matt 26:3,58; Mk 14:54; John 18:15). John provides some preliminary details that are not given by the others. He states that they *“led Him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year”* (John 18:13). We learn from Luke that *“Annas and Caiaphas”* were both high priests when the word of the Lord came to John the Baptist (Lk 3:2). When the apostles were first opposed, Annas and Caiaphas were still functioning together (Acts 4:6). This unholy duo had been operating for over four years, including a period prior to Christ’s ministry, and one following His enthronement in heaven. They probably appeared

invincible at that time. It is supposed by some that the group went first to Annas to obtain advice on how to proceed. They might also had taken him to be with them at the proceedings that would be carried out in the palace of Caiaphas. John also identifies Caiaphas as the one who said it was expedient for one man to die for the people (John 18:14; 11:49-52) – words that he did not speak out of himself (John 11:51).

WITH HIM WERE ASSEMBLED. An unholy assembly was waiting at the palace of Caiaphas: *chief priests* (leaders), *elders* (counselors), and *scribes* (teachers). These were the religious leaders – the kind that had been ordained by God. The Pharisees and Sadducees, offices created by men, are not mentioned in connection with these proceedings.

“ 54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.”

Although Jesus had told the arresting soldiers to let His disciples go their way (John 18:8), and although it is written that they “*forsook*” Him and “*fled*” (Matt 26:56; Mk 14:50), yet at least two of them came back to follow the motley procession from a distance. Having been with Jesus for over three years, and never once seeing Him in any kind of threatening danger, they were no doubt confused by the events of that night – events concerning which they will receive illumination following the ascension of Jesus into the heavens.

PETER FOLLOWED HIM. Other versions read, “*at a distance,*” NKJV “*from afar off,*” DOUAY “*a great way off,*” PNT and “*far behind.*” LIVING You might say this was a *safe* distance – one in which he could not be recognized. Peter had an undeniable interest in the Savior, yet his fear would not permit him to follow closely. Although the Scriptures were being fulfilled in the abandonment of the disciples (Mk 14:27), yet their natures were also revealed in that desertion. At this time, Peter was dominated more by fear than love, “*for fear hath torment*” (1 John 4:18). Thus, in a single evening, the very man who drew his sword and was willing to launch an initiative against a multitude, was reduced to a state where he followed Jesus (for he was following “**Him**”) “*afar off.*”

There are still people like Peter, who have enough interest in Jesus to follow Him, but can only pursue Him at a distance, because they are dominated by fear. They are like the chief rulers who “*believed on*” Jesus, “*but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue*” (John 12:42). This was also the reaction of the parents of a certain blind man who was healed by Jesus. When asked the means through which their son was healed, although they knew the cause, they told the inquirers to ask their son. It is written that they did this “*because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue*” (John 9:22). As it is written, “*the fear of man bringeth a snare*” (Prov 29:25).

John tells us that Peter was not by himself when he followed Jesus: “*And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest*” (John 18:15). This disciple is not named, although it is generally supposed that it was John. This view seems to agree with the fact that John says he personally beheld the closing events associated with Christ’s death (John 19:35). Jewish historians say that John was familiar with the high priest because he delivered fish to his house when occupied with the fishing trade. NONNUS/as reported by JOHN GILL That this was John, is also supported by the fact that Jesus sent these two disciples to prepare for the feast that was observed on this very night (Lk 22:8).

Peter and John both had other brothers (Andrew and James), yet Jesus sent them out together, and in the book of Acts they continued to minister together (3:1,3,11; 4:13,19; 8:14). Spiritual relationships are more strong than that of flesh and blood.

THE PALACE OF THE HIGH PRIEST. Peter followed “*even into the palace of the high priest.*” Another version reads, “*right into the courtyard of the high priest.*” Matthew adds that he, after arriving at the palace, “*went in*” (Matt 26:58). John provides some additional information, saying that the other disciple “*went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest,*” while Peter initially “*stood at the door without.*” The “*other disciple,*” who was known by the high priest, “*went out*” and spoke to a woman who was the doorkeeper, and then “*brought in Peter*” (John 18:15-16). This fact also supports the idea that this was not a disciple outside of the twelve, for it is not likely that someone who was actually not chosen to be close with Jesus would have been so bold as to accompany Jesus into the palace, and then exercise his influence to see to it that Peter was also allowed to come in. The picture here is of a large palace, surrounded by a courtyard, which was accessed through a gate. This is still the manner in which houses are build in the Middle East.

HE SAT WITH THE SERVANTS. It did take some boldness to assume a place among the servants of the high priest. Yet, Peter apparently did this in an unassuming manner, so as not to draw attention to himself. How uncomfortable he must have felt in those hostile surroundings! Yet, Peter did not know what was happening, and so out of his untutored curiosity, sat with the servants. Matthew reports that he did so “*to see the end,*” or “*outcome*” NASB or “*how this would end*” NRSV (Matt 26:58). Some of the paraphrased versions read, “*to see what was going to be done to Jesus,*” LIVING “*to see what would happen.*” IE We have no idea what he was thinking, but the events that follow confirm he was not hopeful about the outcome.

HE WARMED HIMSELF BY THE FIRE. Peter did not do this because he was endeared to these servants, but because he sought warmth by a fire that had been kindled there. Luke reports, “*And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them*” (Luke 22:55). Not only was it night, it was cold!

“ 55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.”

This was a legal proceeding – an attempt to condemn, Jesus by means of Jewish law – the very Law that God Himself had given. Later, not knowing that they had done this, Pilate had admonished them to take Jesus and “*judge Him according to your law.*” At that time, the Jews responded, “*It is not lawful for us to put any man to death*” (John 18:31). They had certainly not thought this when they formerly “*sought to kill Him*” (John 5:18), “*took . . . up stones to cast at Him*” (John 8:58), and “*took up stones again to kill Him*” (John 10:31). They thought nothing of it when they stoned Stephen later (Acts 7:58-60). However, under the Roman rule, they were not as free to do this as they had been before. Thoughtful people would not have pursued the death of Christ. However, these people had rejected the Lord’s Christ, were filled with hatred, and were being controlled by the devil. Additionally, the time appointed by God in which Jesus would lay down His life had come, and these wicked men will prove to be suitable for the carrying out of some of the matters related to that death.

THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND ALL THE COUNCIL. Matthew reads, “*the chief priests, and elders, and all the council*” (Matt 26:59). We understand “*the council*” to be the same as the “*Sanhedrin,*” a term that is not used in the King James Version, but is used in the NIV. The word “*council*” is a transliteration of the Greek word **sune,drion** (sunedrion). This council consisted of representatives from three main groups among the Jews: the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.

Traditionally the numbers were 24 priests, 24 elders, and 22 scribes. McCLINTOK-STRONG The total number was seventy. Jewish tradition says it was formed in keeping with the number of men who were chosen to judge with Moses – seventy in number (Num 11:16-24). These are also said to be paralleled with seventy men referred to as “*the ancients of Israel*” in Ezekiel 8:11-12.

This was a meeting that had been previously convened – probably at the time they sent out the soldiers to apprehend Jesus. Among the Jewish leaders, there was a near-perfect unity in their opposition to Christ Jesus. Earlier during Christ’s ministry, when these same leaders convened to condemn Jesus, Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus by night, had spoken in His defense: “*Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*” (John 7:51). However, no voice will be raised in behalf of the Lord on this night, for this is His enemies “*hour, and the power of darkness.*”

SOUGHT FOR WITNESS. They go about to condemn Jesus through the Law, which Jesus Himself had magnified and made honorable (Isa 42:21). So contemptible is the defiled religion mind, that it will attempt to justify ungodliness with the Word of God itself. The Law was very precise about capital punishment: “*At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death*” (Deut 17:6). Matthew therefore says they “*sought false witnesses*” (Matt 26:59). Now, the official court of the Jews seeks for witnesses who will justify the passing of the death sentence upon Jesus. When the Lord had walked among them, He challenged them to convince Him of sin – any sin (John 8:46). They could not do it, for Satan “*had nothing*” in Him (John 14:30). Concerning His life prior to this time, Jesus had told His disciples earlier that evening, “*I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love*” (John 15:10). However, even though His enemies have not been able to level a valid charge at Him in over three years, they now call for witnesses who will validate their hatred of Him.

THEIR WITNESS AGREED NOT TOGETHER. In an effort to please the Council, and also to rid themselves of Jesus, “*many bare false witness against Him.*” Perhaps some restated the charge that He was “*a Samaritan, and hast a devil*” (John 8:48), while others may have said He had done what was “*not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day*” (Matt 12:2). However, at the end of the session, “*their witness agreed not together,*” or “*their testimony was not consistent.*” NASB The point to be seen here was that the Council was not seeking a valid charge, but an agreement on any **false** charge. They already knew that a legitimate charge could not be leveled against Jesus of Nazareth – they had tried in vain to do this for over three years. They knew that any charge against Him would have to be a lie. Therefore, they sought “*false witnesses.*”

Whatever we may think about believers being criticized, it is our business to see to it that no one can register a legitimate complaint against us. This is why Paul said of those who contradict believers, that they might be ashamed “*having no evil thing to say of you*” (Tit 2:8). It is also why Peter wrote of those “*who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ*” (1 Pet 3:16), being put to shame by their godly manner of life (1 Pet 2:12,15). Jesus lived this out!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 159

Mark 14:57 *“And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, 58 We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59 But neither so did their witness agree together. 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? 61a But He held His peace, and answered nothing. . .”*

(Mark 14:57-61a; Matt 26:60-63a; John 18:19-24)

INTRODUCTION

It is in the middle of the night, and the powers of darkness are at work. When Judas had left Jesus and His disciples, it is written that *“it was night”* (John 13:30). Now, the moral darkness blends with natural darkness, which is a time when *“the power of darkness”* delights to work – when it is difficult to see and men tend to be tired, lacking alertness. After the commencement of the night, Jesus had prayed His intercessory prayer (John 17). He had taken His disciples into Gethsemane, and thrice prayed in agony to the Father (Matt 26:44). He had then awakened His disciples and went to meet those coming to arrest Him (Matt 26:46). Upon their arrival, Jesus asked the soldiers whom they were seeking. At their answer, He told them He was the One they sought, and they stumbled backward, falling to the ground. Judas then betrayed Jesus, and the Lord queried Him about His malicious deed. Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest. Jesus stopped the aggression of His disciples, instructed them, and then rebuked the multitude for coming against Him as though He was a thief. The disciples fled. The soldiers tried to arrest a young unnamed man who was watching, and he fled, leaving his outer garment with them. Jesus is bound, and led away to the palace of the high priest. Peter and John follow, and John speaks to the doorkeeper so she would allow Peter to enter. There was a call for false witnesses against Jesus, and many came forward, although their witnesses were contradictory of one another, and did not agree. A lot has happened, and we are now well into the night – perhaps not far from the dawning of the day. **You see with what aggression the enemies of Jesus came against Him – how they abandoned all thoughts of convenience and propriety.** In view of this scene, should we not conclude that a casual and haphazard effort to serve the Lord is a great contradiction? Does not such a sight betray an absence of understanding and conviction? If His enemies knew enough to oppose Jesus, how is it possible for those professing to know Him to fail to serve Him with intention and zeal?

“ Mark 14:57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, 58 We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59 But neither so did their witness agree together.”

The *“chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death.”* That means that the entire trial was nothing more than a mockery. There was no attempt to

get to the truth, only an effort to justify what they had already determined to do. This was not a legal proceeding, and there was no effort to determine whether or not Jesus was actually worthy of the death sentence. The Law of Moses, under which they were supposedly operating, imposed the death sentence for the following: *murder* (Num 35:16), *adultery* (Lev 20:10), *incest* (Lev 20:11,12,14), *bestiality* (Ex 22:19), *sodomy* (Lev 20:13), *whoredom* (Deut 22:21-24), *rape* (Deut 22:25), *kidnaping* (Ex 21:16), *a priest's daughter who committed fornication* (Lev 21:9), *witchcraft* (Ex 22:18), *offering human sacrifice* (Lev 20:2), *striking or cursing father or mother* (Ex 21:15,17), *disobedience to parents* (Deut 21:18-21), *blasphemy* (Lev 24:16), *Sabbath desecration* (Ex 35:2), *prophesying falsely* (Deut 13:1-10), *sacrificing to false gods* (Ex 22:20), *the owner of an animal that was prone to kill, and was not restrained* (Ex 21:19), *a man or woman with a familiar spirit* (Lev 20:27), *a stranger who entered the tabernacle* (Num 18:7), *anyone who sought to turn the people away from God* (Deut. 13:5), *and refusing to abide by the decision of the appointed Jewish authorities* (Deut 17:12).

There are twenty-two lawful reasons to put a man to death. Yet, even when people were lying, no two people could agree as to a just cause for Jesus to be put to death. Truly, He was without sin! He lived out the requirement of being “*blameless*” (Phil 2:15; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Pet 3:15). He was, in every sense of the word, “*separate from sinners*” (Heb 7:26).

THERE AROSE CERTAIN. Finally, no doubt after a considerable period of time, two false witnesses agreed enough to appear to justify the quest of the high priest. They could not charge Jesus with any of the crimes authorizing capital punishment. They could not show any weakness in His character or His work. However, they “*arose,*” being forward to tell the court what it wanted to hear. Matthew says these witnesses “*came*” (Matt 26:60).

WE HEARD HIM SAY! Their witness was that they both heard Him say, “*I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.*” Matthew reports they said, “*I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days*” (Mat 26:61). It is a stretch of one’s imagination to make this a justification for capital punishment – particularly since the people had thought nothing of desecrating the Temple by merchants exchanging money, and selling doves and oxen. They had no care for the house of God, and twice faced a Jesus who cleansed the Temple of such defilement. Yet now, these false witnesses represent Jesus as though He had no respect for His Father’s house.

Of course, they did not hear Jesus say these words. At the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, when He had cleansed the Temple from those who had made it a “*house of merchandise,*” the Jews had asked Him, “*What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?*” Jesus answered, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:14-19). Thinking that He was referring to the structure of Herod’s Temple, the Jews replied, “*Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?*” (John 2:20). The Lord never did explain to them, or to His disciples, what He meant. However, after He rose from the dead, His disciples “*remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said*” (John 2:22). In recording the event, John added this inspired editorial comment: “*But He spake of the temple of His body*” (John 2:21).

These witnesses even wrested what Jesus said. He did not say HE would destroy the Temple, but that THEY would – and even then, He was speaking of the Temple of His body. However, these witnesses had no interest in the truth, even though the Law pointedly required that a “*diligent inquisition*” be made concerning the truth of a capital charge. Further, any false witnesses were to be duly punished (Deut 19:15-21). Thus, in the name of the Law, the high priest

and his motley court broke the Law themselves, while Jesus did not.

NEITHER DID THEIR WITNESS AGREE. Other versions read, “*And not even in this respect was their testimony consistent*” (Mark 14:59). In some way, the words of these witnesses were at variance with one another. The particular disagreement is not specified, signifying that the report of the charge is a summation, and not a word-for-word statement. It is an invariable principle that a mental house cannot be build with the bricks of lies. Falsehoods cannot be put together in a cohesive manner. This is why imaginations and high thoughts can be pulled down and cast down (2 Cor 10:4-5). They are put together with statements and concepts that are not true. Those expert in spiritual warfare are able to dismantle false doctrines and statements, showing them to be erroneous.

“ JOHN 18:19 *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21 Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. 22 And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? 23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? 24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.*”

THE HIGH PRIEST ASKS JESUS OF HIS DISCIPLES AND DOCTRINE. Only John records this interrogation. It apparently took place following the failure to find any consistent false witnesses against Jesus. Without these witnesses, according to the Law, the capital case should have been dropped. “*At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death*” (Deut 17:6). Ignoring this Divine mandate, the high priest proceeds with the interrogation of Jesus.

This inquiry concerning Jesus’ disciples and doctrine was not an honest one. This very high priest, Caiaphas, had been involved in a discussion about Jesus earlier (John 11:47-53). The “*chief priests,*” which are understood to include the high priest, had opposed Jesus throughout His ministry (Matt 16:21). They had seen his wonderful works (Matt 21:15), had asked about His authority (Matt 21:23), heard His parables (Matt 21:45), and had even sent officers to arrest Him (John 7:32).

I SPAKE OPENLY. The Lord Jesus will not dignify the demand of Caiaphas with an accounting of Himself. Instead, He points out that He had not taught secretly, but openly. He was in the synagogues and in the Temple – places where the Jews “*always resort.*” I cannot help but note how things have deteriorated under the leadership of the Gentiles. Now, those who claim identity with the Lord are rarely noted for resorting to public gathering places, where the Word of God is read and expounded, and prayers are made. However, Jesus refers to a people who had been cultured by God by means of the Law, the ordinances, and holy prophets. Whatever deficiencies they may have had, they knew their lives centered in matters “*pertaining to God*” (Heb 2:17; 5:1).

There were times when Jesus spoke to and spent time with His disciples “*privately*” (Matt 24:3; Mk 6:32; 9:28; 13:3; Lk 9:10; 10:23). However, in every case, it was only **after** He had been speaking and working publically. Speaking of the life and death of Jesus, Paul said to Agrippa, “*This thing was not done in a corner*” (Acts 26:26). Among men, there is a penchant for secret orders. Most all lodges and fraternities are noted for their secrecy, and for their private teachings, known only to the members of the organization. Most religious cults are noted for their secrecy, and private teachings, which are withheld from the masses. When Jesus taught His

disciples privately, He expounded what He had said openly.

ASK THEM THAT HEARD ME. Those who heard the scribes knew what they taught (Matt 17:10). Jesus assures the high priest that those who heard Him knew what He had said as well. Here He does not single out His disciples, but opens the inquiry to the masses who heard Him during the last three years. People from throughout Canaan had heard Him, as well as representatives from Syria (Matt 4:24), Decapolis and “*beyond Jordan*” (Matt 4:25), and Idumaea and Tyre and Sidon (Mk 3:8). His “*fame*” had gone “*abroad into all the land*” (Matt 9:16), and it concerned what He had said and done. If it was information concerning what Jesus said and did, there was certainly no lack of witnesses.

It ought to be noted that what is taught in the name of the Lord should be public. The truth of God is not to be held in secret, or withheld from the people. While it is true that discretion is often required, as when Jesus spoke in parables, yet it was public, so that anyone intrigued by the truth was at liberty to pursue it, and make further inquiry into it.

ONE OF THE OFFICERS STRUCK HIM. Hearing the answer, one of the officers, who had more respect for Caiaphas than for Jesus, struck him with the palm of his hand. The NIV reads, “*struck Him in the face.*” He felt that Jesus owed respect to the high priest. Little did he know that the Lord could have struck him dead with a single word. But this was an hour given over to the power of darkness, and for the very first time a man struck the Lord’s Christ. With perfect composure Jesus challenged the man who struck him, “*If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?*” (John 18:23). The Lord does not give this man the option of remaining silent. Here was an opportunity for the man to examine his deed.

This is a microcosm of the day of judgment, when those who have treated Jesus as though He was not Lord will be called to either witness against Him, or explain their insolence. As it is written, God **will** be justified in all of His sayings (Rom 3:4).

“ 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? 61 But He held His peace, and answered nothing . . .”

The picture being presented here is that of a high priest in a state of total frustration. Together with his cohorts they have meticulously planned this moment. They have even hired Judas to ensure that they took hold of Jesus apart from the multitudes. There has been a call for witnesses – false witnesses – to come forward and testify against Jesus, thereby fulfilling the Law of Moses. However, after a long and tedious effort, they cannot find two witnesses who are in accord in what they say. Even when two witnesses are found who present the same testimony of what they heard Jesus say, there is disagreement between them. On top of it all, Jesus has not responded to a single charge, and has even refused to testify concerning His disciples and what He has taught.

ANSWEREST THOU NOTHING? The conduct of Jesus is in stark contrast with that of a person seeking his own will, or attempting to promote His own interests. His life had been lived in the public, and his teaching has been in public places, where the Jews could always be found. It does not make sense to the flesh to be silent in the face of false charges. Indeed, there were times when Jesus was not silent – but this is not one of them

WHAT IS IT THAT THESE WITNESS AGAINST THEE? Other versions read, “*What do have to say for yourself?*” LIVING and “*What they are saying against you – is it true?*” IE Is the

witness true or false? Is it right or wrong? No doubt the high priest had in mind the convoluted witness of the two men who just testified. He might also have hoped that some of the other incongruent charges made against Jesus would be answered. Earlier, when the council had gathered to discuss how they could get rid of Jesus, Nicodemus had asked, “*Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*” (John 7:51). Moses had taught the people that in a trial they were to hear the small and the great, and to do so without respect of persons (Deut 1:17). The Law even specified that when a case was too difficult, they were to go to a place God would designate, go to the experts in the Law, and obtain a verdict in keeping with the will of the Lord (Deut 17:8-11). Furthermore, difficult cases were also to be public, with false witnesses being punished with the same action they had sought against the accused. In doing this, Moses said “*And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you*” (Deut 19:20).

None of these procedures were carried out in the trial of Jesus. There were no judges who made “*diligent inquisition*” concerning what was true and what was false (Deut 19:18). The aim here was to justify what men had predetermined was true. Further, their determination was based on their preference for themselves, not the truth.

While not laboring the point, this sort of conduct is the inevitable result of focusing on an institution, as compared to being taken up with the Person of Christ and the truth of God. Whenever an emphasis is adopted that is not in harmony with the revealed heavenly agenda, there is an inevitable clash with the truth. However, those caught on the horns of this dilemma will not yield to the truth, just as the high priest and the council would not do so. In order to abandon an institutional emphasis, men must first see and be convinced of the absolute superiority of Jesus, and the singularity of His truth. Where these are not found, men will always oppose the truth, taking that opposition as far as they possibly can.

HE HELD HIS PEACE. Other versions read, “*He kept silent, and made no answer,*” NASB and “*Jesus continued to be silent.*” LIVING In His refusal to answer, Jesus was fulfilling the word of Isaiah: “*He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth*” (Isa 53:7). He did not speak in His own defense because He was not in the hands of the high priest and his corrupt council, but was in the heart of the will of His Father. He knew why He had come into the world. Prior to the commencement of these events, when He was yet among the people, He said: “*Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour*” (John 12:27). Now, having obtained strength from a heavenly messenger (Lk 22:43), He sheathes the sword that proceeds from His mouth (Rev 19:15), and holds His peace. This is not the time to fight, but is rather the time to submit.

Surely He thought of the words of David, with whom the Scripture identifies Him: “*I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred*” (Psa 39:1-2). And again, “*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it*” (Psa 39:9). It was not because of what Caiaphas was doing that Jesus held His peace, but because of what God was doing – delivering Him up “*for us all*” (Rom 8:32). Blessed is the person who, having the spirit of Christ, knows when to keep silence and cease to defend himself!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 160

Mark 14:61b “ . . . *Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. 65 And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.*”

(Mark 14:61b-65; Matt 26:63b-68; Lk 22:63-65)

INTRODUCTION

In this text the contempt that the Jewish leaders had for Jesus becomes very apparent. They address Him as though He was a transgressor – something they did not dare to do in public, “*for they feared the people*” (Lk 20:19; 22:5). In their opposition and abuse of Jesus, they were unwittingly fulfilling the words of the prophets; “*He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not*” (Isa 53:3). Their actions also commenced the fulfillment of John’s word, “*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not*” (John 1:11), for they would turn the minds of the people against Him (Mk 15:11). We are provided the sordid details of this night to confirm the fallenness of humanity. Remember, this rejection took place among a nation that had been cultured to receive the Lord’s Christ. God had dealt exclusively with them, preferring them above all other people, giving them a righteous law, and sending His holy prophets to them. Yet, with all of that, their hearts were hardened, their consciences dead, and their minds corrupt – and these were the leaders, who would also corrupt the people. This once and for all exposes the fallacy of the notion that some good remains in the natural man. If Divine goodness, revelation, provision, direction, and deliverance cannot cause goodness to surface in those upon whom it is focused, how can it be established that such mythical goodness exists? The actions of these people confirm the fall of humanity, the dominance of the wicked one, and the need for a Savior. Therefore in the death of Christ, both the depravity of man and the grace of God were revealed.

“Mark 14:61b . . . *Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*”

The high priest, Caiaphas, had not been able to get Jesus to respond to the charges leveled against Him – particularly the one in which He was represented as saying He Himself would tear the Temple down, then built it again in three days. Now, nonplused by the silence of the Savior, He tries another tactic. This time, Jesus will respond.

ART THOU THE CHRIST? Notice that Caiaphas does have some understanding: he knows that the Christ was to be *“the Son of the Blessed.”* Matthew says that the high priest said, *“I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God”* (Matt 26:63). To *“adjure”* means to put under an oath to God: i.e. *“I put You under oath by the living God.”* NKJV The prophets had made Christ’s Son ship quite clear. David wrote of the Messiah, *“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee”* (Psa 2:7). Isaiah said the Son of a virgin would be called *“Emmanuel”* – God with us (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23). He also said a *“Son”* would be given to the people whose name was *“the Mighty God”* (Isa 9:6).

The Messiah would, therefore, be a Man, who was properly called *“the Son of God.”* Caiaphas knew that an angel would not be sent to be the Messiah, but a Man – and that He would be *“the Son of the Blessed One,”* NASB or *“the Son of God.”* In addition to the Prophets, Jesus was *“approved of God among”* the people *“by miracles, and signs, and wonders”* (Acts 2:22). However, the **words** of Jesus proved to be too difficult for the Jewish leaders, for in them He exposed their falsity and hypocrisy. Speaking of the Jewish world, and particularly its leaders, Jesus told His disciples, *“The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil”* (John 7:7). These leaders knew when Jesus had spoken *“against them”* (Mk 12:12). Therefore Jesus said of them, *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin”* (John 15:22).

The question Caiaphas asks is not an honest one, and he is not seeking an answer. However, now he has inquired about the Person of Christ, not merely what He taught. Therefore the Lord will answer, further exposing the corruption of those before whom He stands.

I AM! Christ’s answer is clear and concise: *“I AM!”* Matthew records, *“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said”* (Matt 26:64). Other versions read, *“It is as you said,”* NKJV *“You have said it yourself,”* NASB and *“Yes, it is as you say.”* NIV The idea here is that God was behind the words that Caiaphas said, just as he was when he told the council it was best that Jesus die for the nation, rather than the whole nation perish (John 11:50-51). What the high priest had said did not come from his heart, but it was true. That is, the truth had been close enough to him for him to embrace it. Instead, he had rejected it, and actually opposed the Christ.

YOU WILL SEE! Now, Jesus states that who He really is will eventually be confirmed, and that Caiaphas will see it, together with *“every eye”* (Rev 1:7). In this trial, it appears as though the high priest and the council are the Divinely sanctioned authorities. However, God is going to show who the real authority is when He unveils the Son in all of His glory (1 Tim 6:15). He will be revealed as *“sitting on the right hand of power.”* The NIV reads, *“at the right hand of the Mighty One.”* Here, the word *“power”* does not refer to ability, but to the One who dispenses it – the God of heaven. Confirming that the expression *“the power of God”* can refer to Deity Itself, Paul refers to Jesus Himself as *“the power of God”* (1 Cor 1:24).

The fact that Jesus is *“the Christ, the Son of the Blessed,”* will be publically confirmed, and Caiaphas himself will see it, together with the puppet-council over which he was presiding. Jesus did not speak of a *secret appearing* (which is an oxymoron), but of an open one, which even His enemies will behold. Earlier, Jesus had said to His disciples, *“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory”* (Mark 13:26). Before His transfiguration He had said to all of the people, *“For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels”* (Luke 9:26). Now He refers to this showing again, doing so before His enemies.

COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN. During His ministry, Jesus had also said He would come “*in the clouds*” (Matt 24:30; Mk 13:26). Paul wrote that when we are gathered to the Lord, it will be “*in the clouds*” (1 Thess 4:17). Jesus told John that He would return “*with the clouds*” (Rev 1:7). In His ascension, the clouds escorted Jesus back to heaven (Dan 7:13; Acts 1:9). They will also escort Him when He returns to gather His own, bringing His reward with Him, and punishing the ungodly as well (2 Thess 1:7-10). It is as though before nature is folded up as a vesture, the clouds will perform their last ministry. This time they will not conceal, but will reveal the Son of God in all of His majesty and power.

“ 63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.”

How will these men respond to the confession of the Son of God? Are their hearts hardened, or can they be drawn by the truth? In this case, it will be confirmed that those who repeatedly reject the truth become more and more firm in their erroneous persuasion. It also confirms what happens when God pours out the spirit of deep sleep on those who consistently reject His truth, closing their eyes, and reducing to spiritual stupidity their prophets, rulers, and seers. As Isaiah prophesied, “*For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered*” (Isa 29:10). John said that this judgment took place during Jesus’ ministry. “*Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them*” (John 12:39-40). The response of the high priest and the council will confirm that this had, in fact, taken place.

THE HIGH PRIEST RENT HIS CLOTHES. Under the Law of Moses, the high priest was forbidden to tear his clothes: “*And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes*” (Lev 21:10). While this rule no doubt pertained primarily to when he was executing his office, Caiaphas was acting officially in this trial, and ought to have honored the law. But he did not, choosing to conduct himself as one who was not a high priest. The rending of clothes was often a sign of great grief (Gen 37:29; 2 Sam 13:31; Josh 7:6; 2 Kgs 19:1; Ezra 9:3). Sometimes it also was the expression of indignation and anger, mingled with sorrow (Isa 37:1; Acts 14:14). In this case, the high priest tore his clothes in indignation that, as he surmised, God had been blasphemed.

NO FURTHER WITNESSES REQUIRED. Now, after spending a considerable amount of time trying to find witnesses, Caiaphas says they have no need of “*further witnesses,*” as though they had been able to find any at all. In all of their quest, they had not managed to find two witnesses that agreed – even when they were not telling the truth. Caiaphas now affirms there is no further need for inquisition – no additional witnesses are required.

YE HAVE HEARD THE BLASPHEMY. The point here is that no witnesses were required because the whole council had heard what Jesus said – something Caiaphas interpreted as blasphemy. Of course, that could only be true if Jesus had not been telling the truth. However, the Lord gave them a sign that what He declared was the truth. He would be seen sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. That would be confirmation enough. However, the high priest does not believe Jesus, declaring that He has done nothing more than blaspheme, saying something that demeaned the God of heaven.

THEY ALL CONDEMNED HIM. Upon being asked what they thought about the

matter, the entire council “condemned Him to be guilty of death.” Matthew writes, “They answered and said, He is guilty of death” (Mat 26:66). That is, “He is deserving of death.” NKJV This judgment was supposedly based on the stipulation of the Law of Moses. These words were spoken by God Himself to Moses. “And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death” (Lev 24:15-16). This came under the general commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Ex 20:7).

The word “blasphemy” means slander, or speech that is injurious to someone – reproachful speech. THAYER And what is it that Jesus had said? “And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

To His enemies, that was speaking reproachfully against God – taking His name in vain, and claiming an identity that was fictitious. Of course, Jesus had spoken the truth, and God Himself will confirm it by showing Him opening in the capacity of the “blessed and only Potentate” (1 Tim 6:15). Jesus affirmed that this is something the council would also see.

I have often pondered how heaven reacts to those who say they are related to God, when actually they are not – to those who say they are followers of Jesus, when that is not at all what they are. What of those who present an appearance as being believers – “going to church occasionally,” wearing the name of *Christian*, and insisting that they believe every word of the Bible. All the while, they live for themselves, fail to crucify the flesh, and do not forsake all to follow Jesus. Is it possible that such people are actually guilty of blasphemy? – of taking the name of the Lord in vain? In my judgement, this is the case.

“ 65 And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.”

Their evaluation of Jesus now determined what they did. Further, in their minds, it justified what they did. Prior to this, one of the officers had struck Jesus “with the palm of his hand,” challenging Him by saying, “Answerest Thou the high priest thus?” (John 18:22). That was the first time anyone had struck Jesus. Now, however, emboldened by the assessment of the high priest, and the consent of the counsel, others take it upon themselves to also defame Him and strike Him, carrying the actions of the people to unparalleled depths.

It ought to be noted that those who sin publically cause other sinners to become more bold in their disobedience and insolence. They move the name of the Lord to be further blasphemed. Paul wrote to insolent Jewish Christians, “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written” (Rom 2:24). The children of God are to “adorn the doctrine” (Tit 2:10), giving “none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1Tim 5:14).

SOME BEGAN TO SPIT ON HIM. Matthew reads, “Then did they spit in His face” (Matt 26:67). Later, in Pilate’s hall, men will also “spit upon Him” (Mk 15:19). Under the Law, spitting in the face was a sign of deserved contempt. If, for example, the brother of a widow’s husband refused to raise up seed to her who was childless, the woman was to come to him in the presence of the elders. Among other things, she was to “spit in his face” (Deut 25:9). Job said that those who abhorred him spit in his face (Job 30:10). Moses also spoke of a woman being “ashamed seven days” by her father sitting in her face (Num 12:14).

The prophet Isaiah prophesied that one of the reproaches that would be borne by Jesus was that of spitting. He said of the Messiah, *“I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting”* (Isa 50:6). That night, the Divine restraint that was present in the palace of the high priest was most remarkable. Knowing how sin provokes God, and how His wrath is upon those who continue in it, who is able to measure the power that it required for Jesus to make Himself available to those who desired to spit upon Him? No one ever dared to do such a thing before. Now, however, they were only able to do it because Jesus did not hide His face from their contempt. Who is able to conceive of the terror that will strike through the hearts of those who spit on Him when they see the Son of God coming with power and great glory!

THEY COVERED HIS FACE AND BUFFETED HIM. Mark says some covered his face and began to *“buffet Him,”* or *“beat Him.”* NKJV Luke says the men who held Jesus *“blindfolded Him,”* and *“struck Him on the face”* (Lk 22:63). The word *“buffet”* means to *“1) to strike with the fist, give one a blow with the fist 2) to maltreat, treat with violence and contumely,”* (*abuse or insult*) THAYER *“treat roughly,”* FRIBERG and *“to strike or beat with the fist, either once or repeatedly.”* LOUW-NIDA This is a violent word, underscoring the utter contempt of these men for the Lord Jesus. They were making sport of Him, like the Philistines did of Samson (Judges 16:27). These are things they did not dare to do before the people. However, as the wicked do, they drew strength from one another’s foolishness, and became more bold in their attacks. Keep in mind that Jesus has given His face to them for this abuse, else they would have been the ones who were smitten. It was necessary for Jesus to endure this kind of insolence in order to appear weak and helpless before His foes. If they would have had the faintest glimmer of who this was, they would have cried out to be spared, like the demons in the wild man from Gadara (Lk 8:32).

THEY ASKED HIM TO PROPHECY. Having covered His face, and continuing to pummel Him with their fists, they taunted Jesus by saying, *“Prophecy!”* Both Matthew and Luke provide us with their full statement: *“Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?”* (Mat 26:68; Lk 22:64). Jesus will identify those men at the day of judgment!

Now, gathering boldness from the abuse being heaped upon Jesus, *“the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands”* – being less bold than the others. I do not doubt that some of the disfigurement of which the prophet spoke took place at this time. Isaiah prophesied, *“His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness”* NIV (Isa 52:14). Also, the word of the Psalmist was being fulfilled: *“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people”* (Psa 22:6).

Luke adds a word that confirms this was a long and arduous ordeal. *“And many other things blasphemously spake they against Him”* (Luke 22:65). Thus, in the palace of the high priest, in the name of the Lord, and before the highest Jewish court, Jesus is blasphemed, lied against, slapped, and struck with clinched fists. He is challenged to prophecy for the entertainment the people, and even the servants step forward to smite him with the palms of their hands while He was blindfolded. None of them remembered what had happened in the Garden when they arrested Jesus. Their seeming triumph over the Lord had caused them to forget every impressive thing they knew of Jesus, and all of the mighty works He had done.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 161

Mark 14:66 “ *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. 69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak. 72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.”*

(Mark 14:66-72; Matt 26:69-75; Luke 22:56-62)

INTRODUCTION

This is one of the heart-rending sections of Scripture in which much is revealed. We are provided the details of what was involved in Satan sifting Peter, and of the strategies and devices that he employs. We see the quickness of the world to recognize those who have been with Jesus. The weakness of the flesh is also revealed. It involves infinitely more than a proneness to sleep. The possibility of the unity of the wicked, and the total lack of sympathy among them for the godly is confirmed. There is also a picture of the jeopardy of the night, and of sitting among those who are of the night, even if it is for convenience sake, or while beholding how they conduct themselves toward Jesus. There are certain liabilities associated with being among the ungodly, especially when it is not necessary, or the responsibilities of life do not require such associations. It becomes evident in this text that a man – even a select disciple of Jesus – can overestimate his strength. We also see that repentance involves an association of the Word of the Lord with the sin that has been committed. There is also the matter of godly sorrow, and its relationship to repentance. The gentleness of Jesus is revealed, as well as the aggressiveness of the devil. There is a sense in which this evening is a microcosm of the conflict between the religious world and Jesus, and the unbelievers and those who follow Jesus. The nature of both worlds is more clearly seen here, when it was night.

“ **Mark 14:66** *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.”*

REMEMBER WHAT IS HAPPENING TO PETER! It is essential that we remember

what is actually happening to Peter at this time. Prior to this, when the disciples and Jesus were together, Jesus told Peter, “*behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*” (Luke 22:32). Immediately after that Jesus told him, “*Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me*” (Luke 22:34). Mark tells us Jesus said “*before the cock crow twice*” (Mk 14:30). Therefore, we are being exposed to a brief period of time during which Satan is throwing everything he has at Peter.

THOU WAST ALSO WITH JESUS. Now “*one of the maids of the high priest*” confronts Peter. Already we have learned that the high priest had a palace, many servants, and even an armed militia. It probably was difficult for some to even associate the high priest with God, intercessions for men, and the service of God. One of Caiaphas’ maids notices Peter “*warming himself.*” Luke tells us that she studied Peter, for she “*earnestly looked at him,*” or “*looked closely at him*” NIV (Lk 22:56). I do not doubt that, apart from his features, Peter even looked out of place in that setting. He will find that, although obtaining warmth is commendable, it is not wise to do it at the wrong fire. All three of the Gospels say that this woman charged Peter with being “*with*” Jesus. She was not referring to a particular occasion when Peter was “*with*” Jesus, such as in the Temple, one of the synagogues, or even in the garden. She was rather identifying him as one of Jesus’ disciples, whom we know, were appointed to be “*with Him*” (Mk 3:14). This was no doubt accentuated by the fact that he entered the palace when Jesus was brought in. Perhaps this very woman was the one who had admitted him at the instruction of John. In other words, she sees Peter as not being with the servants of the high priest, or the soldiers, or any of the others who were present for the trial of Jesus.

HE DENIED BEFORE THEM ALL. Mark says Peter “*denied,*” or “*denied it.*” NKJV That is, he denied that he was with Jesus, or was one of His disciples. Matthew tells us that Peter denied Jesus “*before them all*” (Matt 26:70). That is, Peter addressed the woman and those to whom she had made her statement. This response constituted a denial that he knew Jesus, for that is what Jesus said he would deny (Lk 22:34).

I KNOW NOT NEITHER UNDERSTAND. Peter affirms that he does not know what the woman is talking about. “*I know not what thou sayest,*” or “*I do not know what you are talking about*” NASB (Matt 26:70). Luke records Peter’s words with the prophecy of Jesus in mind, “*Woman, I know Him not*” (Lk 22:57).

HE DENIED HIM. Luke says that Peter actually denied Jesus Himself: “*And he denied Him , saying . . .*” (Luke 22:57). Both Matthew and Mark state that Peter simply said he did not know what the woman was talking about. However, Luke interprets what was actually done when Peter said those words. By saying this, he was denying Jesus – that is, he was stating that he had no affiliation with Jesus at all.

WHAT IS A DENIAL? Precisely what does it mean to “*deny*” Christ? It is surely a serious offence, for Jesus said, “*But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven*” (Matt 10:33). Denying Jesus is refusing to acknowledge any association with Jesus. The word itself means, to disregard the interests of, acting entirely unlike the person, and deserting the cause of one. THAYER Here Peter denials verbally, but denial can also be done in one’s works – that is conducting one’s life unlike Jesus: i.e. “*But in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (Tit 1:16). Therefore, when a person speaks or acts in contradiction of Jesus’ words and manners, that person has denied Christ. Moral failures within the church constitute a denial of Jesus in works. When people modify their behavior to remove any suspicion that they belong to Jesus, they have, in fact

denied Him. The only reason Jesus will not deny Peter is because He had prayed for him that his faith fail not. In other words, Peter will recover.

HE WENT OUT, AND THE COCK CREW. Peter then went out into the porch, or entryway. Only Mark records the first crowing. It was at this point that the cock crowed for the first time. Some version omit this report (NASB, NIV, RSV). However, Jesus had said, “*before the cock crow twice , thou shalt deny Me thrice*” (Mk 14:30) – and that is in all of the versions. Mark, then, has provided us with what appears to be a technicality. However, it is actually identifying the precision with which this entire incident is being carried out. Note that Peter apparently makes no association with the crowing cock with Jesus’ words.

“ 69 And a maid saw him again , and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70 And he denied it again . And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.”

Now Peter has moved to another place, and yet he is not safe from the accusers. The word of the Lord will be fulfilled, even though it be a most bitter experience for Peter.

ANOTHER MAID SAW HIM. Mark says “*a maid saw him again.*” This was not the same maid that saw Peter “*again,*” but means that he was seen “*again,*” for the second time. Matthew tells us “ **another maid saw him**” (Matt 26:71). Luke reports that “*after a little while another saw him*” (Lk 22:58). **Remember, we are witnessing Satan sifting a man.** He is stalking Peter as a roaring lion, seeking to devour him (1 Pet 5:8). He is throwing everything that he can at Peter, just as he did with Job (Job 1:12-19; 2:7). We know the limitations God placed on Satan when he sifted Job. First, he could not touch Job personally, and second, he could not take his life. In this case, we only know that Jesus prayed Peter’s faith would not fail. And, you may rest assured that God did hear the prayer of His only begotten Son!

THIS IS ONE OF THEM. The first maid said that Peter was **with** Jesus. The second said he was “*one of them*” – that is, one of Jesus’ followers. Luke reports that this maid spoke personally to Peter: “ **Thou art also one of them**” (Luke 22:58). Matthew records that she said, “*This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth*” (Matt 26:71). Here the issue was not what Peter believed or taught, but the one with whom he was identified. So far as heaven is concerned, that is still the ultimate issue – and you cannot remain with Jesus without it impacting upon what you say and do. The influence of Jesus cannot be avoided by those who abide with Him. In this case, Peter is not abiding with Jesus, but has become a spectator, interested in seeing what was going to happen – “*to see the end,*” or “*see the outcome*” NASB (Matt 26:58)..

In his life, Peter did not merely happen to be where Jesus was, but had chosen to continue with Him, be with Him, and hear and obey His words. That is what it means to be “*one of them.*” It means to be a follower who has forsaken “*all*” (Matt 19:27; Lk 14:33), takes up his cross “*daily*” (Lk 9:23), and follows Jesus (John 12:26). “*Them*” describes those who hear Christ’s voice (John 10:27), and will not follow a stranger (John 10:5).

HE DENIED IT AGAIN. “*He denied it again.*” The second time Peter denies he is in any way affiliated with Jesus. Matthew reports, “*And again he denied with an oath , I do not know the man*” (Matt 26:72). Luke says Peter responded, “*Man, I am not*” (Luke 22:58) – that is, *I am not one of them.* Once again, we are beholding Satan sifting a follower of Jesus.

YOUR SPEECH BETRAYS YOU. A “*little while after,*” those who were standing by

addressed Peter directly saying that he was surely “*one of them*,” because he was a Galilean, and his speech gave him away. Matthew says, “*for thy speech bewrayeth thee*,” or “*your accent gives you away*” NIV (Matt 26:73). Luke says that “*about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean*” (Luke 22:59). Peter did not speak in the same manner as the others. It was obvious that he was not from that area, as the Galileans spoke in a more crude fashion. John tells us that one of the men who addressed him was related to Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off. “*One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?*” (John 18:26).

HE CURSED AND SWORE, AND DENIED HIM AGAIN. This time Peter is more vehement in his denial. He “*began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom, ye speak*.” One version reads, “*call down curses on himself, and he swore to them*.” NIV Matthew records the same words (Matt 26:74). This was not cursing and swearing, or profanity, as we use the terms today. It was more like taking an oath before God – i.e. “*I swear by the Lord*” (2 Sam 19:7). Abraham took an oath before God not to take any gift from the king of Sodom (Gen 14:22-23). David took an oath, calling a curse upon himself if he did not do what he said he would do (2 Sam 3:35). David wrote of the man who could abide in the tabernacle of God as one who “*swaureth to his own hurt and changeth not*” (Psa 15:4). The princes of the congregation of Israel took a similar oath when they promised to spare the Gibeonites, taking an oath and keeping it lest the wrath of God come upon them (Josh 9:19-21).

Peter was not, as men would say today, *cussing*. Rather, he was swearing before God, calling down wrath upon himself if what he was saying was not the truth. No doubt by doing this, he thought to remove all doubt from the minds of his accusers. As it is written, “*For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife*” (Heb 6:16; Ex 22:11). Of course, this only complicated things for Peter, for now he was calling upon the Lord to stand behind what he had said. This was no doubt spoken rashly and without due consideration, for that is the nature of an “*idle word*.” Nevertheless, it constituted the denial to be even more serious than before.

“ 72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.”

THE SECOND TIME THE COCK CREW. In confirmation of the word of Jesus, that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crowed twice, the sound of the crowing cock filled the air for the second time. Matthew says, “*immediately the cock crew*” (Matt 26:74), as though eager to fulfill the word of the Lord. Luke adds an additional perspective reporting that the cock crew “*immediately, while he yet spake*” (Luke 22:60). The actual oaths that Peter took are not recorded, lest we reproachfully of him. However, while he was in the process of speaking them the cock interrupted what he was saying to fill the night air with a stern reminder that the words of Jesus will never pass away (Matt 24:35). This time, Peter will take note of what is heard, even though he did not do so the first time the cock crowed.

THE LORD LOOKED AT PETER. Luke records that at this time “*the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter*” (Lk 22:61). He was not looking at Peter while he vigorously denied any association with or knowledge of Himself. Peter’s words, at least the most recent ones, were while the back of Jesus was toward him. In my judgment, they could never have been said if Peter had been viewing the face of Jesus. Thus, in a deliberate move, Jesus “*turned*” and “*looked straight at Peter*.” NIV That look will end the present phase of Satan’s sifting, as when the word of God placed a line of demarcation on the trying of Job. From this point to the time when Peter will be martyred, he will never again deny Jesus, or claim no association with Him.

PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD. Commensurate with the look of Jesus, Peter recalled what Jesus had said: “*Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.*” Oh, what a bitter recollection that must have been! Luke says that Peter remembered “*how*” the Lord had said this (Lk 22:61). He no doubt also recalled how he had said at that time, “*Although all shall be offended, yet will not I*” (Mark 14:29), and “*Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death*” (Luke 22:33). Matthew says that **after** Jesus had said Peter would deny him three times, Peter responded, “*Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee*” (Matt 26:35). However, at the time, Peter did not have the faintest conception of how fiercely Satan can sift a person. He had been under the protective care of Jesus for the last 3½ years, and had not confronted the ferocity of the devil. Because of this, he had overestimated his own strength, not even taking into account the “*power of darkness.*” (Lk 22:53), but had only regarded the opposition of men. Later, shortly before he was about to put off his earthly tabernacle, he wrote with a wider perspective of the truth. “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet 5:8). He knew first hand what havoc Satan can wreak, even when the subject he is attacking has been prayed for by Jesus, that their faith fail not. I do not doubt that Peter thought his faith was totally void at this time. However, it is not his assessment that will determine the outcome, but Jesus’ intercession.

Those who flirt with spiritual danger do well to recall the case of Peter. He was willingly in the camp of the enemy, even though he had heard Jesus tell those who came to arrest Him, “*Let these go their way*” (John 18:8). When professing believers take it upon themselves to company with the ungodly, they at once enter into an environment of danger. This is why the Psalmist, in an age of spiritual twilight, said, “*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful*” (Psa 1:1),

HE WENT OUT AND WEPT BITTERLY. Concerning the word that Jesus had spoken to Peter, Mark says, “*when he thought thereon, he wept.*” His mind was now devoted to the words of Jesus, and it was a bitter experience. That is what sin does. Both Matthew and Luke report that he “*went out and wept bitterly*” (Matt 26:75; Lk 22:62). Every major version, both literal and paraphrased, say the same thing – “*wept bitterly.*” The Amplified Bible adds, “*that is, with painfully moving grief.*” The word “*bitterly,*” as defined lexically, means “*with poignant [painfully affecting the feelings] grief,*” THAYER “*violent and uncontrolled weeping that expresses despair,*” FRIBERG and “*feeling mental agony.*” LOUWA-NIDA Tradition records “*that all his life long Peter hereafter never could hear a cock crow without failing on his knees and weeping.*” PULPIT

Only the soul that has been smitten with the enormity of guilt has any idea about what Peter experienced at this point. This was an example of “*godly sorrow*” that “*works repentance*” (2 Cor 7:10). It is an experience where there is no longer any excuse for sin. A sense of the indignation of the Almighty hovers over the head, and all self confidence flies away like a wounded dove. Sin is serious enough to cause this kind of response, even when it is traceable to the sifting of Satan. You will not hear Peter saying that the devil made him do this, or that he was unable to control himself. All such excuses only cripple the soul. The truth of the matter is that shame and reproach are associated with every sin. Every sin offends Christ, and is the result of yielding to the wicked one. Peter knew that at this time, and wept bitterly.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 162

Mark 15:1 *“And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. 2 And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto Him, Thou sayest it. 3 And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing. 4 And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against Thee. 5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.”*

(Mark 15:1-5; Matt 27:1-13; Luke 23:1-4; John 18:28-32)

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish council has now agreed that Jesus is worthy of death. This is based upon His confession that He was *“the Christ, the Son of the Blessed,”* and that His accusers would see Him sitting at the right hand of God and coming in the heavens. This confession established the borders of the conflict. His enemies could not condemn Him for any of His works (John 10:32) – and they really were not the issue, even with His enemies. It was who He was and what He said that moved them to indignation. Those two things still remain the issue with men. Should the professed church ever get to the business of expounding the Person and words of Jesus, it would directly impact upon the whole of their program and the number of their constituents. Men can tolerate a Jesus who fits into their own preferences and ambitions. And, indeed, for a while Jesus may appear to do just that, as when He fed the multitudes and healed their sick. The expression of such mercies, however, are like a time of testing that establish whether or not the people want the real Jesus – who brings an end to sin, establishes righteousness, and prepares men for the day of judgment and glory. Eventually, men must deal with what Jesus has said of Himself. It is precisely at this point that Satan marshals his host against the Lord and His Christ. Men will now be forced to deal with who Jesus is, and what He has said, particularly of Himself. They will either be saved or lost upon the basis of their assessment of these two realities.

“ Mark 15:1 *And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.”*

THEY HELD A CONSULTATION. In the morning, or when the sun rose, straightway, or immediately, the leaders held *“a consultation.”* Matthew says, *“When the morning was come”* (Matt 27:1). John says, *“and it was early”* (John 18:28). It had been a long night, and they had no sleep. Yet, as the wicked are prone to do, they were eager to *“do evil with both hands”* (Mic 7:3). They would not delay to carry out the sentence they had imposed, giving no thought to their own convenience or comfort. That is the kind of mind-set Satan fosters in his victims. They become so intent upon doing evil that they will suppress even wholesome natural desires.

It is important to note that the opposition of Jesus was attended by much thought. It was deliberate and calculating. Their strategy was thought out, and bathed in consultation. *“They plotted,”* NKJV *“took counsel,”* NASB and *“came to the decision.”* NIV They *“conferred together,”* NRSV *“held a council,”* GENEVA and *“discussed their next step.”* NLT Speaking of this very conspiracy, the Psalmist said the people imagined *“a vain thing”* (Psa 2:1). In a fervent prayer for boldness, the early church referred to this occasion as people imagining *“vain things”* (Acts 4:25). That vanity did not have to do with Christ’s death, for that was something appointed in heaven. It rather had to do with thinking they could rid themselves of the hampering presence of Jesus. The Psalmist said that in their opposition they were really saying, *“Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us”* (Psa 2:3). However, the Psalmist continues, *“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision”* (Psa 2:4). In quoting from this Psalm, the early church declared why God laughed at their opposition of His Christ: They said the people *“gathered together for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:27-28).

What these wicked men did not know is that they were not only gathering against Jesus of Nazareth – *“His Anointed”* – but against the LORD God as well (Psa 2:2). Whoever does not honor Jesus, also dishonors God (John 5:23). Jesus said, *“He that hateth me hateth My Father also”* (John 15:23). The status of a person before God rises or falls upon their attitude toward His Son. Considering the appalling absence of a proper view of Jesus, this has some rather alarming ramifications.

JUDAS MAKES AN APPEARANCE. Matthew records that prior to delivering Jesus to Pilate, Judas made an appearance before the chief priests and elders. He did this *when “he saw that Jesus was condemned.”* It was then that he *“repented himself,”* feeling remorse and sorrow, but not the kind that *“worketh repentance unto salvation”* (2 Cor 7:10). He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, *“I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood”* (Mat 27:4). With complete indifference, the leaders replied, *“What is that to us? . . . That’s your responsibility”* NIV Judas then hurled the money into the Temple, *“departed, and went and hanged himself”* (Matt 27:5). Alas, he had crossed a moral line from which he could not return. He sinned a sin from which he could not recover.

In a sterling display of their hypocrisy the chief priests *“took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood”* (Matt 27:6). They had interpreted this to be true from the Mosaic stipulation, *“Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God”* (Deut 23:18). A *“dog”* was a male prostitute, or a sodomite. NIV In some sense, the deed of Judas fell into that class – a man that was hired to bring a form of gratification to chief priests and elders: the betrayal of their enemy into their hands. They were so exacting in making sure they did the right thing, that they refused to put this blood money into the Temple treasury. Instead, they purchased a field with it, in which strangers, or non-Jews, could be buried. That field was henceforth referred to as *“The field of blood.”* Matthew states that in doing this they fulfilled the Scriptures, doing *“as the Lord appointed”* (Matt 27:6-10). We assume the purchase was accomplished some time later.

JESUS IS BOUND AND DELIVERED TO PILATE. Now the leaders bind Jesus, carry Him away, and deliver Him to Pilate. John says they *“led . . . Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early.”* This was called the *“Praetorium,”* NKJV and was *“the palace of the Roman governor.”* NIV However, in keeping with their penchant for keeping the Law, *“they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover”* (John 18:28). In this we see how easily carnality and corrupt religion can be mingled

together. Once religion is corrupted, there is no end to what can be done against the Lord and His Christ – the only limitation being the determinations of God. This is a factor that must be taken into consideration when one embarks on a sinful life.

“ 2 And Pilate asked Him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. 3 And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing.”

WHAT ACCUSATION DO YOU BRING? John records that, upon their arrival at Pilate’s hall of judgment, Pilate came to the leaders (for they had not entered into the hall itself) and asked them, *“What accusation bring ye against this man?”* (John 18:29). It is not that he had any particular interest in Jesus. He was rather acting in strict accord with the judicial Law, which required the presentation and substantiation of a legitimate charge.

The people quickly responded, *“If He were not a malefactor [evildoer], we would not have delivered him up unto thee”* (John 18:30). Unwilling to put up with their nonsense, Pilate responded, *“Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law.”* We know that Pilate had no respect for the Jews or their Law, because he had once slaughtered some Galileans, mingling their blood with that of the sacrifices they offered (Lk 13:1). However, as will be confirmed later, he preferred to have nothing to do with this case. Notwithstanding this circumstance, the Jews responded, *“It is not lawful for us to put any man to death”* (John 18:31). By using the word *“lawful,”* they were not referring to the law of Moses, which often commanded them to put people to death (Lev 20:2; Deut 13:9; 17:7). It is generally agreed that this had reference to the removal of their right to execute people under Roman Law. However, they had not thought of this before, when they had determined to stone Jesus (John 8:3,59; 7:25). Just prior to Jesus’ betrayal these very leaders had assembled together and *“consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill Him”* (Matt 26:4). This seeming submission to Roman law was only a cunning way to avoid raising the indignation of the common Jewish people, who would not, at that time, have consented to Him being killed. That is why they wanted Judas to betray Him *“in the absence of the multitude.”*

Over and above this circumstance, John adds this remark concerning this response. *“That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die”* (John 18:32). That *“saying”* included Him being lifted up on the cross (John 3:14; 12:32), being crucified (Matt 20:19; 26:2), and being delivered to the Gentiles (Lk 18:32). Thus, when Jesus would be put to death, it would be according to Divine determination (Acts 4:28).

Luke tells us that prior to being questioned by Pilate, *“they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King”* (Luke 23:2). This was in stark contrast with the words of Jesus Himself who said, *“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s”* (Matt 22:21). However, these people had no interest in either truth or justice. They wanted to rid themselves of Jesus, and are willing to do or say anything that will contribute to that cause.

ART THOU KING OF THE JEWS? Now Jesus is brought to stand *“before the governor,”* Pilate himself (Matt 27:11). John tells us that at this point *“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus”* (John 18:33). It is the charge that the Jews have made concerning Jesus saying He was a king that provokes Pilate’s question. *“Art Thou king of the Jews?”* He does not ask Jesus if He is perverting the nation, or leading it astray. He does not ask if He is a malefactor, or a doer of evil. Neither, indeed, does he ask Jesus if He has advocated withholding taxes from Caesar. Instead, he asks the Man before him if He is *“the King of the Jews.”* All four Gospels record this question (Matt 27:11; Mk 15:2; Lk 23:3; John 18:33). It is one which the Lord **will** answer. There is no record of Him ever being asked this question before.

THOU SAYEST IT. Jesus answered, *“Thou sayest it.”* The literal translation is, *“You are saying.”* The idea is, *“It is as you say”* NKJV, AMPLIFIED Even though Pilate had not intended to say so, he **has** said the truth. This also indicates that he knew enough to make further inquiry into the matter. This was also God speaking through Pilate as He did through Caiaphas (John 11:50-51). In both cases, the accuracy was unintended by men. The only other time we read this expression, *“the King of the Jews,”* is when *“wise men came from the east,”* seeking the One who was *“born King of the Jews”* (Matt 2:2). Although Jesus was not **only** the King the Jews, He was, indeed, precisely that, being appointed by God to that role.

THEY ACCUSED HIM OF MANY THINGS. At this point, *“the chief priests accused”* Jesus *“of many things.”* Matthew says He was accused *“of the chief priests and elders”* (Matt 27:11). Luke says Pilate answered *“I find no fault in this man,”* to which the Jews replied with unparalleled fierceness, *“He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place”* (Luke 23:5). This session was especially volatile.

HE ANSWERED NOTHING. In fulfillment of the prophets, Jesus *“opened not His mouth.”* He was *“as a sheep before her shearers is dumb”* (Psa 39:9; Isa 53:7). He acknowledged He was Christ, the Son of God, to Caiaphas. He acknowledged that He was the *“King of the Jews”* before Pilate. However, He would not respond to the false charges of the people.

“ 4 And Pilate asked Him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. 5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled.”

PILATE SENT HIM TO HEROD. Luke records that as soon as Pilate heard about Jesus preaching in Galilee, he asked if He was a Galilean. Upon hearing that he was, and knowing that Galilee was within Herod’s jurisdiction, and thinking to rid himself of this case, *“he sent Him to Herod, who himself was at Jerusalem at that time”* (Lk 23:6-7). Upon seeing Jesus, Herod *“was exceeding glad,”* for he had wanted to see him for a long time, *“because he had heard many things of Him.”* In fact, *“he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him”* (Lk 23:8). It is written that Herod questioned Jesus *“with many words,”* or *“questioned Him at some length.”* NASB However, Jesus also maintained His silence before Herod (Lk 23:9). The *“chief priests and scribes”* had followed Jesus to Herod, and *“vehemently accused Him”* before him (Lk 23:10). It was then that *“Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate”* NKJV (Luke 23:11). It is also said of that occasion, *“And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves”* (Luke 23:12).

PILATE ASKED HIM AGAIN. It is at this point, upon the return of Jesus from Herod, that Pilate again interrogated the Lord. *“Do You answer nothing?”* (Mk 15:4). As when He was before the high priest and the council, the silence of Jesus contradicted all notions of legal propriety. This was an opportunity for Jesus to exonerate His name, and confirm that the charges leveled against Him were totally false. His rights had been violated, and injustice was having its way – at least that is the way that is appeared. However, more was happening than what appeared to men! The will of the Lord was being carried out in meticulous detail – a will that involved Him using dishonorable vessels that were in His house (2 Tim 2:20). Jesus knew precisely what was happening, and did not lift His voice, for that would have conflicted with the will of God. Jesus came to do His Father’s will, and keeping silence was part of that doing.

Solomon wrote that there is *“a time to keep silence,”* and this was such a time (Eccl 3:2). As *“the wisdom of God”* (1 Cor 1:24), Jesus was able to identify such a time, and fully comply with it. It seems to me that those who wear the name of Jesus do well to also be discerning of such times. Paul spoke of such occasions when he said, *“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own*

business” (1 Thess 4:11). Although not always easy, this is to be done.

BEHOLD HOW MANY THINGS THAT WITNESS AGAINST THEE. “*See how many things they testify against You!*” (Mk 15:4). The specified charges that are recorded include the following. 1) He was a malefactor, or evildoer (John 18:30). 2) He perverted the nation (Lk 23:2). 3) He forbade the people to pay tribute to Caesar (Lk 23:2). 4) He said that he was a king (Lk 23:2). 5) He was stirring up the people (Lk 23:5). It is also stated that “*He was accused of the chief priests and elders*” (Matt 27:12), “*the chief priests accused Him of many things*” (Mk 15:3). There is a certain ambiguity that characterizes all of the charges brought against Jesus. How foolish they must have sounded to Pilate. The only charge that might have concerned him was that of Jesus stirring up the people, and creating unrest in his political turf. However, he must have known this was not true, for his militia had never been called out to quell any disturbances caused by the Prince of peace. Jesus did not stir up political unrest, and there is not the slightest indication that He is involved in such things today.

JESUS STILL ANSWERED NOTHING. The second time Jesus keeps His silence. He did this before Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and now again before Pilate. We are speaking of a lengthy period of time that commenced on the prior evening, and has now extended well into the next day. Along with the interrogations, He has been bound (Mk 15:1), spit upon (Matt 26:67a), pummeled with fists (Matt 26:67b), buffeted while His face was covered (Mk 14:65), slapped with open hands (Matt 26:67c), mocked before the council (Matt 26:68), He was blasphemed (Lk 22:65), and mocked by Herod and his men of war (Lk 23:11). In addition to all of this, He had heard Peter deny Him three times. Yet, the firm heart of Jesus remained strong, and His determination to do the will of His Father never waned. He still did not speak in His own defense!

And why was this so? It was because Jesus had lived His entire life unto His Father. He had cultured His spirit, and had never become absorbed in the ways of the world. In this the word of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah was fulfilled: “*His righteousness, it sustained Him*” (Isa 59:16). When we assume a godly posture in life, it will also sustain us during trial.

PILATE MARVELED. Matthew says that Pilate “*marveled greatly*” (Matt 27:14). It was during this interrogation that Jesus told Pilate His Kingdom was not of the world, and that He came to bear witness of the truth (John 18:34-37). Thus Pilate is dumbfounded by the presence and words of the Lord Jesus. The text will indicate that he felt unequal to the challenge of trying Jesus, and would have preferred to back out of the whole matter. However, he was caught in the net of Divine purpose, the God’s hook was in his nose.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 163

Mark 15:6 *“Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy. 11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.”*

(Mark 15:6-11; Matt 27:15-20; Luke 23:14-20; John 18: 39-40)

INTRODUCTION

The death of Christ had been determined by the God of heaven. In fact, that is why He was sent into the world – to lay down His life, and take it up again (John 10:17-18). This was required to extricate men from sin: the sins of humanity had to be placed upon a sinless person, who would absorb not only the responsibility for that sin, but would bear the curse that was due to the sinners. Notwithstanding this Divine determination, it was not carried out independently of human involvement, for not only must God be shown to be just in this salvation, but man must be shown to be wholly in need of it. Men, being moved along by Satan, would demand the death of Jesus in contradiction of all reason – even Gentile reasoning. They will not be casual in demanding the death of Jesus, but will press Pilate to carry it out, even over his objections, as well as the obvious violation of even human rationality. I do not believe men would ordinarily provide all of the details associated with the condemnation of a man to death. Normally, in criminal cases, the spotlight is thrown upon the **deeds** of the lawbreaker, confirming that justice was being carried out. However, in this case, there were no legitimate charges brought against the one being tried, and even Pilate knew it. The inspired record, therefore, provides the details of the procedure involved in the trying of Jesus, thus highlighting the sinfulness of those who delivered Him to Pilate. This is more than a mere report! It is a confirmation of the fundamental and unalterable sinfulness of men. It justifies God laying the iniquities of us all upon Jesus, for there was no other way to expiate them.

“Mark 15:6 *Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.”*

A CUSTOM: HE RELEASED UNTO THEM ONE PRISONER. The feast of reference is the Passover Feast. John declares that Pilate specifically mentioned this fact. *“But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover”* (John 18:39). The account of Christ’s betrayal,

judgment, and death contains at least eighteen references to the Passover Feast. This was the feast mentioned by name, that Jesus observed with His disciples the night before this trial (Matt 26:2,17-19; Mk 14:1,12-16; Lk 22:17-15; John 18:28,39; 19:14). It is as though the Spirit underscores this fact in order to associate the death of Jesus with deliverance. This was the first and most important of three annual feasts of the Jews, the other two feasts being Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. These were feasts where the male population of the Jews appeared before the Lord. The Passover was a single day that was followed by, and closely associated with, the seven day feast of unleavened bread (Lev 23:5-6).

Mark says Pilate released one prisoner, of the people's choosing, on this day. Matthew says he was "*wont*," or accustomed to do this, allowing the choice of the prisoner to be made by the Jews (Matt 27:15). Luke refers to this release as something that was "*of necessity*" (Lk 23:17). John records Pilate saying it was a "*custom*" of the Jews themselves (John 18:39). We do not know the source of this custom, but it is assumed that it was allowed by the Romans to keep the Jews peaceable under their rule. Such a practice violated the Law of Moses, which insisted that the transgressor die "*without mercy under two or three witnesses*" (Heb 10:28). This was apparently a Roman concession to the Jews, with which they were quite willing to live, even though it contradicted the Law that God had given them. This confirms that their appeal to their Law (John 19:7) was nothing more than hypocrisy. They could live with an annual breaking of that Law by a mere "*custom*," without the slightest twinge of conscience.

Now, Pilate will attempt to capitalize on this "*custom*" in order to be released from this most uncomfortable situation. However, he will not be able to escape what is happening.

PILATE CONFIRMS THE INJUSTICE OF IT ALL. Luke records Pilate's appeal to the people to release Jesus, telling them that their charges could not be supported, and that, after diligent search, both he and Herod found nothing worthy of death in Jesus. "*Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him*" (Luke 23:14-15).

It is a sad state of affairs when worldly men, even especially ungodly ones, can see through the illogical nature of false religion! We are seeing something of this in our time, when several Christian leaders are being examined by the government for certain improprieties. There is an irreconcilable conflict between the lives and the claims of the pretenders. However, no such contradiction could be found in Jesus – not so much as one. He was, in every sense of the word, "*separate from sinners*" – not only by claim, but in the light of the most exacting examination (Heb 7:26). Remember that Jesus is, as John states, "*that eternal life*" (1 John 1:2). That is, He is the embodiment, or incarnation, of the life that we receive through Him. We should expect, therefore, that those who possess eternal life, or the ones in whom Jesus resides, will bear some noticeable resemblance to Him in this regard.

PILATE'S DETERMINATION. Luke tells us that Pilate put forth a resolution, himself making the choice of who should be released. "*I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him*" (Luke 23:16). As the record will confirm, the chastening was severe enough to have elicited the sympathy of the people. Here, then, was an opportunity for the people to change their minds on the basis of cold and hard logic, and even appearance. As Peter would say to the Jewish leaders some days later, Pilate "*was determined to let Him go*" (Acts 3:15). This is the first expression of that determination, but it will not be the last.

At its root, sin is fundamentally unreasonable. It is no more possible to justify it than it was to rationalize the death of Jesus as a malefactor. When men attempt to explain sin, they are conducting themselves like the Jews who sought to justify the death of Jesus. There are times when even the worst of the world know the conduct of professing Christians is wrong.

A NOTABLE PRISONER. We are now introduced to Barabbas who was bound in prison together with those who had fomented an insurrection, or revolt against the Roman government. Mark says he had “*committed murder in the insurrection.*” Matthew refers to him as “*a notable prisoner*” (Matt 27:16). Luke says he was in prison “*for a certain sedition . . . and for murder*” (Lk 23:16). John says “*Now Barabbas was a robber*” (John 18:39). That is, he was a criminal before the uprising, and was not merely a demonstrator against Rome. Unlike Jesus of Nazareth, **all** of the charges against him had been fully confirmed and justified.

“8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.”

THE MULTITUDE WANT PILATE TO HONOR THE CUSTOM. The Jews, strictly objected to Roman rule, fearing, as the chief priests and Pharisees had said, that “*the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation*” (John 11:48). However, now, instead of seeing the Romans as a threat, they sought one of their favors, to which they had grown accustomed. In fact, now the tradition would actually serve their purpose. The merging of a political custom and the Passover feast was quite acceptable – especially now that it would assist the leaders in getting rid of Jesus, who was a thorn in their side.

PILATE BRINGS UP RELEASING JESUS. Pilate is quite willing to content the people, not that he had any regard for them, but because it best served his own purpose. From the lower point of view, it would not look well for the governor to have continued unrest among the Jews, whom he governed. There had already been an insurrection among the people, and he surely thought to remove any possibility of another one arising.

Mark records that Pilate asked the people if they would prefer he release “*the King of the Jews*” to them. John’s record of this event says precisely the same thing (John 18:39). Luke says that “*the third time*” he spoke to them, Pilate said he would chasten Jesus and release Him (Lk 23:16). Matthew records some additional details: “*Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?*” (Matt 27:17). Although I doubt that these were all said at the same time, they do give us an accurate picture of Pilate’s determination to release Jesus, doing it in strict accord with Law, and not out of any regard for Jesus Himself. First, he took the responsibility for the decision upon himself, and said this is what he would do: chastise Jesus and let him go. That would absolve the people of any responsibility in the matter: he would make the decision about who would go free. Second, he refers to “*the King of the Jews,*” as though comparing Jesus with an insurrectionist. In this he was pointing out that it was legally their responsibility to handle this case, for Jesus had not aligned himself against Rome, as Barabbas did. Third, as Matthew states, he gave them a choice between Barabbas and Jesus “*which is called Christ.*” Here the choice was between an insurrectionist and one who was anointed by God Almighty. This was a choice between a murderer, who took life, and one to gave life, even publically raising people from the dead. It was a choice between a thief who took from people, and One who came to give to very same people.

As though unintentionally rubbing salt into their wounds, Pilate said they had of custom, that he should release one of the Jewish prisoners to them “*at the Passover*” (John 18:39). Thus

the Jewish leaders have been subjected to certain facts that should have awakened their conscience, and stirred them to a sober reflection upon what they were doing. First, Pilate has said that their charges could not be proved. Second, he affirmed that both he and Herod could find nothing worthy of death in Jesus. Third, he gave them the choice of releasing someone against whom no charge could be substantiated, over someone who was a convicted robber and murderer. Fourth, he referred to Jesus as *“the King of the Jews.”* Fifth, he also referred to Jesus as He who *“is called Christ.”* Sixth, he reminded them that it was the Passover. Behold how hard sin makes a people, so that such things have no effect upon them at all.

HE KNEW WHY THEY HAD DELIVERED JESUS. Both Matthew and Mark record that Pilate *“knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy”* (Matt 27:18; Mk 15:10). Other versions read *“out of jealousy,”* NRSV and *“sheer spite.”* WEYMOUTH The meaning of the Greek word that is translated *“envy”* is *“jealousy over the good success of another,”* FRIBERG *“a state of ill will toward someone because of some real or presumed advantage experienced by such a person.”* LOUW-NIDA The definition of the English word *“envy”* is *“a painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage.”* MERRIAM-WEBSTER

Pilate knew that the people had not come to him out of any regard for Rome or Caesar. They were not interested in promoting peace, or exposing some threat to the Roman government. **It was the spreading popularity of Jesus, and the people’s acceptance of, and preference for, Him that had agitated the chief priests, elders, Pharisees, and scribes.** Jesus had taken the attention away from them, and reduced their value in the eyes of the people. They were afraid of losing their position and prominence, and had therefore determined to rid themselves of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, there is something to be seen here. Jesus does compete against dead and stereotyped religion. He is a threat to empty religious tradition and those who promote their own interests. He exposes charlatans through His presence, teaching, and influence. There is no way to escape this impact. Those who receive Jesus, embracing what He declares, will find a growing disdain for religious sham and pretense. They will not tolerate spiritual deadness, and will withdraw from it in order that they might take hold of eternal life.

“ 11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.”

PILATE’S WIFE WARNS HIM. Matthew alone records the interruption of a messenger from Pilate’s wife. She delivered a word that was like a voice from heaven – one which Pilate would suppress, even though it would be with considerable difficulty. Matthew records, *“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him”* (Matt 27:19). Note that this message was not received until he had assumed the official posture of a judge. The message was to the point, with no introductory frills or rhetoric. *“Have nothing to do with that just Man!”* Other versions read, *“that righteous Man,”* NASB *“that innocent Man,”* NIV *“that upright Man,”* BBE *“that good Man,”* LIVING and *“just and upright Man.”* AMPLIFIED A single Greek word is used here that is translated *“just man.”* The original word has a strong single meaning, *“righteous, observing divine and human laws; one who is such as he ought to be.”* THAYER In other words, Jesus was a Person against whom no legitimate charge of any kind could be brought. Personally, socially, politically, or religiously – no charge against Him could possibly be supported. He was impeccably upright in every sense of the word, and in every facet of life. **Remember, Jesus is the Divine nature being lived out before men!** While no honest person can confess that he perfectly reflects the Master in life, this **is** their fervent desire, and the objective toward which they

are progressing. Furthermore, that progress will be apparent to their peers.

The appeal of Pilate's wife was not to be indifferent toward Jesus, but to withdraw from any involvement in the prosecution of Him. She was pleading with him not to side with those who were against Jesus, or to assume any posture that required him to render a judgment against Him.

Scripturally, this is all we know about Pilate's wife. She is not mentioned elsewhere in the Word of God. Ecclesiastical tradition presents her as a convert to Judaism. The Greek Orthodox church has canonized her, making her an officially recognized saint. PULPIT COMMENTARY However, none of those claims can be substantiated.

It is obvious that in some way she had been made aware of Jesus, else her dream would have had no significance. We do not know what she dreamed, only that it was a "*painful experience . . . because of Him.*" AMPLIFIED In some way that dream had to do with Jesus, for she said it was "*because of Him.*" Other versions read, "by reason of Him," GENEVA "about Him," GWN "concerning Him," LIVING "through Him," WEYMOUTH and "caused by Him." WILLIAMS The language itself can be taken to mean that the dream was concerning Him, was even caused by Him, or that Jesus was the ground or reason for the dream. It seems to me that behind the scenes, this was God Himself providing another confirmation of the absolute uprightness of Jesus. It caused Pilate's wife to be fearful about opposing Him in any way. It would be a blessed thing if such a wholesome fear was more prominent in our own day, when religious men appear to be more like Pilate than his wife.

PILATE PRESSES THE PEOPLE FOR A CHOICE. Matthew presents Pilate as pressing the people for a choice, offering them only two alternatives: "*Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?*" (Matt 27:17). According to the apparent moving of the Lord Himself, Pilate will make clear that the choice is between very real malefactor, or evildoer, and One who cannot, under any circumstances be so described.

It ought to be noted that the rejection of Jesus is always in order that someone else might be embraced. Refusing to hear His word is always attended by hearing someone else's word. Rejecting Jesus in any way is never a sign of neutrality or indifference. It always reveals a preference for someone else.

THE PEOPLE PREFER BARABBAS. Mark says that the chief priests moved the people to ask for the release of Barnabas. Matthew, giving a more full account, says that the chief priests and elders did the persuading, adding that they not only sought the release of Barabbas, but the destruction of Jesus as well (Matt 27:20). The chief priests apparently headed up the effort, with the elders joining in the actual persuading of the people. Luke says that the people "*cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas*" (Luke 23:18). John records that they said, "*Not this man, but Barabbas*" (John 18:40) .

The people had come to Pilate to obtain a judgment against Jesus, and to see to it that He was killed. Now, however, they are forced to make **two** decisions, not one. They must ask for the release of one man as well as the execution of another. They must side with one man, and against another. One man must be released – that is the custom, and Pilate will see to it that it is honored. The people will not be allowed to deal only with Jesus.

This incident reminds me of the choice that Joshua required of the people: between the

true God, or the idols of their fathers (Josh 24:15). Elijah also required such a choice of the people: either the Lord or Baal (1 Kgs 18:21). Such choices must still be bound upon men!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 164

Mark 15:12 *“And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews? 13 And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him. 15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.”*

(Mark 15:12-15; Matt 27:21-26; Luke 23:21-25; John 19:7-15)

INTRODUCTION

The trial of Jesus before Pilate, including the response of the Jews, underlines the strength of the expression, *“determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”* (Acts 2:23). Was it God who delivered up Jesus or the people? Romans 8:32 affirms that it was God who delivered Him up. Was it the will of the people or the will of God that was being carried out in Pilate’s hall? Acts 4:26 asserts that both the people and Pilate were fulfilling the counsel of God, which was *“determined before to be done.”* Had God not willed this, there is no possible way that it could have been done, for Jesus had lived in such a manner as technically exempted Him from both death and suffering. And yet, it is still true that the people were held responsible for delivering Jesus to Pilate to be crucified (Acts 2:23,35). They are charged with being both the betrayers and murderers of Jesus (Acts 7:52). How, then, can God be said to have driven the death of Christ, and yet the Jews were responsible for it? It is quite simple, although men do not tend to think often about it. The people, because of their fundamental wickedness, were used by God to implement the determined atoning death of Christ. In this, even the angelic hosts witnessed the absolute need for a redemption by means of death that was accomplished by One who was not worthy to die. They saw the pervasive iniquity within men, who rejected truth enfleshed, love incarnate, and God manifested. There could not possibly have been a clearer revelation of God and the truth of God, than His Son – and yet the people declared He was *“worthy of death,”* or deserved to die. Jesus alone could bear the weight of sin in order that it might be duly punished in Him, and a basis for remission be established. The fact that the people were carrying out the will of God did not absolve them of guilt, for they did it willingly, with hatred in the hearts. Sin can never be excused or overlooked by God – not even when it is bore by Jesus in His body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24).

“Mark 15:12 *And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews? 13 And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath He done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify Him.”*

WHAT IS YOUR WILL? It is as though God is manipulating the mouth of Pilate, determining what comes forth from it – even though both Pilate’s will and intellect are in the matter. He is being moved to violate the protocols of justice, and now his conscience as well. Yet, even

though he knows it is wrong, he again asks the people what they want him to do with Jesus – except, he refers to Jesus as “*Him whom Ye call King of the Jews.*” Only a flawed conscience could not be awakened by those words – one that was “*weak*” (1 Cor 8:12), or “*seared*” (1 Tim 4:2). Here is a door of opportunity through which soundness of mind can enter.

Again, apparently without any pangs of conscience, the people cry out, “*Crucify Him!*” They care nothing for the words and work of Jesus. They have absolutely no concern for the injustice of which they are glaringly guilty. They have made no attempt to examine the words of Jesus, or His confession that He was, in fact, the Son of the Blessed One.

This is the effect of sin upon both the heart and the mind. When men indulge in sin, their heart begins to grow hard and calloused. Their minds also become spiritual deranged, so that they are not capable of thinking in concert with the truth.

WHY? WHY? Here Pilate calls for some justification for condemning Jesus. He does not ask what He **said**, but what He has “*done*” that requires that He die. His request is certainly a reasonable one, calling upon the people to reassess what they are doing. However, their hearts are now hardened, and they are not even capable of sound reasoning.

THEY CRIED OUT EVEN MORE. Mark says the people “*cried out more exceedingly, Crucify Him!*” Other versions read, “*they shouted all the more,*” NASB and “*they shouted out louder.*” NIV A good and provocative question caused them to become even more adamant than they were before. It reminds me of a judgmental statement God made against Israel. He said He would keep heaping words of truth upon them until they finally went backward and fell: “*But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken*” (Isa 28:13). While the truth in Pilate’s words was only measured, yet there was enough truth there to awaken a sensitive heart.

PILATE DECLARES HIS INNOCENCE. Matthew records that at this point, Pilate chose to affirm his innocence in the matter. In a vain attempt, he sought to disassociate what was happening in his court with his own person. “*When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it*” (Matt 27:24). It was the tumult that concerned him, not any form of justice. Just as in Ephesus, he knew the Roman government would call men into account for an “*uproar*” among the people (Acts 19:40). Therefore he formally declares himself to be innocent of the blood of Jesus. That is, he imagined that this would free him from any connection with His death. He could not possibly have been more wrong. Heaven considered him to be gathering against the Lord and His Christ, together with Herod, the chief priests, and the people (Acts 4:27).

HIS BLOOD BE ON US. Matthew alone records this response of the people. It was something that they all said in concert. “*Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children*” (Matt 27:25). This expression may very well have been based upon a statement made in Joshua 2:19. There the spies told Rahab that anyone in her house would be safe when they took the land. However, “*whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless.*” That is, in saying this the people were telling Pilate they were freeing him from any guilt in this matter. They would take the responsibility for this action, willingly incurring that obligation for their children as well.

What a fearful statement this was! It moved the proclaimers of the Gospel to refer over and over again to this guilt (Acts 2:23; 36; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:28-29; 1 Cor 2:8).

THE THIRD TIME. Luke accents that Pilate made three attempts to release Jesus, stating he could find nothing wrong in him, and offering to handle matters himself in an expeditious manner. “*And he said unto them **the third time**, Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go.*” However, the people would not listen, and became even more insistent. They outshouted Pilate. “*And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed*” (Luke 23:22-23). Behold the unreasonableness of sin! It moves people to be so intent on fulfilling their own will that they will act in total contradiction of good reason, refusing to consider things that are otherwise very apparent.

“ 15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.”

Pilate will now take a course of action that requires him to completely ignore the facts in the case. He will contradict all the laws of justice, and defer to a course of action that is more convenient, and attended with far less difficulty.

WILLING TO CONTENT THE PEOPLE. Pilate was “*willing to content the people,*” even if they were a raging mob that had been deprived of all wisdom and good sense. Other versions read, “*wanting to gratify the crowd,*” NKJV “*desiring to do what was pleasing to the people,*” BBE “*desirous of contenting the crowd,*” DARBY and “*he wanted to satisfy the crowd.*” NET The action of Pilate was thought out. He had weighed the facts delivered to him, first judiciously, and then with regard to his own personal advantage. From the standpoint of law, there was no question about the action that ought to be taken: release Jesus, and punish Barabbas. Those actions could be fully justified in any court of law. But now, with only his own interests and career in mind, he defers to the will of the people. For all practical purposes, and from the lower view, he had become their servant.

This tendency to please men still remains among those who have to do with Jesus. It is as though when you confront the Lord Jesus Christ you are forced to make a decision between the people who reject Him, and the Lord Himself. Knowing the tendency of the natural man, Paul made clear that choosing the people severs one from Jesus. “*For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ*” NASB (Gal 1:10). It ought to be clear that Jesus will allow no person to be identified with Him that will not serve Him, becoming involved in His interests, so to speak. He said, “*If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor*” (John 12:26). The only true freedom that can be realized is that which is experienced in serving Christ. Primary service rendered to anyone else is really nothing more than a form of bondage.

RELEASED BAR ABBAS UNTO THEM. Therefore, Pilate “*released Barabbas unto them,*” as Matthew also states (Matt 27:26). Luke states the action with even more precision. “*And he released unto them him that for sedition [insurrection] and murder was cast into prison, whom **they had desired** ; but he delivered Jesus to **their will** ” (Luke 23:25). Thus, Pilate let the people have their way with both Barabbas and Jesus. One went free, and one was condemned. It could be no other way. Both could not properly be condemned or released. One was clearly innocent, and one was obviously guilty.*

Here the Jews broke the Law of Moses: “*Thou shalt not wrest judgment*” (Deut 16:19). “*You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice*” NKJV (Ex 23:2). “*You shall do not unrighteousness in judgment*” (Lev

19:15). The Law – their law, to which they had appealed (John 19:7) – did not allow the Israelites to make improper legal judgment. The prophets declared, “*Keep ye judgment, and do justice!*” (Isa 56:1). In fact, the Lord condemned Israel because “*none calleth for justice, nor any leadeth for the truth*” (Isa 59:4). The erosion of justice was declared to be the evidence that truth had “*fallen in the street*” (Isa 59:14).

PILATE GAVE SENTENCE. Luke says that Pilate delivered a sentence, of judgment on this case. “*And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required*” (Luke 23:24). Other versions read, “*pronounced the sentence,*” NASB and “*gave the verdict.*” NRSV This wicked man rendered an official judgment without any regard for the person against whom it was delivered. He only had a desire please the people, who were nothing more than a howling mob under the control of Satan.

Do you wonder how much pressure men can put upon a soul? Here is a classic example. Our peers can cause us to act contrary to reason, even opposing the One who gave Himself to deliver us. Avoiding this kind of influence is worthy of the most extensive effort.

HE DELIVERED JESUS. Now Pilate has Jesus scourged, or whipped and lashed publicly. Scourging is defined as “a cruel and barbaric punishment.” The victim was stripped to the waist, stretched with cords on a frame, and beaten with either a whip or rods. McCLINTOK It was a most severe and disfiguring treatment. In correlating John’s Gospel with Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it appears that Pilate had Jesus scourged two times. John says Jesus was scourged prior to bringing Jesus into the court and the call to crucify Him (John 19:1).

The scourging to which Pilate first subjected Jesus, as recorded in John, was one associated with interrogation. The scourging of reference in our text, was the prelude to crucifixion. It appears that Jesus was reduced to a bloody pulp before He was crucified. Isaiah declared that the Savior “*gave*” His back to the “*smiters*” (Isa 50:6). In order to fully confirm the dire state of the human race, He allowed those of the chosen race to treat Him as a felon.

John provides some details of this occasion that are worthy of special note. You may recall that He wrote His Gospel in order that we might “*believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing,*” we “*might have life through His name*” (John 20:31).

PILATE WAS AFRAID. As soon as Pilate heard the people say, “*He made Himself the Son of God,*” “*he was the more afraid; 9 and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer*” (John 19:7-9). He no doubt correlated that word with what his wife had told him concerning Jesus being a “*just man*” (Matt 27:19). He immediately went to Jesus, whom he had already had scourged, and asked Him “*Where are you from?*” NKJV He already knew He was from Galilee, and was even referred to as “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” Out of fear, however, he now senses there is more to Jesus than meets the eye. However, there is a slight complication, Jesus will not answer him. Pilate is not deserving of an answer to this question. He has already shown a propensity to the people, and none toward God. Therefore, Jesus will not dignify his question with an answer.

JESUS DEFINES WHO HAS THE POWER. Pilate is irritated by the silence of Jesus. After all, he is a dignitary to whom Jesus is supposedly subject, and yet He ignores his question. Pilate responds to the Savior’s disruptive silence, “*Speakest Thou not unto me? knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?*” Like all worldly rulers, Pilate overstates his power, and entertains a view of his position that completely ignores the Sovereignty of

Almighty God. He is looking upon the appearance of things, and according to that view he thinks that he is in charge. But Jesus will not let his remark pass, for he has not spoken correctly of either himself or Jesus.

NO POWER AT ALL! “ 11 *Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above.*” The totality of Pilate’s civil authority, particularly over Jesus, has been given to Him from heaven, for, as Paul states, “*there is no power, but of God*” (Rom 13:1) – and Paul was speaking of civil authority. Pilate received his power from God when the “*power of darkness*” was given its “*hour*” by the God of heaven (Lk 22:53). Until that time there is no record of a single opportunity being given to Pilate to even see Jesus, much less speak to him, or threaten Him with his imagined power. His power flowed from the assignment of the Almighty, and he was really nothing more than a vessel “*unto dishonor*” – a kind of spiritual garbage can. Notwithstanding that circumstance, he was, in a very real sense, in God’s “*great house*” (2 Tim 2:20), and was caught in the “*net*” of Divine purpose (Matt 13:47-50).

THE GREATER SIN. Jesus does assign to Pilate a lesser role, affirming that there were those who were guilty of an even greater sin: “*therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin*” (John 19:10-11). Most versions read “*greater sin.*” Some versions read “*more sin,*” BISHOPS & TYNDALL All sin, then, is not alike. Even though Pilate and Herod are classified as co-conspirators against Jesus (Acts 4:27), the sin of “*the people of Israel*” was far greater. This is because they sinned against more light, rejected more revelation, and repudiated more evidence. When people are exposed to more truth, if they do not receive it, their sin becomes worse. When they have been subjected to the light of the sun, they will not be judged as those who were subjected only to starlight and moonlight.

PILATE SEEKS TO RELEASE JESUS. “*And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar*” (John 19:12). From this time forward, employing all of his shrewdness, Pilate sought for a way to release Jesus. But he was caught in the net of Divine purpose, and could not find a way. However he ceased his efforts when the people said he was not Caesar’s friend if he did not carry out the death sentence against Jesus. It ought to be noted that Satan is also aware of the sin that so easily besets us. It should not surprise us when Satan makes appeals to those weaknesses in his temptations.

WE HAVE NO KING BUT CAESAR. With his career on the line, and the possibility of a report that he had in some way repudiated the authority of Caesar, Pilate began caving in to the pressure. He made one more effort to get rid of this case. “ 13 *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! 15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar*” (John 19:13-15). Now, through the words of Pilate, the real issue of the people is expressed. It was the authority of Jesus to which they objected, refusing to let “*this Man*” reign over them, as Jesus declared they would do during His ministry (Lk 19:14). However, God will not permit men to ultimately refuse the reign of His Son. Jesus will pronounce judgment against all who have rejected His authority over them, as He affirmed in Luke 19:27. Those who reject His rule only postpone the inevitable.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 165

Mark 15:16 “ *And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. 17 And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, 18 And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19 And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. 20 And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. 21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.*”

(Mark 15:16-21; Matt 27:27-32; Luke 23:26-31; John 19:16-17)

INTRODUCTION

The horrendous things that were done to Jesus **before** He was crucified were cruel and brutal beyond all imagination. He was subjected to treatment that was not heaped upon even the worst of criminals – particularly mockery. Yet, as unjust and barbarous as this treatment was, we must not allow it to overshadow what God did to Jesus. The redemptive value was found in God’s treatment of Christ after He was crucified. It is what happened **ON** the cross, **AFTER** men had done their worst, that accomplished the will of God, providing a sound basis upon which men could be both delivered and justified. In considering the death of Jesus, both our hearts and minds will be challenged to reach deeper than their natural capacity allows, for there is a profound “*depth*” in God’s salvation. We must strain to see farther, for there is a “*length*” in His salvation that cannot be perused casually. Here, during a brief period of time, the wrath and indignation of God will be focused upon His only begotten Son. He will be “*made a curse*” for us, and be “*made to be sin*” in order that sin might be judged and condemned effectively, and once for all (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21). God’s absolute hatred of sin will be seen to be greater than man’s hatred of Jesus. His judgment against His own Christ will transcend the judgments rendered by men. Therefore, as we consider what men did to Jesus, it will begin to sensitize our hearts, preparing us for an alert and tender thoughtfulness concerning the Divine judgment that took place on the cross. That was the worst judgment and the most severe experience of Jesus. What He undergoes from men will, in a sense serve to prepare Him for what will be experienced as He hangs upon the cross.

“ **Mark 15:16** *And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. 17 And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his Head.*”

What we are now witnessing takes place **after** the official judgment of Jesus has been completed, and the sentence of death has been declared. This is taking place in a Roman court that was noted, in those times, for special attention to justice and sound judgment. Yet, the depravity of human nature breaks out when these men, noted for their penchant for law and

order, confront the Christ of God.

THEY LED HIM AWAY INTO THE HALL. Matthew says they took Jesus “*into the common hall*” (Matt 27:27). The Praetorium, by definition, was “the house of the Roman Governor in his province,” McCLINTOK being equivalent to a “Governor’s mansion” in our country. John refers to it as “*the hall of judgment*” (John 18:28) and “*the judgment hall*” (John 19:9). In other words, Jesus was taken to Pilate’s official residence, and to the section of it in which judgments or trials took place. This is **after** Jesus had been presented to the people, who were standing outside of this area because they did not want to defile themselves during the Passover (John 18:28). Now, the judgment against him had already been finalized (Mk 15:15), and Pilate had proclaimed the sentence (Lk 23:24). Now, however, even more indignities will be heaped upon the Savior.

THEY CALL TOGETHER THE WHOLE BAND. A Roman “*band*,” is also referred to as a *cohort*, and was a tenth part of a Roman legion. It consisted of from 400-600 men, according to the size of the legion. This was, therefore, a considerable number of soldiers. Here, this band of men, charged with upholding the law, will sport with Jesus, subjecting Him to ignominy and shame. They will join with Pilate, Herod, the chief priests, the elders, the Pharisees, and scribes, and the Jewish people “*against the Lord, and against His Christ*” (Acts 4:26).

There is something to be noted here. **The corruption of the people of God brought out the rottenness that was within the Gentiles.** Although the Gentiles had not themselves sided against Christ, yet the opposition of the Jews moved them to also oppose the Christ. It is in this sense that spiritual Babylon is referred to as “*the mother of . . . abominations of the earth*” (Rev 17:5). It is because of corrupt Christendom that “*the word of God*” is “*blasphemed*” (Tit 2:5). Thus the Lord’s adversaries are given “*to speak reproachfully*” because of the inconsistent conduct of professing believers (1 Tim 5:14). It is, therefore, possible for “*the name of God and His doctrine*” to be “*blasphemed*” because of the lives of those who identify themselves with Him (1 Tim 6:1). All of this is being lived out in our text. The opposition of Pilate, Herod, and the soldiers was actually occasioned by the corrupt religion of the Jews, and their leaders in particular. While it is true that holy and consistent lives are not a guarantee that believers will be well received by their enemies, such lives will promote shame among those who accuse them falsely (1 Pet 2:12; 3:16; Tit 2:18).

THEY CLOTHED HIM WITH PURPLE. “*They clothed Him with purple.*” Matthew says, “*they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe*” (Matt 27:28). John says, “*they put on Him a purple robe,*” and that this took place after they had “*scourged Him*” (John 19:1-2). This was an expression of mockery in which they were scorning Him for the claim that He was a King. Several hundred men, who apparently did not have access to Jesus before, are now granted access to Him to insult and abuse Him before He is actually nailed to the cross.

THEY PLATTED A CROWN OF THORNS. “*They platted a crown of thorns and put it about His head.*” More than simply placing this thorny crown on the head of Jesus, the language indicates that they wrapped it around His head, inflicting more pain, so that the thorns pierced His head and gripped it tightly as it came together. The word “*platted*” means braided, like men weave a rope, or a woman braids her hair. Matthew adds that they also put “*a reed in His right hand,*” as though feigning a kingly scepter (Matt 27:29).

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED. In all of this, we are being faced with what it means to know Jesus “*after the flesh,*” or purely in connection with His humanity. “*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more*” (2 Cor 5:16). These men thought that because Jesus did not resist them or

restrain them that He could **not** do so. They judged Him according to the flesh. They considered themselves to be superior to Jesus, and thus subjected Him to shame, unaware that the time would come when they would stand before this very Person, and hear their eternal destiny announced by Him publically.

Similarly, there are still people who ignore Jesus, refuse to consider His words, and live in stark contradiction of what He has said, thinking nothing of it. They too have concluded that Jesus is powerless, and refuse to consider that, in the end, He will judge them. All of this is in spite of the remarkable abundance of revelation that God has provided in the “*record*” He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). Such persons are in the same category as those of our text.

“ 18 And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19 And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. 20 And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him . . .”

Now, the soldiers are given time to mock and ridicule the Lord Jesus, making sport of Him, and subjecting Him to shame. Sin has hardened these men, so that they do not have any pangs of conscience about what they are doing, but consider it to be nothing more than indulging in a form of pleasure – imagining they are exploiting the weakness of Jesus. Actually, however, He is submitting to them with a very lively awareness of the time when they will openly be subjected to Him. They did not know what they were doing – but Jesus knew!

THEY BEGAN TO SALUTE HIM. Other versions read, “*they began to acclaim Him,*” NASB “*began to call out to Him,*” NIV “*as if honoring Him,*” BBE “*saluted Him and taunted.*” [*teased*] NLT The word “*Hail*” means “*greetings, good health to You, long life to You.*” AMPLIFIED The technical meaning of the word is “*rejoice and be glad,*” THAYER and “*enjoy a state of happiness and well being.*” LOUW-NIDA It is as though they were saying, “*In view of your kingship, may you enjoy a state of well being and happiness!*” All the while, they were heaping shame upon Him, and doing whatever they wanted to Him, free from any of his kingly restraints – at least, that is what they thought they were doing. But in the heavens, God laughed, having them in derision, He was going to enthrone His King anyway, and bring a conclusion to their seemingly invincible reign. As it is written, “*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My king upon my holy hill of Zion*” (Psa 2:4-6). What they did to Jesus was nothing to be compared with what God was going to do to them! He would “*terrify them in His fury,*” NASB and God does have fury that terrifies His enemies! I will tell you that when Jesus comes in all of His glory, there will not be so much as a syllable of derision spoken against Him. And, it would not have been spoken here if Jesus did not submit to it.

THEY SMOTE HIM. “*They smote Him on the head with a reed,*” or “*kept beating Him on the head with a reed,*” NASB or “*staff.*” NIV The Amplified Bible reads, “*they struck His head with a staff made of a [bamboo-like] reed.*” The Living Bible reads, “*they beat Him on the head with a cane.*” A “*reed,*” in this case, was actually a firm stick that was made out of the reed plant – woven together tightly for use as a walking stick or measuring rod. It was something solid, and was by no means flimsy or flexible. **Keep in mind that at this time a woven crown of thorns had been wrapped around His head.**

John adds that they also “*struck Him with their hands,*” NKJV striking Him “*in the face*” NIV (John 19:3), for the word used here means “a slap in the face.” THAYER

THEY SPIT UPON HIM. Not content to mock Jesus, strike Him on the head with a cane, and slap Him repeatedly in the face, they also “*did spit upon Him*” in derision. This is more of the spitting from which Jesus, fulfilling the word of Isaiah, refused to hide His face (Isa 50:6).

THEY BOWED THEIR KNEES TO HIM. What mockery was this in which the soldiers engaged! They feigned worship, as though they were honoring Jesus. Actually, their intent was to show that they saw nothing in Him that suggested He was a king. Therefore they could hit Him on the head with a cane, slap Him in the face, and spit on Him with perfect freedom. Then, to show that they were in control, they would bow to Him and worship Him in an act of pretension and rebellion. Anyone who imagines that this was not noted in heaven needs to rethink the matter. If God took special note of the oppression of Pharaoh against a people He had chosen (Ex 3:7), what will He do to those who submit His own Son to such indignities? If He punished Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians for taking delight in carrying out His will against a disobedient people (Jer 50:11), what will He do to those who carried out His will against His Christ, His “*well beloved Son?*” You may rest assured that at this very hour, those men are acutely aware of the folly of their conduct during the occasion that is being reported.

THEY PUT HIS OWN CLOTHES ON HIM. The soldiers then removed “*the robe*” from Jesus (Matt 27:31), and “*put His own clothes on Him.*” Now, they would lead Him away to be crucified. Thus, prior to the cross, Jesus had endured unspeakable atrocities. At the palace of Caiaphas they lied against Him, spit on Him, covered His head and beat Him, asking Him to prophesy who smote Him. They struck Him in the face, blasphemously spoke against Him, and pummeled Him with their fists. Before Pilate He was falsely accused, and twice scourged. Before Herod he was treated with contempt, mocked, and arrayed in a “*gorgeous robe.*” Before the soldiers of Pilate He was clothed in purple, had a crown of thorns wrapped around His head, was beaten on the head with a cane, and slapped in the face. They also spit on Him, and feigned to worship Him. All of this was because of our sin, yet it did not pay the price for it.

“ 20b . . . and led Him out to crucify Him. 21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.”

JESUS IS LED AWAY TO BE CRUCIFIED. Now, being disfigured more than any of the sons of men (Isa 52:14), Jesus is led away to be crucified. John, a first hand witness of the events (John 19:35), informs us that at the first “*he bearing His cross went forth*” from the place in which He was tried and condemned (John 19:17). The Scriptures do not say that Jesus fell beneath the weight of the cross, as some song writers have said. However, that is suggested in the record that follows.

ANOTHER IS COMPELLED TO CARRY HIS CROSS. The soldiers who were leading Jesus “*compelled*” a man from Cyrene, a city in Libya which is a region in Africa, to carry Christ’s cross. Matthew says they did this “*as they came out*” (Matt 27:32) – that is, “*going out of the city.*” WILLIAMS Both Matthew and Mark identify the man by name – “*Simon.*” The fact that he was a man from an African region who was in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover strongly suggests that he was a proselyte who had come there to worship – like the Ethiopian eunuch would do on a later occasion (Acts 8:27). Mark also states that he was “*coming in from the country and passing by.*” NKJV That is, as the group was going out of the city toward the place of crucifixion, Simon was coming into the city from another place in that area. Luke tells us that Simon carried the cross “*after Jesus*” – that is, with Jesus leading the way (Lk 23:26).

Mark tells us even more of this man, saying he was “*the father of Alexander and Rufus.*” At the time Mark wrote this, it appears these names were well known among believers. During those

early days, Christians took particular note of those who were especially devoted to the Lord and advanced in the faith (Acts 6:1; 16:2; Rom 16:7). It is unfortunate that this is not a common practice in our day, and betrays a certain level of apostasy. Although it cannot be confirmed with certainty, it is supposed that the sons of Simon, Alexander and Rufus, are the individuals of reference in Acts 19:33 (Alexander) and Rom 16:13 (Rufus).

A GREAT CROWD FOLLOWS THE PROCESSION. As the soldiers and Jesus proceeded to the appointed place, there followed Jesus “*a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him.*” (Lk 23:27). These had certainly not condoned the condemnation of Jesus, and were lamenting in a state of hopelessness. A special note is made of the women who were lamenting.

Jesus speaks to these women, referring to them as “*Daughters of Jerusalem,*” or those who truly belong to the city of God. “*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*” (Luke 23:28-31). What a stirring prophesy of the Savior – and it was given while He was on the way to the cross.

Weep Not For Me. Jesus admonishes the women not to weep for Him. While what was happening to Him was, from one point of view, tragic, He would recover from it. This is what had been appointed to Him by God, and it would result in the remission of sin and the reconciling of men to God. From the standpoint of the flesh, this was nothing to be compared with what was going to take place in Jerusalem. The women should therefore weep for themselves and their offspring, for Divine judgment was on the horizon. There is a sense in which men rejecting Jesus is worse than God forsaking Him. Jesus would taste death for every man, but be raised again from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God. That, however, would not be the experience of the generation of which Jesus then spoke.

The Days are Coming. The time would come when it would be a blessing NOT to conceive children. It would also be a time when those who had no children at all would be glad they did not. A sense of despair would grip the city, and they would rather be covered by the mountains and hills than to face what was coming. Jesus was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem – something that was decreed from heaven when the city rejected the Lord’s Christ, not knowing the time of their visitation (Lk 13:44-45; 19:42-44). There are times when the ordinary values of life are reduced to nothing, giving no advantage and bringing no satisfaction. That is a consequence that took place because Jerusalem rejected Jesus. That was only an introduction to the magnitude of the curse that will be focused on those who ultimately refuse to believe on Jesus.

If They Do These Things in a Green Tree. Here Jesus likens Himself to a “*green tree,*” filled with life, and difficult to burn. Jerusalem, on the other hand, is likened to a dead and brittle “*dry tree*” that can easily be burned. If, under the administration of God, men treated Jesus as they did, what would happen when the wrath of God was unleashed through men against Jerusalem? It was, indeed, a fearful thing to consider! However, that is how serious it is when men, for whatever reason, reject the Son of God, spurning His invitation and ignoring His word.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 166

Mark 15:22 “ *And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. 23 And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. 24 And when they had crucified him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. 26 And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 And with Him they crucify two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. 28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.*”

(Mark 15:22-28; Matt 27:33-38; Luke 23:32-34; John 19:18-24)

INTRODUCTION

The crucifixion of Jesus will display both the depravity of men and the Sovereignty of God. Men will appear to be fulfilling their will, yet it was all within the framework of the will of God – His “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge*” (Acts 2:23), and what His counsel had “*determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:28). The Gospel writers are careful to point out how several Scriptures were fulfilled in Christ’s death. All of this confirms a trait that is found in God Himself. He alone speaks it, then brings it to pass; He purposes it, then does it. As it is written, “*I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*” (Isa 46:11). Those who view God’s declarations as mere prescience – i.e. beholding what men are going to do – are in great error. God declares it, then He Himself brings it to pass. He purposes it, then personally does it, working within an arena that ignores Him. He “*declares the end from the beginning,*” not because He merely looks into the future, but because He controls the future. Three times the Lord hurls this question at humanity: “*To whom then will ye liken Me*” (Isa 40:18,25; 46:5). Let no person imagine for a moment that in the working out of our salvation God merely used what men did – making it serve His purpose. The doing of wicked men, unknown to them, was actually the working out of God’s purpose, not something that He would merely make to serve His purpose. He is working with vessels that are in His house (2 Tim 2:20), and fish that are in His net (Matt 13:47-49). It is true that God has “*made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil*” (Prov 16:4). We will behold this fulfilled in our text, and it is most marvelous to consider.

“**Mark 15:22** *And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. 23 And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.*”

THEY BRING HIM TO THE PLACE. Mark emphasizes the trip to Golgotha: “*they bring Him.*” Matthew emphasizes their arrival: “*they were come .*” Along the way the soldiers compel Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross (Mk 15:21). A large throng joins the procession (Lk 23:27).

Certain holy women bewailed Jesus, and He addressed them concerning the awful future appointed to Jerusalem (Lk 23:27-34). This all suggests that the trip took some time. We know that Jesus was delivered to Pilate “*in the morning*,” which is defined as “the fourth watch of the night, from, 3:00-6:00 AM THAYER (Mk 15:1). We also know that He was crucified at the third hour, or 9:00 AM. From His time before Pilate until He was crucified was from 3-6 hours. We infer, therefore, that the trip there could have taken at least one hour.

The precise location of Golgotha is not given in Scripture. Hebrews 13:12 states that Jesus “*suffered without the gate*,” that is, outside of the confines of Jerusalem itself. Matthew, Mark, and John refer to it as “*Golgotha*” (Matt 27:33; Mk 15:22; John 19:17). Luke refers to it as “*Calvary*,” which means “*the Skull*,” and is so translated in later versions. “*Golgotha*” comes from a different Greek word which means “*the place of the skull*” (Mk 15:22). John says that Golgotha was the Hebrew name for “*the place of the skull*” (John 19:17). John also states the location was “*nigh unto the city*” (John 19:20). We assume from Matthew 27:39 and Mark 15:22 that it was along some thoroughfare, for there were those “*that passed by*.” From what is said of Simon being compelled to carry the cross, it is also suggested that it was in a place leading into the open country (Mk 15:21). There was also a garden, or orchard, close to Golgotha, in which the tomb was located where Jesus was buried (John 19:41).

In all of the Bible, “*Golgotha*,” which is a Hebrew word, is mentioned three times (Matt 27:33; Mk 15:22; John 19:17). “*Calvary*” is mentioned only once (Lk 23:33). “*The place of a skull*” is also mentioned three times (Matt 27:33; Mk 15:22; John 19:17). Following the death of Christ, no inspired man ever referred to these expressions. With a solitary exception, the place where Jesus was crucified is never mentioned. Apostolic teaching concerned what was accomplished in Jesus death, not where it took place. There is a remarkable consistency in their approach to the death of our Lord. They did not leave their readers thinking of where Jesus was crucified, but why He was crucified, and what was achieved by that means.

HE FULFILLMENT OF THE TYPE . The one exception to this rule is found in the book of Hebrews. There the Holy Spirit declares that the death of Christ fulfilled a type that was developed under the Law. He first affirms that those in Christ have an altar at which those who labor under the administration of the Law have no right to eat (Heb 13:10). In this, he refers to the priests who ate of the sacrifices that were offered upon the ancient altar (Lev 10:12; Deut 12:27; 1 Cor 10:18). He then states that the carcasses of the beasts whose blood was brought into holy place were burned “*without*,” or “*outside*,” NKJV the camp (Heb 13:11). The instructions for doing this were given in Exodus 29:14; Lev 4:11-12,21; 9:11; 16:27. This, the Spirit declared, typified Jesus suffering death “*outside the gate*” of Jerusalem (Heb 13:12). Now, it is in view of this that believers are admonished to “*go to*” Jesus “*without the camp*,” or outside the confines of this world and formalistic religion: “*Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach*” (Heb 13:13). “*Bearing His reproach*” is the same as bearing one’s cross – enduring the rejection of those who are of this world, and bearing up under their malignment and evil treatment, whatever form it takes. In other words, to be “*partakers of Christ*” we must leave the worldly order, going outside of it and the religion that it fosters. This is part of being “*crucified with Christ*” (Gal 2:20), and being “*dead with Christ*” (Rom 6:8; Col 2:20). At some point, a person will have to separate from lifeless forms of religion, just as surely as Jesus, when He died, was taken outside of Jerusalem.

THEY GAVE HIM WINE MINGLED WITH MYRRH. Mark says the soldiers gave Jesus “*wine mingled with myrrh*.” Matthew refers to this drink as “*vinegar . . . mingled with gall*.” Both refer to the same substance. “*Wine*” refers to the **source** of the drink – pressed from grapes.

“Vinegar” refers to the **state** of the substance, which was soured or fermented. “Gall” refers to the bitter quality of the substance with which the drink was mingled, and “myrrh” refers to the particular source of that bitterness. This intoxicating drink was offered to Jesus to apparently dull the pain, and make crucifixion more tolerable, and was presented to Him before He was actually crucified. It was no doubt intended to make the actual nailing of Jesus to the cross more bearable.

However, after tasting the substance, Jesus refused it. He would not endure the pain and sufferings of the cross with any special assistance from men. He would rather “*drink*” the cup the Father had given Him without resorting to humanly devised comforts and aids (John 18:11). The determination of Jesus is something in which we also can participate.

“ 24 And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. 26 and the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

WHEN THEY HAD CRUCIFIED HIM. The word “*crucified*” means to “impale upon a cross,” STRONG’S to “fortify with driven stakes,” THAYER and “to nail or affix to a cross.” FRIBERG There is a sense in which the crucified one becomes one with the cross, and is not able to be separated from it – at least not without intense pain. We know from Scripture that “*nails*” were used to impale Jesus on the cross. After He had risen, He showed His disciples “*the print of the nails*” in His hands (John 20:25). Luke states that He showed them His “*hands and His feet*” (Lk 24:40). Pointing to what was accomplished on the cross, Paul stated that God Himself “*blotted out the handwriting of ordinances,*” or “*certificate of death,*” NASB “***nailing it to His cross***” (Col 2:14). More, therefore, was nailed to the cross than the body of our blessed Lord.

It ought to be noted here that those who are “*crucified with Christ*” **ought not** expect a pleasant ordeal. There is much inner discomfort in such a procedure, and that is what causes many to draw back from it.

THEY PARTED HIS GARMENTS . In a display of complete indifference, those who had crucified Christ parted, or divided, His garments. It is generally understood that this was the result of stripping the one being crucified of all of his clothing. Some have affirmed that the person crucified was not stripped stark naked, but was given a modest covering for the front and the back. I do not know if this is true or not.

John gives us a more precise record of this activity. He tells us they divided His garments “*into four parts,*” of which every soldier “*took a part.*” However, His “*coat,*” or outmost garment “*was without seam, woven from the top throughout.*” It was this garment for which they cast lots saying, “*Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it*” (John 19:23-24).

Matthews says that the dividing of Jesus’ garments, as well as the casting of lots for them, was done “*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots*” (Matt 27:35). That text is found in the 22 nd Psalm, which is a Messianic Psalm: “*They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture*” (Psa 22:18). John also refers to this detailed fulfillment (John 19:24).

This text reminds us of what was required for the riches of grace to be given to those who believe. “*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich*” (2 Cor 8:9). What took place in the realm of the unseen was vividly depicted by the sight of Jesus crucified. Just as He was stripped of His clothing, and it was distributed to others, so Jesus was stripped of His Divine prerogatives when He died, being shamed by taking upon Himself of the human condition. It was by this means

that it became righteous for the “*Divine nature*,” which is His spiritual vesture, to be given to those who trust in His name.

IT WAS THE THIRD HOUR. At nine in the morning, the Lord was crucified – while the residue of the dew remained, and before the sun rose to its zenith, and the heat of the day commenced. It was at the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon, that Jesus commended His Spirit into the hands of the Father (Lk 23:44-46), meaning He was suspended upon the cross for six full hours. This was an aspect of sacrifice that, to my knowledge, was never paralleled under the Law. The sacrificial victim appeared to always have been killed quickly, and not required to suffer. The Passover lamb, for example, was killed “*in the evening*” (Ex 12:6). Sacrifices offered on the altar were killed at the side of the altar while facing the North, indicating the swiftness of the procedure (Lev 1:11). However, when it came to removing the sins of the world, there was suffering as well as death.

THE SUPERScription. The “*superscription of His accusation*” was a “*written notice of the charge that was written against Him.*” NIV The English word “*superscription*” means something written (ascription) and placed overhead (super). Matthew says it was placed “*over His head*” (Matt 27:37). John tells us it was “*written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin*” (John 19:20). John also said that many of the Jews read this sign, “*for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city*” (John 19:20). It was like a heavenly reminder of what the people had done. I do not doubt that the recollection of this writing caused considerable restlessness among many of the Jews – like the dream of Pilate’s wife brought disquietness to her. Pilate had this written, and the chief priests objected to it, saying that it should read, “*He said, I am King of the Jews.*” However, Pilate refused to change it (John 10:21-22).

Therefore, in the crucifixion of Jesus, God would not let the people ignore what was being done. When He came into the world, wise men from a foreign country told Herod that He was born “*King of the Jews.*” Now, when Jesus prepares to leave the realm of the living and descend into the abode of the dead, another foreigner reminds them of the same thing.

“27 And with Him they crucify two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. 28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.”

TWO THIEVES. Matthew, Mark, and Luke refer to these two men. John omits them from his record. All three of the writers recording this event tell us that Jesus was crucified between these two thieves, with one being on His right hand, and the other on His left (Matt 27:38 | Mk 15:27). Luke refers to them as “*malefactors,*” “*criminals,*” NKJV or wrong-doers. You recall that the Jewish leaders had told Pilate that Jesus was a “*malefactor*” (John 18:30). To them, this arrangement no doubt appeared quite satisfactory, as though it had justified their accusation. It was also said that Barabbas was a “*robber,*” yet he was released (John 18:40).

Now, just as surely as Jesus really did pay the price that was due a criminal, even though He was not one, even so Jesus paid the real penalty for sin, even though He was not a sinner. I sometimes think that men treat the death of Christ too casually, and speak of it to glibly, as though it was not a real death, a real payment, and real disgrace. They do not seem to present it as though it involved a real curse, and real Divine abandonment, and really being cut off.

ANOTHER FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE. Here again, the details of prophecy were fulfilled in the death of Jesus on the cross. Here, in Jesus dying between two thieves, the Scripture was fulfilled: “*He was numbered with the transgressors.*” That prophecy is found in Isaiah 53:12: “*Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors*” (Isa 53:12). Notice what

marvelous things are said about the Savior. (1) He “*poured out His soul unto death,*” (2) “*He was numbered with the transgressors,*” (3) “*He bare the sin of many,*” (4) “*He made intercession for the transgressors.*” These four reasons are cited as justification for God dividing Him a portion with the great, or identifying Him with greatness, even in His death. It also was the reason Jesus would divide the spoil He reaped through His death with those who are strong in faith.

It is of significance that Jesus is said to have been “*numbered with the transgressors .*” This was true of Him ONLY when He died. He was **not** numbered with the transgressors in His birth! In His birth the angel referred to Jesus as “*that Holy thing,*” or “*Holy One*” NKJV (Lk 1:35). When God brought Jesus into the world He charged, “*And let all of the angels of God worship Him*” (Heb 1:6). During His youth, He was certainly not noted for being “*numbered with the transgressors.*” Instead, He was known for being about His “*Father’s business*” (Lk 2:49). And during His prodigious ministry, He was never “*numbered with the transgressors,*” or noted for being one of their company. Even the demons said of Him, “*I know Thee, who Thou art; the Holy One of God*” (Mk 1:24).

I am aware that His enemies said of Him, “*Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*” Matt 11:19). They were wrong on all accounts! That is not what any inspired man said. No one who knew Jesus ever identified Him with either publicans or sinners. In fact, I do not that there is a place in Scripture where God or Jesus ever referred to themselves as a Friend to anyone. God referred to Abraham as “*My friend*” (Isa 41:8; 2 Chron 20:7; James 2:23). But Abraham never referred to God as his Friend! Jesus referred to His disciples as “*My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*” (John 15:14-15). However, none of those disciples ever referred to Jesus as their Friend. The word “*friend*” means an associate. THAYER It seems to me to be presumptuous to refer to either God or Jesus as our associate. We have been called into Their work, but They have not been called into ours. It is on the part of wisdom to be particular about the manner in which we refer to Deity. Never should we adopt terminology that suggests that we are in any primary.

JESUS PRAYS TO THE FATHER. Luke alone relates that at this time, while they started to part His raiment, Jesus said, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34) . In this, He was fulfilling the word Isaiah prophesied concerning the atoning death of Christ: “*and He bare the sin of many, AND made intercession for the transgressors.*” Isaiah did not say Jesus **would** make intercession for the transgressors, but that He did **when** “*He bare the sin of many.*” In this saying, and in the role of a High Priest, Jesus fulfilled one of the priestly functions which was to have “*compassion on the ignorant*” (Heb 5:2). Some have argued over whether Jesus was praying for the Jews or the Gentiles. Such arguments are futile, for He was making “*intercession for the transgressors.*” That included, as discerned by the illuminated church, “*both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel*” (Acts 4:27). Paul also alludes to the ignorance of those who crucified Jews: “*Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Cor 2:8). Thus Jesus accented the willingness of God to save, and the marvelous effectiveness of His own death.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 167

Mark 15:29 *“And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30 Save Thyself, and come down from the cross. 31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. 32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. 33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.”*

(Mark 15:29-33; Matt 27:39-45; Luke 23:35-44; John 19:25-27)

INTRODUCTION

As if it was not enough that Jesus had been beaten and maligned by His own people and Pilate, and then affixed to a cross by nails, He is then subjected to all kinds of mockery. The contemptuous treatment comes from a variety of sources – from free men and condemned men, from common people and religious leaders, from Jew and Gentile. The only people who display any interest in Him are four women, one of His disciples, and a thief. The women and John linger at the foot of the cross, although in this hour, they are helpless to give Him any aid, for the penalty for sin is to be paid, and He must tread the winepress of the wrath of God *“alone”* (Isa 63:3). This awful hour is the result of man’s sin. Jesus is not dying because of the devil’s transgression, but because of the sins of those who were brought down by iniquity. When Jesus died, all comforts were removed from Him. There was no good Samaritan to pour oil and wine into His wounds. None were allowed to show mercy upon Him, or minister the slightest bit of physical comfort. The only elixir of comfort that He will be given was the word of a thief. There is no record of any other word of kindness or concern being spoken to Him while He hung suspended between heaven and earth. This is surely an awful spectacle, providing a most vivid commentary of the effects of sin upon both heaven and earth – upon both God and man. It is a sobering scene, indeed!

“Mark 15:29 *And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30 Save Thyself, and come down from the cross.”*

In these verses we have a fulfillment of the Scripture, *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not”* (Isa 53:3). Once again, this is a stunning display of the depravity of men, and how sin is *“exceeding sinful”* (Rom 7:13). Sin causes men to be callous and unfeeling, so that they can stand before one who is enduring unspeakable suffering, and actually scoff at Him. Even ordinary human kindness is struck down to the ground when sin rules over a person. It should not surprise us that those who defer to sin conduct themselves in a stupid manner, confounding us with their insensitivity and words. Sin has caused them to react in such a manner, just as it moved

the people in our text to deride Jesus in a heartless and insensitive manner.

THEY THAT PASSED BY. *“They that passed by railed on Him.”* Other versions read, *“made sport,”* BBE *“hurled insults,”* CJB *“blasphemed,”* DOUAY *“derided,”* ESV *“insulted,”* GWN *“hurling abuse,”* NAS and *“kept reviling Him and reproaching Him abusively in harsh and insolent language.”* AMPLIFIED To *“rail”* means to speak reproachfully. This speaking is the exact opposite of *“speak evil of no man”* (Tit 3:2). Matthew says they *“reviled Him”* (Matt 27:39).

These were not the people who hauled Jesus off to Pilate, or cried out *“Crucify Him!”* They had apparently not taken an open stand against Him until this time. They were simply people who were passing by – going either in or out of the city.

They were *“wagging their heads,”* or *“shaking their heads”* NIV – like moving their heads too and fro in disgust or derision. Their physical posture will match the words that they say. They should have placed their hands over their mouths at the sight of this awful spectacle, but instead, they wagged their heads too and fro, as though they were capable of properly assessing the situation. It was kind of a *“I knew there was nothing to Him”* response.

THOU THAT DESTROYEST THE TEMPLE. Now we learn that these were not merely passers-by. They had been exposed to reports about Jesus, and had probably even heard Him say, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”* (John 2:19). Those words were spoken over three years before this day, after He had turned the water into wine, and then cleansed the Temple. It was a public saying because *“the Jews”* responded, *“Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?”* (John 2:20).

Now, more than three years later, these passers-by challenge Jesus to save Himself and *“come down from the cross.”* They chide Him as though to say, *“If you can rebuild the Temple in three days, it will be but a small thing to come down from the cross!”* But they did not know what they were saying. Matthew adds that they said, *“If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross”* (Matt 27:40). Therefore we see that they not only were familiar with the sayings of Jesus, but also that He had been identified as *“the Son of God.”* You see that while truth has a sanctifying effect on those who believe it, it hardens those who reject it. It is no wonder that we are admonished, *“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh . . . from heaven”* (Heb 12:25). Casual and disinterested people are not aware of how hard they become when they do not seriously consider the truth to which they are subjected. **All it takes is a circumstance that appears to contradict the truth, and the railing begins.** It may take the form of a circumstance that appears to negate the affirmation of the love and care God has for His people. When such a thing occurs, railing erupts from those who did not embrace the truth by faith. Perhaps they say, *“If God really loves us, why does He . . .”* In so speaking, they take their place by the side of the passers-by who railed on Jesus.

THE PEOPLE STOOD BEHOLDING. Luke speaks of some others, who were standing there looking at Jesus. *“And the people stood beholding”* (Luke 23:35). Matthew also mentions some (probably the soldiers) who simply were watching the whole affair. *“And sitting down they watched Him there”* (Matt 27:36). What a display of absolute indifference! And the progeny of that crowd remains today. They appear to be neither for or against Jesus, but are mere spectators. However, be sure that such people are classed with Christ’s enemies.

THE SOLDIERS MOCKED HIM. As if the reviling of the people was not enough, the soldiers join in the derision. *“And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself”* (Luke 23:37). For them, the sign over the head of Jesus was like a contradiction of the truth. It appears that they did not actually give

Him soured wine, a narcotic, but rather offered it to Him in mockery, thinking that He was incapable of taking it from them. Their chiding suggested that if He was really a king, He could at least save Himself. Thus, they joined the Jews in a chorus of derision, railing on Jesus when He appeared helpless. One day, those soldiers will face Him, and He will be their Judge!

“ 31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. 32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him.”

THE CHIEF PRIESTS MOCKING. First, the passers-by mocked Jesus. Then the soldiers mocked Him. Now the chief priests and scribes join in the mocking. Matthew says the elders also joined in (Matt 27:41). Mark said they spoke “*among themselves*,” as though analyzing the situation and suggesting what could be done if Jesus really was who He said He was. First they said, “*He saved others; Himself He cannot save.*” Luke reports that the people who were beholding Him and the rulers of the people joined in saying, “*He saved others; let Him save Himself*” (Lk 23:35). Note that they do **not** say Jesus **claimed** to save others, but that He **did** “*save others.*” They could not deny the miracles of deliverance that had been wrought by Jesus. Nor, indeed, could they forget that at least once He told them that He caused a man to take up his bed and walk to prove that He had “*power on earth to forgive sins*” (Mk 2:10). Ignoring the great works that Jesus had done, and unaware that He was fulfilling the will of God upon the cross, they now chide Him for not saving Himself. To them, it made no sense not to have a prevailing interest in self-preservation. They were truly “*lovers of their own selves*” (2 Tim 3:2).

In mockery they refer to Jesus as “*Christ the King of Israel*,” challenging Him to “*descend now from the cross.*” Should He do so, they say they will “*see and believe*” – even though they had not responded in that manner to the works that had testified of Him. Matthew reports that they said, “*If He be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him*” (Matt 27:42).

HE TRUSTED IN GOD. Matthew records the mockers said, “*He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him : for He said, I am the Son of God*” (Matt 27:43). Oh, how much truth had been spoken to and around them! Behold what things had been associated with Jesus: Christ, King of Israel, He saved others, He trusted in God, Son of God. But sin so hardens the heart and dulls the conscience that men will not even consider the truth of God.

THE THIEVES MOCKED HIM. Matthew reports, “*The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth*” (Matt 27:44) – i.e. “*He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him*” (Matt 27:43). Luke reports after both thieves had “*cast the same in His teeth*,” one thief particularly railed on Jesus. “*And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us*” (Luke 23:39). What a way for an impenitent thief to refer to Jesus: “*If Thou be Christ!*” Thus he joined in the mocking chorus with passers-by, soldiers, those beholding, chief priests, scribes, and elders. What a despicable chorus it was, tuned and orchestrated by the devil for his willing subjects.

ONE THIEF CHANGES. It is precisely at this point, amidst a united chorus of blasphemy that one of the thieves reassesses the situation. He has apparently taken particular note of the sign over Jesus’ head, and of the ways in which the mockers have referred to Him. Perhaps he had even been acquainted in some way with the ministry of Jesus. He turns to his partner in crime and rebukes him. “*Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss*” (Luke 23:40-41). This is what faith does – it moves the believer to make a proper assessment of the situation. In the case of the penitent thief: (1) We ought to fear God, seeing we ourselves have been condemned to

death. (2) We are receiving our just due. (3) Jesus had done nothing worthy of such a judgment. Keep in mind that this sound manner of thinking was expressed while the thief was himself suffering on a cross.

The thief then turns his attention to Jesus Himself, referring to Him as “*Lord*” – something no one else has done to this point. “*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom*” (Luke 23:42). He believes that Jesus is a King, and does not judge that fact by current circumstances. He concludes that Jesus is yet to come into His kingdom, and simply asks that Jesus remember him when He does. “*Remember me!*” Those are the words Samson said in Dagon’s temple (Judges 16:28). Nehemiah said them when he had to contend with the rulers (Neh 13:14,22,31). Job said them when he was suffering (Job 14:134). David also did (Psa 106:4), as well as Jeremiah (Jer 15:15). These men believed that the Lord’s remembrance of humble and contrite people would yield a harvest of mercy.

Jesus responded immediately, “*Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise*” (Luke 23:43). Thus Jesus would bring a trophy with Him when He entered the realm of the dead. This confirms that Jesus did not go to the lake of fire when He died, as some allege. He rather went to “*paradise,*” which is place of blessing. There are no definitive statements made concerning “*paradise,*” other than its association with heaven (2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7). The means by which this thief was saved were not intended to be the standard. They do, however, confirm the eagerness of Jesus to save, and the effectiveness of a plea for mercy.

“ 33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.”

There are three divisions of time mentioned in association with the death of Christ: 1–The third hour, when He was crucified (Mk 15:26). 2–The sixth hour, when darkness commenced (Mk 15:33). 3–The ninth hour, when the darkness concluded and Jesus yielded up His spirit to God, dismissing it from His body.

FROM THE SIXTH HOUR. Mark states that there was darkness over “*the whole land*” until the ninth hour. I gather that the land of Israel, in which Jesus had ministered, is the land of reference. Matthew says that the darkness was “*over all the land*” (Matt 27:45). Luke reports The same Greek word is used in all three texts (Matt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 23:44) – **gh/n** . The meaning of the word is rather broad, referring to the earth as a whole, or to a mass of land, such as the land being separated from the waters. This is the word used in Matthew 5:5: “*The meek shall inherit the earth.*” It is also used in Matthew 10:34: “*peace on earth,*” and Romans 10:18: “*their sound went into all the earth.*” This word is used 249 times in the New Covenant Scriptures, and is applied to everything from a particular country, to a specific piece of land, to the earth in which seed is planted. The extent of this darkness is not known for certain, although it must have been wide-ranging. “Phlegon, a Roman astronomer, speaking of the 14th year of the reign of Tiberius, which is supposed to be that in which our Savior died, says “that the greatest eclipse of the sun that was ever known happened then, for the day was so turned into night that the stars appeared.” ALBERT BARNES Judging from the extent of redemption, and the greatness of the price Jesus paid, it should not surprise me if that darkness did, in fact, cover the whole earth, although it is not necessary to make an issue of it.

Here were three hours of darkness when there was no mocking, no reviling, no blasphemies. It was all silenced as God imposed a change upon nature itself, confirming that the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof. It was during this time that God turned His face from the Son, and He suffered the curse of the Almighty. When no favor was upon the Son of God, it was unfitting that any light should shine upon men who despised Him.

THE WOMEN AT THE CROSS. John informs us that there were four women standing by the cross: Jesus' mother Mary, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25). The identity of Mary's sister is not certain. Some have conjectured that she was "*Mary the wife of Cleophas,*" but it is unlikely that sisters would have the same name. I prefer to see this as four separate women standing near the cross of Jesus. It also ought to be noted that it required confident boldness to be there while the jeering crowd cast aspersions at Jesus. The Lord no doubt protected them from any personal harassment, as it must have been evident that they were not enemies of Jesus, or indifferent to Him.

It was at this point that the prophecy of Simeon was fulfilled – a word that had been uttered to Mary thirty-three years earlier when Jesus was dedicated: "*Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*" (Luke 2:35).

At this time, the reality of Christ's resurrection had not yet burst upon any of Jesus' followers, this cluster of women and John included, who was also standing with them. For them, this was the conclusion, and they were sorrowing and lamenting, just like Jesus said they would (John 16:20). The following three days would be exceedingly difficult for them all, for darkness had settled upon their hearts as well as upon the land.

JESUS PROVIDES FOR HIS MOTHER. During this moment of darkness, suffering, and Divine cursing as well, Jesus "*saw His mother.*" He took the time to ensure that she would be properly cared for, and was most particular about who would do it. John writes, "*When Jesus therefore saw His mother, **and** the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And **from that hour** that disciple took her unto his own home*" (John 19:26-27). Notice that Jesus does not provide an extensive explanation – He spoke only seven words. Yet, John is alert enough to immediately pick up on what He says. It is apparent that up to this time, Jesus had been caring for His mother. Now, He ensures that her care will be continued.

John does not go home and make some special arrangements to receive Mary. The record is specific at that point, that "*from that hour*" he took her into "*his own home.*" The NIV reads, "*from that time on,*" indicating that it was a permanent arrangement. It is no wonder that John is referred to as the disciple Jesus loved! He was the only one of the eleven that remained with Jesus until "*the end.*" He also maintained his composure during that time, being able to instantly discern what Jesus intended, and immediately responding to it. Ordinarily, great sorrow robs men of some of their capacities. But in this hour, John was upheld by the Father. Remember that Jesus had asked God to keep His disciples while He finished the work He had been given to do (John 17:11,15). That is precisely what God is doing with John!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 168

Mark 15:34 *“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? 35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elias. 36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down. 37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”*

(Mark 15:34-37; Matt 27:46-51a; Luke 23:45-46; John 19:28-30)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus died like no other man because of a unique reason. He did not die because He was related to Adam – for He was not. He was the “Seed” of the woman (Gen 3:15). It was because of His relationship to the woman that He was also “the Seed of Abraham” (Gal 3:16), and “the Seed of David” (Rom 1:3). Unlike all other men, He did not die because of Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12,17; 1 Cor 15:22), nor did He die because He was cursed (even though He was cursed), or because of a broken heart, as some allege. Jesus died because He was commanded to lay down His life (John 10:17-18), doing so as an offering to God (Heb 7:27; 9:14; 10:12). From another point of view, God Himself offered Jesus, who was His Lamb (Heb 9:28). Jesus also offered Himself to God “through the Spirit” (Heb 9:14). Thus, the entire Godhead was involved in the death of Christ. However, at the heart of His death, He Himself had to do it, laying down His life. The Father commanded it, the Spirit strengthened Him, but He had to do the work. In Jesus laying down His life, He was alert unto the end, ensuring that all Scripture concerning Him was fulfilled. This was essential if He was to “lay down” His life. He Himself said no man took His life from Him (John 10:18). Nor did the Father take His life from Him as He took the life of Uzzah (2 Sam 6:7). God made the soul of Jesus an offering for sin (Isa 53:10), but Jesus is the one who offered it up to God. Although these may appear to be nothing more than technicalities, they are what validated the death of Christ for the atonement of sin. Now, in this text, Jesus will yield up His life to God.

“ Mark 15:34 *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.”*

AT THE NINTH HOUR. This was three o’clock in the afternoon, and was at the conclusion of three long hours of a darkness that covered the land, and probably the entire earth. This darkness that descended upon the earth was indicative of the darkness that shrouded the soul of Jesus as “the iniquity of us all” was laid upon Him (Isa 53:6). Note, not the iniquities, but “the iniquity.” Sin in its totality was laid upon Jesus in a more real sense than when Aaron confessed “all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all of their transgressions in all of their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat” (Lev 16:21). What Aaron did was, in a sense, symbolic. But what we are witnessing

in the death of Christ is **not** symbolic. When the mass of iniquity was gathered and placed upon the Son, it brought in a flood of darkness. That darkness stood for the vast gulf that sin had caused between man and God. It was a gulf that could not be penetrated by human vision. The knowledge of God was, in a sense, blotted out when sin entered into the world. Now, the only way any individual could obtain the faintest conception of God was for God Himself to break through the darkness, making Himself known to humanity. That moral and spiritual darkness is reflected in the supernatural darkness that descended upon the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour.

HE CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE. Ordinarily, the voice becomes weak when the body is racked with pain over a long period. But this is no ordinary circumstance, and Jesus is certainly no ordinary man. The fact that Jesus cried out with a **loud** voice confirms that He was in control of His life, and it was His **life**, or “*Himself*,” that was being offered to God (Heb 7:27; 9:14,25; Isa 53:10).

WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME? Mark uses the words “*Eloi, Eloi,*” which are Chaldean, or Syriac. Matthew uses the words “*Eli, Eli,*” which are Hebrew (Matt 27:46). The words “*lama sabachthani*” are Aramaic, so that the saying is a kind of mixture of languages. Some have conjectured that Jesus was speaking in the common tongue of the day. However, the response that follows seems to me to contradict that view. I prefer to see this as Jesus crying out in the language of the Jews and of the Gentiles, thereby indicating that He was being offered up for the sins of the whole world. However, there is no need to be contentious about the matter.

This is a quotation of Psalm 22:1, confirming that it was a prophetic psalm concerning the sufferings of Christ. That fact by no means reduces the magnitude of the experience that Jesus has described – being “*forsaken*” by God. Two staggering considerations add to the weight of this cry. First, “*the iniquity of us all*” was being laid upon Him. Secondly, this was a time allotted to “*the power of darkness*” (Lk 22:53), when they would be allowed to do their worst. The cursing of Jesus, as declared in Galatians 3:13, inquired that God abandon His Son, for that is what is involved in cursing. In this case, Jesus was left alone to be ravished by Satan and his powers, for wherever sin is dominate, Satan and all of his hosts may be found.

God has made clear that He cannot countenance sin, or remain with the one in whom sin is found. Habakkuk knew this was the case: “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*” (Hab 1:13). David said, “*For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee*” (Psa 5:4). Again he said, “*The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth*” (Psa 34:16). Sin separates the sinner from the Lord. As He said of His own chosen people, “*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear*” (Isa 59:2).

Now, as it were, with all sin being gathered together into one composite whole and placed upon Jesus, and while He is bearing our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24), God, in keeping with His own nature, turns His face from His Son, withdrawing His presence. The impact of this upon the Lord Jesus goes beyond our abilities of comprehension. Jesus is not asking for an answer, but is rather identifying Himself as the chief subject of the twenty-second Psalm. He is stating that He is experiencing what Had been prophesied of Him nearly eight hundred years earlier. Those were the most suitable words.

Some have taught that God did not really forsake Jesus while He was on the cross. For them, this is too difficult to receive. Therefore, they view His words as nothing more than

oratory. Of course, that would mean that He really did not fulfill the 22nd Psalm, that He really was not cursed by God, and that God really can countenance the sight of sin.

SOME OF THEM THAT STOOD BY. Some hearing Jesus' words assumed He was calling out for Elijah (Matt 27:47). This confirms that they did not comprehend what He had said. In some sense it was confusing to them. It seems to me that Jesus purposefully veiled His cry, for no man was capable of comprehending what He was actually experiencing.

“ 36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down.”

ONE RAN AND FILLED A SPONGE. Following the cry of Jesus, “*Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” someone ran and filled a sponge “*full of vinegar.*” John provides us with a fuller account of that event. He tells us that it was precipitated by another saying of Jesus that is not recorded by the other Gospel writers. “*After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst*” (John 19:28). Note that Jesus knew that “*all things were now accomplished.*” There is a multiple meaning here. First, everything appointed to precede His death had now been accomplished. He had made provision for His mother, and He had apprehended a trophy of grace to carry with Him to the other side. There was also the fulfillment of Scriptures relating to His death. He had been despised and rejected of men (Isa 53:3). His visage had been marred more than any of the sons of men (Isa 52:14; Psa 22:6). He had made intercession for the transgressors (Isa 53:12). The iniquity of us all had been laid upon Him (Isa 53:6). He had experienced the abandonment of which the Psalmist spoke (Psa 22:1). The soldiers had divided His garments and cast lots for His vesture (Psa 22:18). He was mocked by the people (Psa 22:7-8). He was poured out like water, and all of His bones were out of joint (Psa 22:14).

Now, Jesus fulfills another Scripture when He cries out, “*I thirst.*” This fulfilled Psalm 22:15: “*My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death.*” It also fulfilled Psalm 69:21: “*and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.*”

But it seems to me that there is another “*thirst*” that is also encompassed in this saying – one that was experienced when He was forsaken by His God. “*My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*” (Psa 42:2). Who is able to estimate the profound longings for Divine fellowship that Jesus experienced during this awful hour? For the first and last time He was in a place where no Divine assistance was being realized. What an awful price was paid for sin! Even the faintest knowledge of it will provoke the tender of heart to abhor that which is evil, fleeing to Jesus for refuge from its grasp.

This is now the fifth saying of the Lord Jesus while He was upon the cross. The other four are as follows. They are listed in the sequence in which they were uttered.

1–“Then said Jesus, ***Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*** ” (Lk 23:34).

2–“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, ***Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise*** ” (Lk 23:42, 43).

3–“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, ***Woman, behold thy son!*** Then saith he to the disciple, ***Behold thy mother!*** ” (John 19:25, 26)

4–“***And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*** that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?” (Matt 27:46; Mk 15:34) .

HE GAVE HIM TO DRINK. The unnamed person filled a sponge with vinegar and gave Jesus to drink. The first time the Lord was offered vinegar mingled with gall, “*He would not drink*” (Matt 27:34). He would **not** receive assistance from men in the giving of His life as a ransom for many. This time, however, it is written that Jesus “*received the vinegar*” (John 19:30). In so doing He fulfilled the Scripture, “*and in My thirst, they gave Me vinegar to drink*” (Psa 69:21). Behold how precisely He thought, and how deliberately He gave His life.

LET US SEE. Mark says the person giving Jesus the vinegar said “*Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.*” NKJV Matthew tells us “*the rest*” joined in saying, “*let us see if Elijah will come and save Him*” (Matt 27:49). Mark has already noted that, upon hearing Jesus cry out to God, some of them standing by had said, “*Behold, He calleth for Elijah*” (Mk 15:35). They were like many of our day who make observations of Jesus without knowing who He is or what He has really said. They were only surface thinkers, cavorting about on the surface of Divine utterance like a spider who walks around on the water.

At that time, there is no indication that anyone standing by knew what Jesus really said – not merely the meaning of His words, but even the words themselves. They heard Jesus say a word that vaguely sounded like “Elijah” (Eloi), and thus assumed He was crying out to the departed prophet. Only when the record was written was the meaning unveiled. However, Elijah could not have helped Jesus at the time, for the 22nd Psalm also said, “*there is none to help*” (Psa 22:11). Jesus knew that if the Father forsook Him, it was pointless to seek assistance from any other place.

There is something else to be seen here. In those times, even though the people were corrupt, there was a sense of the supernatural – of things that extend beyond the here and the now. Elijah had been carried up into heaven over nine hundred years before Christ. Yet these people had no difficulty believing He was alive and well. I am afraid that the pseudo-scholasticism of our day has robbed the people of this kind of persuasion.

“ 37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 37 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”

JESUS CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE . Once again, emphasizing that Jesus was in control of both His body and His spirit, He cried out with a loud voice – after being on the cross for six hours. In every sense He “*gave Himself*” (Gal 1:4), “*offered Himself*” (Heb 9:14), and “*laid down His life*” (1 John 3:16).

Matthew says that Jesus “*cried again with a loud voice*” (Matt 27:50) – that is, after He had cried “*My God, My God . . .*” (Matt 27:46). John tells us what Jesus said at this time. “*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished*” (John 19:30). Other versions read, “*All is done,*” BBE “*It is consummated,*” DOUAY “*It is completed,*” NET and “*It is fulfilled.*” NJB What did He mean by this? His resurrection had not yet occurred, and that is surely essential to our salvation. Nor, indeed, had He yet ascended into heaven, been seated at the right hand of God, received all power in heaven and earth, and commenced His mediation of the New Covenant and intercession for those coming to God through Him – and that was all necessary also.

Here Jesus refers to everything that must precede Him taking away our sins (1 John 3:5), making an end of sins (Dan 9:24), and finishing the transgression (Dan 9:24). Sin was judged while Jesus was on the cross, when God forsook Him. The Divine stroke that was due sin was administered there – a stroke that would consummate in Christ’s death. When Jesus cried out, “*It is finished,*” He was saying that everything had been done that would justify His death

for the sin of the world. He was now a suitable sacrifice, and the body that had been prepared for Him was now ready to be offered (Heb 10:10).

Luke records that Jesus, after He had cried with a loud voice, said, “*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*” (Lk 23:46). Other versions read, “*commit My spirit.*” NKJV On the day of Pentecost, Peter unveiled something of the meaning of this saying, declaring that David was speaking about the dying Jesus when he wrote, “*For You will not leave My soul in Hades*” NKJV (Acts 2:27; Psa 16:10). Jesus committed His soul into the keeping of the Father, knowing that He would not be left in the abode of the dead, but would be raised again. Therefore, Jesus not only lived in hope, but also died in the full persuasion of what would follow His death (Heb 12:2).

Thus, the final two sayings of Jesus have been uttered, making seven in all.

JESUS GAVE UP THE GHOST. Others have also given up the ghost (Gen 25:8; 35:29; Acts 5:5; 12:23) –but none of them did so like Jesus. Emphasizing the **experience** of death itself, Mark says Jesus then “*gave up the ghost,*” or “*breathed His last.*” NASB Matthew stresses that Jesus **dismissed** His Spirit, laying down His life: “*yielded up His Spirit.*” NKJV Luke says Jesus gave up the ghost **after** He had commended His spirit to God (Lk 23:46). John accents the **personal devotion** of the Lord: He “*bowed His head, and gave up His spirit*” NKJV (John 19:29). When the spirit of Jesus departed from His body, it was not a natural experience, as with every other death. In this case, Jesus controlled the departing of His Spirit, dismissing it by an act of His will.

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS RENT. As soon as Jesus died, the separating veil of the Temple was violently torn in two from the top down, confirming that sin had been removed between God and man, and the way to God been opened up. Luke says the veil was “*rent in the midst,*” emphasizing the granted access (Lk 23:45). This was a symbolic gesture, and was not intended to allow for the continuance of the Temple ministry in the Most Holy place. The book of Hebrews stresses that during the administration of the Law “*the way into the holiest was not yet manifest*” (Heb 9:8). There was another “*Holiest*” place that was opened by means of Jesus death – and the way that led to it was a “*new and living way*” that permits us to “*draw near*” to God Himself “*with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*” (Heb 10:19-22).

By tearing the veil in two, the Lord signified the conclusion of the Temple service, and an approach to Him by means of routine. Once the way to “*the holiest*” has been opened, it is a transgression of great magnitude to attempt to approach God by means of rituals or procedures. Those who seek to worship or gain access to God by a series of authorized actions or activities, regardless of their nature, are on very precarious ground. Too, those who affirm that praise is the means of gaining access to God are operating under an Old Covenant principle. The means by which we come to God are spelled out with exacting precision. Several conditions are required. (1) A true heart. (2) The full assurance of faith. (3) Hearts that are cleansed from defiling guilt. (4) Bodies that have been washed with purifying water. We do not approach God with our lips, but with our hearts, and in faith. Where the specified requirements are not met, there is no frame of mind or activity that can compensate for their absence. It is categorically stated that we have access into grace “*by faith*” (Rom 5:2), and that we have “*access with confidence*” by the faith that comes from Christ (Eph 3:12; 6:23).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 169

Mark 15:39 *“And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. 40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; 41 (Who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem.”*

(Mark 15:39-41; Matt 27:51b-56; Luke 23:47-49; John 19:31-37)

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of people that come to light when Jesus died. In addition to Malchus, Pilate, Pilate's wife, and Herod, there were the soldier's who cast lots for Jesus' vesture, the two thieves, Barabbas, the centurion who observed *“Truly this man as the Son of God,”* Joseph of Arimathaea, Salome, and Mary the mother of James the less, who was the wife of Cleophas (John 19:25). The death of Jesus affected heaven, earth, and even the powers of darkness, with Satan destroyed in that death, and principalities and powers plundered. Sin was taken away, reconciliation was effected, and peace was made. Confirming the power of the Savior's death, some of the saints who had passed away were even raised from the dead. However, none of these things were apparent to those who were standing by on earth at that time. It was evident to some that something of great significance had happened, but the nature and extent of it was not yet known. The events and activities that attended the death of Christ are provided in order to confirm that His was a very real death, being so in the eyes of everyone who observed it. There was absolutely no question at that time about Jesus really dying. However, now that Jesus has risen from the dead, there is no longer a veil of darkness covering His death, nor can there be any question about the fact of its occurrence. No person will be convinced of the benefits proceeding from the death of Christ if they are not persuaded that it did, in fact, take place. Therefore, around the world, wherever the Gospel has been believed, the impact of that death is being chronicled in doctrine, while that doctrine is adorned by consistently holy lives.

“Mark 15:39 *And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.”*

THE EARTH DID QUAKE. Matthew records that simultaneous with the veil being torn in two from the top, *“the earth did quake, and the rocks rent”* (Matt 27:51). Other versions read, *“the earth shook; and the rocks split.”* NASB The impact of Christ's sacrificial death were felt in heaven, in earth, and in the region of darkness. In heaven, *“heavenly things”* were cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9:23). When His spirit left His body, and at the same time the Temple veil was *“rent in twain,”* a *“new and living way”* to heaven was opened and would be *“consecrated”* for travel

when He returned there (Heb 10:20). In the region of darkness the devil was “*destroyed*” (Heb 2:14), and “*principalities and powers*” were “*spoiled*” (Col 2:15). In the natural order “*the earth did quake,*” reeling too and fro as it would once again at the end of time (Isa 24:20). This time, the earth did not pass away, but would be upheld until Jesus came back from the dead to assume the reins of the Kingdom. The One who died had created the world (Col 1:13-16). It is also “*by Him*” that “*all things consist,*” or “*hold together*” NIV Here we are given a very small glimpse of what would happen if Jesus was not maintaining the worlds that He created. The universe does not continue according to the laws of nature, for it cannot sustain itself. Therefore, when God forsook the Son, the earth shook in that brief “*moment*” when the Son was forsaken (Isa 54:7).

The text also says that the “*rocks rent*” – like the Temple veil. What man had made was torn in two, and what God had made – the rocks – also were split. Many historians, both ancient and contemporary say that the “*fissure at Golgotha*” is still visible. McCLINTOK STRONGS’ ENCY

THE GRAVES WERE OPENED. Only Matthew records this singular event. Other versions read “*the tombs were opened*” – that is, graves that were hewn out of a rock – like the one in which Jesus’ body was buried (Matt 27:60). By “*opened,*” the text means they were split open by Divine power, confirming that the Lord has power over the grave. This was but a small prelude to the last day in which “*the earth shall cast out the dead*” (Isa 26:19), and “*the grave*” will have no victory (1 Cor 15:55).

MANY BODIES OF THE SAINTS AROSE. We do not know the number of bodies that rose from the dead, but it is said to have been “*many*” – a word that means “a multitude, numerous, abundant.” THAYER Unlike the general resurrection, only the bodies of “*saints*” were resurrected. We have no idea who they were, or what happened to them after Jesus returned to heaven. The record is given to us to confirm “*the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!*” (Rom 11:33). In the record, however, we do have the attestation that in Christ’s death the power of the grave was broken.

There is a technical point here. These saints did not come out of their graves until Jesus rose from the dead, in order that He might be “*the first fruits of them that slept*” (1 Cor 15:50). Matthew records that they “*came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many*” (Matt 27:53). This suggests that they were known to the people – and yet it is vague enough that we cannot be sure.

THE CENTURION SAW. Mark says that the centurion was standing “*over against*” Jesus, or “*opposite Him.*” NKJV Several things are said of this centurion by the Gospel writers. (1) He was standing opposite Christ, or “*right in front of Him.*” NASB . (2) He “*saw that He so cried out,*” or “*saw that He cried out like this.*” NKJV (3) He saw that “*He gave up the ghost,*” or “*saw how He died.*” NIV (4) Matthew says that he, “*and they that were with him*” were “*watching Jesus.*” (5) He also “*saw the earthquake.*” (6) Additionally, he saw “*those things that were done,*” or “*the things that had happened.*” NKJV (7) Together with those who were with him, the centurion “*feared greatly.*” (Matt 27:54). **Those seven observations confirm that this man was alert to what was happening, being attentive.** He will do what every person who is attentive to Christ will do. He will declare something that confirms the uniqueness of Jesus.

THIS MAN WAS THE SON OF GOD. Mark records that the centurion said, “*Truly this man was the Son of God!*” Matthew says the same thing (Matt 27:54). Luke reports that “*when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God , saying, Certainly this was a righteous man*” (Luke 23:47). It was obvious to this centurion that Jesus was **not** a malefactor, or criminal, as the case against Him had stated. He doubtless concluded that Jesus was the Son of God because

He had referred to God as “*Father*” two times: once at the beginning (Lk 23:34), and once at the end (Lk 23:46). That was enough evidence to bring the centurion to this conclusion. He was certain about this, preceding his observation with “*Truly,*” or “*Surely,*” NIV or “*Certainly.*” LUKE

What must be said of those who **still** do not see this, even after the Gospel has declared, clarified, and has expounded this very fact – the foundation on which the church is built. At some point, this fact must be perceived with the heart and confessed with the mouth.

“ 40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; 41 (Who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him;) and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem.”

Prior to mentioning these women Luke records that “*all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned,*” or “*went away*” NIV after “*coming together for this spectacle*” NASB (Luke 23:48). The mentioning of the women and those who were with them are contrasted with the ones who came, saw, and left as though nothing of significance had taken place on Golgotha, the place of the skull.

THERE WERE ALSO WOMEN. Here is a holy cluster of women that are separated from those who were at the foot of the cross. Matthew says “*there were many women beholding from afar off*” (Matt 27:55). Luke includes “*all His acquaintance,*” or “*all those who knew Him,*” NIV in the number (Luke 23:49). It appears that Mary Magdalene and perhaps the other Mary had gone away from the cross when Jesus was addressing His mother and John. Prior to that, they were said to be standing “*by the cross*” (John 19:25). But now, they are “*looking on from afar off,*” or “*watching from a distance.*” NIV Perhaps they sensed the privacy of the moment, and withdrew to a more distant location while Jesus addressed His mother and John. For whatever reason, they are now beholding the events from a distance.

Mary Magdalene. “*Magdalene*” was not this woman’s name, but indicated the city from which she came – Magdala, which was on the sea of Galilee. She is distinguished from the other Marys in this way. In the Gospels this Mary is mentioned twelve times. Luke 8:2 tells us that “*seven demons*” had been cast out of her. John 19:25 affirms that earlier she was standing “*by the cross.*” Mark 15:47 says that she, together with Mary the mother of Joses, saw where the body of Jesus was placed. Matthew and Mark tell us that she came with some other women to the tomb of Jesus, to anoint His body (Matt 28:1; Mk 16:1). John tells us she was the first to come to the tomb where Jesus had been placed. Finding it empty, she ran and told Peter and John that the body had been stolen (John 20:1-2). Mark 16:9 reveals that she was the first person to whom the risen Christ appeared. Luke 24:10 states that she was among the women who reported to the apostles that angels told them Jesus had risen from the dead. John 20:18 reports that after she had personally seen Jesus, she “*came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord.*”

Mary the mother of James. Mark refers to this Mary as “*the mother of James the less and of Joses.*” Matthew calls her “*the mother of James and Joses*” (Matt 27:56). Some think that this was Jesus’ mother, for among the four sons she had through Joseph, two had these names (Matt 13:55). However, this cannot be true, for His mother was at the foot of the cross. “*James the less*” is the other apostle named “*James,*” and was the son of Alphaeus (Matt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13). So far as privilege was concerned, he came behind the other James, and was therefore referred to as “*the less.*”

Salome. Mark refers to this woman as “*Salome.*” Matthew calls her “*the mother of Zebedee’s children,*” who were James and John (Matt 27:56). She also was one of the women who

brought “*sweet spices*” to anoint the body of Jesus, not knowing that He was risen from the dead (Mk 16:1). During the ministry of Jesus, she also requested that her sons, James and John, be given the privilege of sitting at the His right and left hands (Matt 20:20).

THEY HAD FOLLOWED HIM. These women are said have “*followed*” Jesus when He was in Galilee, where the bulk of His ministry was accomplished. Luke says they “*followed Him from Galilee*” – that is, they were from that region, and had availed themselves of the Lord’s presence and ministry (Lk 23:49). He also identifies some other women in that number, saying that they accompanied Jesus when “*the twelve were with Him.*” He adds Johanna and Susanna to the number. The zeal of these holy women is certainly worthy of note, as well as the fact that they followed Jesus early in His ministry.

THEY HAD MINISTERED TO HIM. These woman had “*ministered*” to Jesus as He traveled throughout Galilee. Luke provides an extensive comment about this. “*He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others , which ministered unto Him of their substance,*” “*contributing to their support out of their private means*” NASB (Luke 8:1-3). This must have required most, if not all, of their time. At least one of them was married, and all of them ministered to Jesus. I do not doubt they would be criticized today in much the same manner as Martha criticized Mary (Lk 10:41-42). During the time of our text, how their hopes must have been dashed to the ground! Yet, in just three days, the King Himself will comfort them.

“ John 19:31 *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: 34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. 35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*”

Being a personal witness, as well as being inspired, John provides some details of Christ’s death that are not mentioned in the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He also reveals the fulfillment of two prophecies that were at a very detailed level.

TAKE THE BODIES OFF THE CROSS. The Jews, though they thought nothing of consigning Jesus to death, were very interested in keeping the letter of the Law. The Law had said of those who were hanged on a tree, “*His body shall not remain all night upon the tree*” (Deut 21:22-23). They particularly did not want any of the bodies – the thieves included – to remain “*upon the cross.*” This was the Sabbath following the Passover, and was a “*high day,*” or “*special Sabbath.*” NIV Therefore, with a total lack of concern concerning the ones who were crucified, chiefly Jesus Christ, they “*besought,*” or “*asked Pilate that their legs might be broken.*” NKJV This would cause the weight of the body to fall, thus inducing suffocation and a more rapid death.

The soldiers commenced to carry out the sentence, first breaking the legs of the thieves who were not yet dead. However, when they came to Jesus they “*saw He was dead already,*” and did not break his legs. It was most unusual that Jesus had died, even though He had endured so much. Later, when Joseph of Arimathaea requested the body of Jesus, Pilate could

not believe He was already dead. He even called the centurion and “*asked him if He had been dead for some time*” NKJV (Mk 15:44). Death by crucifixion was not intended to be a rapid death, for it was not only a means of execution, but of putting fear into the people, should they be inclined to criminal activities. Jesus, however, did not die as others. He yielded up His life, laying it down by Himself, and dismissing His spirit when the work He had been given to do was completed.

John is quick to tell us that not breaking the legs of Jesus fulfilled the Scripture. This speaks of several texts. First, on the night of the first Passover, while Israel was still in Egypt, no bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken: “*neither shall ye break a bone thereof*” (Ex 12:46). Second, during the Passovers after that deliverance, Israel was charged to not “*break any bone of it*” (Num 9:12). Third, the Psalmist said of the Messiah that **God** kept His bones safe: “*He keepeth all His bones: not one of them is broken*” (Psa 34:20). This is why the soldiers made a point of seeing whether Jesus was alive or not. This does not seem to me to be an ordinary way of going about that grisly business. Indeed, they took note of Jesus **because** God was protecting Him, seeing to it that no bone was broken, attesting that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

THEY PIERCED HIS SIDE. Even Though Jesus was obviously dead, one of the soldiers, in what appeared to be a random act, “*with a spear pierced His side.*” It is written that “*immediately blood and water came out.*” Anatomists and physicians tell us that the outpouring of blood and water indicated that Jesus died of a ruptured heart, which resulted in the blood being separated into a clot, and isolated from the watery substance that surrounds the heart. However, this is **not** how Jesus died, for He dismissed His spirit, laying down His life. **Death did not overtake Jesus, which would be the case if His heart ruptured.** If there was any malfunctioning of His heart, it could only be because He was **already** dead. It could not possibly have led to His death. That would impinge upon what Jesus had said of His own death. It would also have ascribed to nature what Scripture assigns to Deity.

It rather appears to me that this incident confirmed that not only did Jesus **really** die, it was a **real** Man who died. Later, Gnosticism would refer to Jesus as an apparition, phantom, or figment of the imagination. Even today, Christian Science sees it this way, denying that there was true Substance in the Person of Christ and His blood.

This event, which also seemed to be nothing more than an irregular act, also fulfilled a Scripture: “*And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they **pierced***” (John 19:37). The Psalmist also spoke of Jesus’ hands and feet being “*pierced*” (Psa 22:16). However, the specific text to which this verse refers is Zechariah 12:10: “*. . . and **they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him***” (Zech 12:10). This text is also referred to in Revelation 1:7, which speaks of Christ’s second coming. In our text, the “*piercing*” is the particular fulfillment. The looking upon Him is yet to take place. Behold the marvelous particulars!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 170

Mark 15:42 *“And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. 44 And Pilate marveled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. 45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. 46 And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid.”*

(Mark 15:42-47; Matt 27:52-56; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:38-42)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus had died for our sins *“according to the Scriptures”* (1 Cor 15:3), fulfilling a host of prophecies concerning His death. He also accomplished a number of things in His death that were requisite to salvation. These included putting away sin (Heb 9:26), reconciling the world to God (2 Cor 5:18-19), making peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20), destroying the devil (Heb 2:14), plundering principalities and powers (Col 2:15), ending the Law as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4), and opening a new and living way to God (Heb 10:20). But there was much to be fulfilled. Isaiah said prophesied *“He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death”* (Isa 53:9). Other versions read, *“His grave was assigned,”* NASB and *“He was assigned a grave.”* NIV Like His death, Christ’s burial was purposed and carried out by God Almighty. Our text will reveal HOW that Divine determination was carried out, and the kind of people who were employed in this purposed act. As Joseph had made arrangement for his bones, commanding that they be carried out of Egypt, so Isaiah declared that something would be done with Christ’s body. Even though Jesus would be raised from the dead, there was a keen interest in heaven concerning the placement of that body until resurrection morning. Remember, the burial of Jesus is an essential part of the Gospel itself (1 Cor 15:3-4). All four Gospels record the burial of Jesus. Paul declared it in Acts 13:39. Baptism is also depicted as being *“buried with Christ”* (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12).

“Mark 15:42 *And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.”*

THE DAY BEFORE THE SABBATH. The *“even,”* or *“evening,”* NKJV commenced at 3:00 P.M. By now, it is some time after the ninth hour, nine ‘clock P.M. This was the hour that Jesus cried out, *“My God, My God, why hath Thou forsaken Me”* (Matt 27:46). Jesus appears to have died immediately after He had yielded up His spirit to the Father (Lk 23:46).

The *“day before the Sabbath,”* preparations were made for the Sabbath itself. This included making the house ready for the Passover Sabbath by ridding it of all leaven, for nothing leavened

could be eaten on the Sabbath (Ex 12:19-20). Paul alludes to this in his exhortation to rid the church of defiling influences (1 Cor 5:7-8). God Himself honored the day of preparation by taking away the sin of the world by means of His own Lamb (John 1:29).

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA. All four Gospels mention this man in connection with Jesus' burial (Matt 27:57; Mk15:43; Lk 23:51; John 18:38). He is not mentioned before nor after this time. Several things are said of him that are worthy of note. Luke 23:53 identifies Arimathaea as "*a city of the Jews*" (Lk 23:51).

An Honorable Counselor. Mark says that He was an "*honorable counselor,*" or "*a prominent member of the council.*" NIV This is the "*council*" that had decreed the death of Jesus (Matt 26:59; 14:55). Joseph had, then, been exposed to the trial of Jesus that took place in the palace of Caiaphas.

He waited for THE Kingdom of God . Mark also states that Joseph "*waited for the kingdom of God.*" Luke also reports that Joseph was waiting for the kingdom of God (Lk 23:51). He had believed the preaching of John the Baptist who told the people. "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 3:2). Jesus had also preached that "*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 4:17). When Jesus first sent out the twelve, He told them "*preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 10:7). The other Gospel writers refer to this same kingdom as "*the kingdom of God*" (Mk 1:15; 15:42; Lk 21:31). The word "*waited*" means Joseph was looking for, or anticipating, the kingdom of God.

He was a rich man. Matthew states that Joseph was "*a rich man from Arimathaea*" (Matt 27:57a). The fact that Joseph laid the body of Jesus in his own tomb fulfilled the Scripture, "*He made his grave . . . with the rich*" (Isa 53:9). Notice, it was not in life that Jesus became associated with the rich, as some false prophets allege. It was rather in His death that He did so, confirming that riches themselves are connected with death, at which point every man loses his grip upon them.

He was a good and a just man. Luke tells us that Joseph as "*a good man and a just,*" or "*a good and upright man*" NIV (Lk 23:50). This description confirms why he was an "honorable counselor," noted for good judgment, goodness and upright determinations.

He had not consented unto the judgment against Jesus. Luke also points out that Joseph did not cast his vote for the death of Jesus, but stood against the other members of the council: "*The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them*" (Luke 23:51). Another version says he "*had not agreed with or assented to the purpose and action of the others*" AMPLIFIED

He was a secret disciple. Matthew tells us that Joseph "*also himself was Jesus' disciple*" (Matt 27:57). John informs us that he was a secret disciple, who did not confess Jesus openly because he feared the Jews: "*Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews*" (John 19:38). But now, after Jesus has died, this man becomes bold, and no longer hides behind the wall of fear.

Methinks there are still people who have a heart for Jesus, and truly desire to follow Him. Yet, because of the lack of commitment to Jesus within the professing church, they keep that matter to themselves, being a secret disciple. Yet, if they will embrace the fact of Jesus death, they too, like Joseph, will become bold, displaying an obvious interest in Jesus.

HE WENT BOLDLY UNTO PILATE. Other versions read, "*taking courage,*" NKJV "*gathered up courage,*" NASB and "*daring the consequences.*" AMPLIFIED Matthew and Luke say he "*begged the body of Jesus*" (Matt 27:58; Lk 23:52). John says that he "*besought Pilate that*

he might take away the body of Jesus” (John 19:38). Considering the manner in which Pilate had looked upon the Jews, slaying some Jewish worshipers while they were making a sacrifice (Lk 13:1), Joseph was bold indeed. From the earthly point of view, it was Joseph’s respect for Jesus that caused him to gather boldness during this occasion. From the heavenly viewpoint, God moved this man to have more of a concern for the body of Jesus than for his own life. Mark says he “*craved the body*” (Mk 15:43). Matthew and Luke say he “*begged the body*” (Matt 27:58; Lk 23:52). John says he “*besought Pilate that he might take away the body*” (John 19:38).

“ 44 And Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. 46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.”

PILATE MARVELED. Pilate “*was surprised to hear*” NIV that Jesus was already dead. As I have said before, crucifixion was not intended to a rapid and merciful death. It was intended to be a rather lengthy process during which potential malefactors could witness the execution and thereby be duly warned to stay within the circumference of law and order.

Pilate therefore calls for the attending centurion – probably the very one that had witnessed how Jesus died, and responded “*Truly, this man was the Son of God*” (Mk 15:39). This centurion attested that Jesus had, in fact, died, being dead for some time.

HE GAVE THE BODY TO JOSEPH. When Pilate knew that Jesus was, in fact, dead, “*he gave the body to Joseph.*” Matthew says that Pilate “*commanded the body to be delivered*” to Joseph (Matt 27:58). John says, “*and Pilate gave him leave,*” or “*gave him permission.*” NKJV Of course, God is behind the scenes, accomplishing His own will, seeing to it that Jesus makes “*His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death*” (Isa 53:9).

Joseph then went to the cross on which Jesus’ body was still suspended, and “*took it down, and wrapped it in linen*” (Lk 23:53). John says that he “*came therefore, and took the body of Jesus*” (John 19:38). I cannot conceive of this as being in any way a simplistic task. I do not doubt that Joseph went about the work with the greatest care and tenderness. It must have been a heart wrenching task for him to complete, for he was a disciple of Jesus. There is no record of anyone assisting him in removing the body from the cross.

NICODEMUS JOINS JOSEPH. John records that at this point, Nicodemus joins Joseph. We do not know if he joined in removing Jesus from the cross, or in the initial wrapping of the body. He is specifically identified as the one “*which at the first came to Jesus by night*” (John 19:39). That visitation is recorded in John 3:1-21. The words “*at the first*” refer to the beginning of Christ’s ministry, when Jesus first attended the Passover feast, teaching and working many miracles (John 2:23).

Midway in Christ’s ministry, when the chief priests and Pharisees were engaging in an effort to snare Jesus, Nicodemus, himself a Pharisee, had spoke up: “*Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*” (John 7:51). His question elicited a response from the others, but at that time they refrained from taking further action against Jesus: “*They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house*” (John 7:52-53).

Thus, we have two men who were, to some degree, devoted to Jesus. They did not follow Jesus openly, as some of His other disciples, but had the beginning of life in them. In

some respects they were like “*a bruised reed*” and “*smoking flax*” (Matt 12:20). They could also be likened to “*little ones*” which, Jesus said, “*believe in Me*” (Matt 18:6).

John tells us that Nicodemus “*brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight*” This was a Greek pound, not an American one, and is said to be equivalent to about seventy-five pounds. John says that Joseph and Nicodemus then “*took . . . the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury*” (John 19:40).

THEY LAID HIM IN A NEW TOMB. John says of Joseph and Nicodemus, “*they*” placed Jesus in “*a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid*” (John 19:41). Matthew says that the tomb was Joseph’s own sepulcher, and that he is the one who had cut it out of the rock (Matt 27:60). Mark also tells us that the tomb had been “*hewn out of a rock*” (Mk 15:46). John reports that it was in a garden where Jesus had been crucified: “*Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid*” (John 19:41).

Here we behold a most excellent picture of true discipleship. The nature of a disciple is discovered in the earnest desire to minister to Jesus Himself. This is to be compared with those who only want to receive something from Jesus. Not yet knowing that Jesus would rise from the dead, Joseph and Nicodemus are careful to do something that could not be driven by a selfish motive. So far as they knew, they could not possibly receive reward for what they did. They did it because they wanted to, without any regard to reaping something from their labors.

Yet, wherever the Gospel is preached, the deed of these two men is declared. They did not know they were fulfilling the Scripture – but they were. As the day drew to a close, their activity picked up! Even though it looked as though everything was over, they continued to display their affection for Jesus. Like the woman who ministered to Jesus out of their substance (Luke 8:3), these men also ministered out of their’s. I thank God for their record.

“ 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid.”

There was a certain alertness in these followers of Jesus that is worthy of our consideration. Here, in what appeared to be the darkest hour for them, their minds were aware, their hearts sensitive, and their emotions under control. The witnesses mentioned in our text had remained with Jesus, even though the circumstances were grievous, and possible dangers were all around them. The mother of Jesus had listened intently when He spoke to her. The disciple whom Jesus loved had listened purposefully when Jesus spoke to him. There were some women who had lingered at the cross: “*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene*” (John 19:25). There was also a cluster of persons who stood at a distance, beholding what was taking place: “*And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him*” (Matt 27:55). The penitent thief was alert, perceptive, and able to make a departing request that Jesus honored: “*. . . this Man hath done nothing amiss . . . Lord, remember me when Thou comest into thy kingdom*” (Luke 23:41-42). The centurion observed what took place, and drew a God-honoring conclusion: “*Truly this Man was the Son of God*” (Mk 15:39).

All of these people, and perhaps more, kept their spiritual composure, even though it appeared as though all hope was lost. In the day of judgment, when various people will arise

to testify against those who had received more than they, yet done less with it, how will those who have given up during difficult times, when disappointment and frustration appear? The people in our text stand as noble examples of how individuals can be made to stand (Rom 14:4)!

THEY BEHELD WHERE HE WAS LAID. Mark says Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph *“beheld where He was laid.”* **Matthew** reports that after Joseph had placed the body of Jesus *“in his own new tomb,” “he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed,”* adding and *“there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher”* (Matt 27:60-61). The stone that Joseph rolled before the mouth of the tomb was apparently the one that Pilate had *“sealed,”* and placing a guard there (Matt 27:60).

Luke reports, *“And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how His body was laid”* (Luke 23:54). Therefore, they remained at Golgotha while Joseph took the body off of the cross. This must have required some time, for Joseph had begged Pilate for the body of Jesus. Pilate had sent for the centurion, who came and reported to him that Jesus had been dead for some time. Yet, the women stayed on, their hearts being knit to Jesus.

Now, after what may have been a rather lengthy time, they follow Joseph and Nicodemus to the tomb, which was in the same area. They did this while *“the Sabbath drew on,”* or *“was about to begin.”* NASB They did so in spite of the fact that this was the day of preparation, when they were to make ready for the observance of the Sabbath. Joseph and Nicodemus, also aware of the commencement of the Sabbath, no doubt moved quickly, lest they defile themselves. Neither them nor the women forgot the Sabbath day, even though they were in a set of circumstances that were, to say the least, unusual.

Here we are being exposed to tender hearts, and how they react under stress. In the flesh, tenderness is often related to weakness, so that people often break down, or fall apart because of sensitivity. But that does not happen here. In fact, this sensitivity is characterized by strength, attention to details, and mental alertness. As will be confirmed in the verses that follow, these women have every intention of returning to anoint the body of Jesus – but they will not do so in a manner that dishonors the Sabbath day. Although this was the darkest hour of their lives, yet they maintained a respect for the ordinances of the Lord.

John indicates that Joseph and Nicodemus quickly adjusted to the circumstances, making a choice on where to lay the body of the Lord. Apparently Joseph had not planned ahead of time to bury Jesus in his own tomb. Here is how John records the matter: *“Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore **because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand**”* (John 19:41-42). From one point of view, it was a quick decision. From the heavenly perspective, the Scriptures were being fulfilled by their deed, with Jesus making His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death (Isa 53:9).

Although it has become popular to assess believers from a psychological point of view, and to present psychical answers for spiritual problems, this text reveals the utter foolishness of such an approach. I do not believe the actions of Joseph, Nicodemus, and the women of reference, could have taken place among a people adopting these modern views. The alertness that characterized these people cannot be traced to the human psyche. They rather flow out from a devotion to Christ that cannot be achieved by routine or natural aptitude. These were

people of tender heart – people in whom the Lord could work both to will and to do.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 171

Mark 16:1 *“And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.”*

(Mark 16:1-4; Matt 27:62-66; Luke 23:56-24:2; John 20:1-2)

INTRODUCTION

So far as the disciples were concerned, the life of Jesus had come to an end, and they would no longer enjoy His presence. Their hopes had been dashed to the ground, and sorrow had filled their hearts, just as Jesus had said: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy”* (John 16:20). At this point, there is no recollection of Jesus’ words concerning their sorrow being turned into joy. How will these people be sustained under such grief? Solomon wrote, *“The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?”* (Prov 18:14). When there is hope, infirmity can be borne, even though it is grievous. However, when there is no hope, despair can rule ruthlessly over both heart and mind. Yet, in the record before us, this does not appear to be the case. Even the lifeless body of Jesus seemed to offer some consolation to these poor souls – so much so that they could go about living in an orderly and purposeful manner. While the other disciples met together, lamenting their loss of Jesus (Lk 24:9,17,33), a cluster of holy women continue their lives, focusing upon the body of their departed Lord. Having witnessed the dying of Jesus, the women have returned to their homes. Yet they are not in utter despair, for they had procured some spices, and now take the time to prepare them so they can anoint the body of Jesus after the Sabbath is passed. Behind the scenes, the prayer of Jesus is being answered: *“Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are,”* and *“keep them from the evil one”* NKJV (John 17:11,15). Now, we will be exposed to a manner in which God keeps the saints during times when it appears as though all hope is gone.

“ Matt 27:62 *Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”*

MATTHEW provides some additional information concerning the burial of Jesus.

These men – the chief priests and Pharisees – were very particular about what took place on the Sabbath day. Once they condemned Jesus’ disciples for picking some heads of grain and eating them on the Sabbath day (Matt 12:1-2). Another time, they watched Jesus with a scrutinizing eye to see “*whether He would heal on the Sabbath day*” (Mk 3:2). Still another time, they “*sought to slay*” Jesus because He healed an impotent man on the Sabbath day (John 5:16). However, on the day of our text – the day “*that followed the preparation,*” which was the Sabbath day – this entourage of Christ’s enemies take time to come together to Pilate. Not content to have pressed Pilate to have Jesus crucified, they now seek yet another favor. What is more, they have this ungodly communication on the Sabbath day.

WE REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID. This text will confirm that a person can be exposed to the very words of Jesus, know precisely what He said, together with its implications, and yet utterly fail to believe them. Among other things, this confirms that the things of God cannot be apprehended by academic means. Whatever value may be found in various forms of human knowledge and logic, they cannot convince, or persuade, the heart of the truth of God. That is something that comes through faith.

HE SAID, “I WILL RISE AGAIN.” Driven by unbelief, they refer to Jesus, who was Truth incarnate, as “*that deceiver.*” What blasphemy! John referred to the person who does not confess “*that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*” as “*a deceiver and an antichrist*” (2 John 1:7). Revelation 12:9 refers to Satan as the one “*which deceiveth the whole world.*” Yet these men, deprived of all spiritual wisdom, ascribe this Satanic trait to the One who Himself is “*the Truth*” (John 14:6). The One who alone is “*the Faithful Witness*” (Rev 1:5), is thus declared by them to be “*that deceiver.*”

And what is it that they cite as proof that Jesus was a deceiver? They provide a direct quote: “*that deceiver said . . . After three days I will rise again.*” Mark makes a point of referring to this saying, declaring that Jesus not only said it to His disciples, but also affirmed it openly. “*And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again . And He spake that saying openly*” (Mark 8:31-32). On another occasion, when “*certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees*” requested a special sign from Jesus, He replied, “*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Mat 12:39-40). Jesus said the same thing in a veiled saying that had been distorted and used against Him during His trial before Caiaphas: “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:19).

Jesus’ disciples did not remember these words, but His enemies did! That circumstance reveals both the weakness of the memory, as well as show how precise, yet impotent, it can be. I have often observed that the ungodly can remember certain aspects of the truth during the very times professed believers seem to have forgotten such things.

MAKE THE SEPULCHER SURE UNTIL THE THIRD DAY. Note the preciseness of their request. They care nothing about **after** the third day. They only request that the tomb be kept against potential intruders **until the third day** . If the enemies of Jesus can structure their requests around His words, what ought to be said of those professing identity with Him? The contention of these men is that the disciples might come, take away the body, and report that Christ had risen from the dead. This, they reasoned, would be a more complicating circumstance that His earthly ministry, which, they imagined, they had brought to an end. Even **they** knew that the report of a resurrected Christ would have great power, causing people to believe even more upon Him! One wonders why the modern church has not reasoned in

this manner, and maintains relative silence on that subject.

PILATE GIVES THEM LEAVE. Pilate tells them to take a guard-group with them, no doubt one of his own, and perhaps one already assigned to that area. He told them to “*make it as sure as you can,*” giving them permission to take whatever measures they deemed necessary. An official seal was placed upon the stone, apparently designating it as being under the authority of Rome, and a group of soldiers set as a guard before it – until the third day.

“ 16:1 *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.*”

THEY HAD BOUGHT SPICES. Mark tells us they “*had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.*” We are not told when the purchase was made. Luke provides some additional information concerning the activities following Christ’s death, saying they “*returned, and prepared spices and ointments*” (Luke 23:56). Although it was probably late when they arrived at their homes, they took time to prepare “*spices and ointments*” before the Sabbath day actually commenced. However, their diligence in preparing the spices after a long and sorrowful day ought to be noted – especially in a time when convenience is a dominating consideration among professing Christians.

THEY RESTED ON THE SABBATH DAY. In stark contrast with the malicious activities of the scribes and Pharisees on the Sabbath day, the women who beheld where the body of Jesus had been buried, “*rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandment*” NKJV (Luke 23:56). Even when the Man whom they loved and followed was apparently taken from them, they held no animosity toward God Almighty. They “*rested on the Sabbath day,*” according to His “*commandment.*” These women had expended their time and energies for Jesus, following after Him and ministering to Him (Mk 15:40-41). Yet, even though circumstance might well have suggested they had wasted their time, that is not at all the way they thought. They did not reason that God had acted unjustly. They did not question the love or control of God. Further, their exemplary conduct was not driven by the understanding of the Gospel: the putting away of sin, the destruction of the devil, the reconciliation of the world, the making of peace, or the opening up of a new and living way to God. When the Sabbath day arrived, even though they had prepared spices, and fully intended to anoint the body of Jesus, they “*rested on the Sabbath day,*” holding their plans in abeyance until they had obeyed the commandment of God.

In this respect, the righteousness of these women exceed that of multitudes in our time. There are all manner of people who forsake the commandment of God in order to do their own pleasure on a day God has sanctified for Himself. The Lord once counseled Israel, “*If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken*” NKJV (Isa 58:14). The memory of these women has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit because they honored that word. I do not know how a person could justify activities on the Lord’s day that have honored God less than those God associated with the Sabbath day. Understanding that this is not a matter in which legislation is in order, it seems to me that believers should be encouraged to think in such a manner. Perhaps one reason why many remain in a kind of static spiritual state is because they have not lived with these things in mind.

THE WOMEN COME TO THE TOMB. Having duly honored the Sabbath day, the woman start out for the tomb while it is still dark, or “*when the Sabbath was past.*” Mark adds

they arrived “*very early in the morning . . . at the rising of the sun.*” Matthew says they came “*in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week*” (Matt 28:1). Luke says they came “*upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning*” (Lk 24:1). John says it was “*early, when it was yet dark*” (John 20:1). Mark also tells us that Jesus rose “*early the first day of the week*” (Mk 16:9).

It appears to me that there is more in this account than meets the casual eye. The words “*when the Sabbath was past,*” and “*in the end of the Sabbath*” suggest the passing of the old order, while “*the rising of the sun*” and “*dawn toward the first day of the week*” suggest a new era that would be noted for light and illumination.

All four Gospels report this differently – yet they are not contradictory, but only accent different people. Matthew says the two named “*Mary*” came (Matt 28:1). Mark adds that Salome, Zebedee’s wife, also came with both of these women: “*and Salome*” (Mk 16:1). Luke infers that a number of other women came also: “*and certain others with them*” (Lk 24:1). John mentions only Mary Magdalene: “*The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early*” (John 20:1). There is nothing unusual about reporting things in this manner. Once, when Martha made a special supper for Jesus, among the guests only Lazarus was mentioned by name as being at the table with Him (John 12:2). Jesus also referred to hell, pointing out only one person who as there (Lk 16:23-26). There is no need to stumble over these texts.

“ 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.”

WHO SHALL ROLL AWAY THE STONE? We do not know how long it took the women to get to the tomb, or the distance they had to traverse. The number and weight of spices that they had purchased and prepared are also unknown. We do know that it was very early in the morning, “*when it was yet dark.*” Neither, indeed, do we know the full number of women who are making the trip. However, as they make their way to the tomb, they are talking among themselves, even as Cleopas and his partner spoke as they walked (Lk 24:14). Their talk did not gravitate to the things of the earth – like the earliness of the hour, or the darkness of the fading night. They were not discussing the possibility of encountering robbers, or other potential dangers. Rather, these women were consumed with the purpose for which they were coming to the tomb – to anoint the body of Jesus with “*sweet spices.*”

They had lingered to see where Jesus was buried, and beheld Joseph and Nicodemus inter the body of Jesus. They then saw Joseph as “*he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed*” (Matt 27:60). At this point, they do not know the tomb had been sealed, and a guard placed before it early on the Sabbath day, while they “*rested . . . according to the commandment.*” They are not disheartened, nor do they conclude that they should return home. Instead, they ask among themselves, “*Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?*” NKJV What an utterance of faith! They are walking in the dark, headed for a tomb that is in a garden on Golgotha. Flesh would reason that it would not be likely that anyone one would even be present to roll the stone away for them. But that is not how these women reasoned. Instead, they ponder WHO the person might be, and they asked, not even knowing that Jesus had risen from the dead.

I cannot help but compare the manner of the reasoning with many of our day. The thinking of professing Christians often gravitates to earth, when it ought to rise into the heavenlies. Instead of reasoning IF deliverance or Divine assistance will come, is it not far better to ponder the possible means through which it will come.

THE STONE WAS ROLLED AWAY. Matthew provides the details of **how** the stone was rolled away – an action that took place some time before the women arrived at the tomb.

The Angel of the Lord Descended. “*And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it,*” confirming his superiority over the circumstance (Matt 28:2). Jesus had already risen from the dead, so the stone was not rolled away to allow Him to come out of the tomb. Once again, as an angel from heaven enters the sinful domain of this world, the earth convulses. A “*great earthquake*” took place. Other versions read, “*severe,*” NASB and “*violent.*” NIV This is when only an angel descended from heaven. Ponder what will occur when the Lord Jesus Himself descends in **all** of His glory, and the glory of the Father, and the glory of all the holy angels (Lk 9:26).

The Appearance of the Angel. “*His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow*” (Matt 28:3). The stark contrast between heaven and earth is seen in the appearance of this angel. In the presence of angels, who are servants, earth never appears dominate or significant! However, that is not the case when men are unaware of heavenly things.

The Impact on the Keepers. “*And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men*” (Matt. 28:4). Those who were guarding the tomb, were military men – “*soldiers*” (Matt 28:11-12). Yet, they did not attempt to attack or restrain this angel. They rather shook with fear, and became like dead men, falling motionless to the ground. In other words, they looked dead. **Mark it well, no person from earth has ever been reported to have knowingly attacked someone who came from heaven.** Any soul who has even been aware of a heavenly confrontation has been prone to fear, and has never shown antagonism.

THEY FOUND THE STONE ROLLED AWAY. Expecting to see a large stone, the women fastened their eyes upon the tomb, “*And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.*” Luke says they saw “*the stone rolled away from the sepulcher*” (Luke 24:2). John says the women saw “*the stone taken away from the sepulcher*” (John 20:1). When John reports that Mary Magdalene ran to Peter saying that someone had stolen Jesus’ body, she made clear that she was one of several women who had come to the tomb: “***WE*** *know not where they have laid Him*” (John 20:2).

The text does not say that the women saw the soldiers “*as dead men*” on the ground, but I assume that is the case – a sort of testimony to the women. I base this on Matthew’s statement that later, **while** the women were on their way to the disciples to report what the angels told them, that “***when they were going***, *behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done*” (Matt 28:11).

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The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 172

Mark 16:5 *“And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. 7 But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. 8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.”*

(Mark 16:5-8; Matt 28:5-10; Luke 24:3-8; John 20:3-10)

INTRODUCTION

Reading the four Gospels concerning the post-resurrection activities of these women, some confusion has been generated by the commentators. Some feel that two different groups of women are being described – the group depicted by Luke being different than the one portrayed by Matthew and Mark. I am proceeding in the persuasion that there is one group of women, with Mary Magdalene first arriving, and reporting the empty tomb to Peter, afterward receiving a more extensive word from Jesus. The harmony in the reports is seen in the various circumstances that are accented by the writers. Special mention is made of the experiences of Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John. In all of this, some general sequence is provided. However, there are some matters in which the sequence is not the primary thing to be seen, but the event itself. If, therefore, the sequence appears difficult to establish, we should not be troubled, but rather focus on what is actually being reported. It must be remembered that the Holy Spirit has no trouble stating the precise sequence of a matter when that is the critical matter. I do will my best to establish what I perceive to be the order of events, confessing that there are some difficulties in this approach. However, those difficulties do not justify being contentious about them. In the Gospels, the Holy Spirit is conveying to us the impact of the empty tomb upon the people who saw it without knowing what had actually happened. They were incapable of making any association between the stark reality of that empty tomb and the clear words that Jesus had spoken prior to His death concerning His resurrection. **This confirms that the human intellect is not capable of assembling facts and drawing proper conclusions independently of heavenly intervention.** The necessity for revealed explanations is clearly established as well as the requirement to believe them.

“ John 20:3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. 4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. 5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. 6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, 7 And the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in

a place by itself. 8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.”

Although all of this activity appears to have taken place within a relatively short period of time, here is what I understand to be the sequence of events. All of the women start for the tomb early in the morning, while it was yet dark (John 20:1). Understanding that they probably did not all start from the same place, Mary Magdalene, possibly with some other women, arrives first at the tomb. Seeing that the tomb is empty, she runs and tells Peter, who was no doubt with the other disciples (John 20:1-2). Now, John provides the account of what took place before the other women arrive and enter the tomb. His report is significant because it will confirm how much evidence and testimony the disciples had received prior to Christ’s appearance to them.

PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLE. Luke reports only that Peter arose and ran to the sepulcher, not mentioning the “*other disciple*” (Lk 24:12). Later that day, Luke reports Jesus’ appearance to the two on the road to Emmaus. In that report Cleopas said, “*And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not*” (Luke 24:24). This substantiates that the eleven were not by themselves when they received the report. The “*other disciple*” is John, who is narrating the record. Like Luke in his writings, John never refers to himself by name. However, in his Gospel, he makes clear that he is the witness of whom he speaks: “*And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe*” (John 19:35). “*This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true*” (John 21:24).

JOHN STOOPED DOWN AND LOOKED IN. John arrived first at the tomb, outrunning Peter. However, giving due respect to Peter, upon whom more honor had been bestowed (Matt 16:19), John waits until He arrives. Still, he stoops down and peers into the tomb, beholding the “*linen clothes lying.*” The “*linen clothes*” were no doubt those with which Joseph and Nicodemus had wrapped the body of Jesus: “*Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes*” (John 19:40). The word “*lying*” suggests the clothes were not scattered about in a disorderly manner. The word “*lying*” carries the meaning of something being “set in place” in a deliberate manner. THAYER Without unduly pressing the matter, this confirms the orderly and precise nature of the Lord of glory. He did not throw off the linen clothes in which He was bound, but took them off and laid them down in an tidy manner – one that would bear witness to the truth of His resurrection, when He took His life up again.

PETER WENT IN AND SAW THE EVIDENCE. Having received the report that the body had been “*taken away*” (John 20:2), Peter immediately enters the tomb. He does not see a place in disarray, like one that had been plundered by thieves. John says he saw the clothes “*lie,*” or “*lying there.*” NKJV Quickly scanning the interior of the tomb, Peter also sees “*the napkin that was about*” Jesus’ head. This was similar to the one that was over the face of Lazarus when he came out of his tomb (John 11:44). This separate piece of material was neatly placed separate from the other clothes – “*wrapped together in a place by itself.*” The words “*wrapped together*” come from a single word that means “to roll up.” THAYER Other versions read “*folded up,*” NKJV and “*rolled up,*” NASB It was the “*Commander*” who rose from the dead!

JOHN SAW THE EVIDENCE AND BELIEVED. After Peter went into the tomb, John also entered, “*saw, and believed.*” Peter left “*wondering in himself*” (Lk 24:12), and John “*believed.*” Both responses indicate that they saw something more was involved than the body of Jesus merely being moved. The believing of John was faith in its infancy, and not in its fulness. It was believing in the beginning stage, as the next verse suggests.

THEY DID NOT KNOW THE SCRIPTURE. At this point, neither Peter nor John were able to associate what they saw with the Scriptures. The Scriptures included David's prophecy concerning Christ's soul not being left in Hades, nor His body seeing corruption (Psa 16:10). Christ's own words are also included (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mk 9:31; 10:34). By not knowing them, the text means they did not think or reason with them in mind.

THEY WENT AGAIN TO THEIR OWN HOME. They returned, and did not linger. Other versions read "*homes.*" NKJV Remember, Mary was staying with John at the time.

"Mark 16:5 And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And He saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. 7 But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you."

Mark now takes up the dialog following the departure of Peter and John. John tells us that Mary Magdalene was there with Peter and John, remaining after they left (John 20:11). Either the women were also there, or had now arrived. At any rate, probably emboldened by seeing or hearing of Peter and John entering the tomb, they also enter.

THEY ENTERED IN. Mark reports that the women entered "*into the sepulcher.*" Matthew omits any reference to them entering. Luke says, they "*entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus*" (Luke 24:3). He adds that they were "*much perplexed,*" or "*wondering*" NIV (Lk 24:4a). The word "*perplexed*" means "thoroughly nonplused," THAYER or bewildered, confused, and dumbfounded. They were incapable of processing what they saw. They could not associate the sight with the prophets or any word that Jesus had spoken. However, heaven will come to their aid, for they are in the right place at the right time. They lingered, while Peter and John did not, and therefore, these women will be given more.

THEY SAW A YOUNG MAN. Nearly every English version reads "*young man.*" The only two exceptions I can find are the James Murdock Translation (1852) – "*a youth,*" and the International English Version – "*as angel.*" In Matthew's account of this occasion, he states this was, in fact, an "*angel,*" and suggests by the placement of the text that it was the angel who had rolled away the stone and sat on it (Matt 28:4-5). Mark says this angel was sitting "*on the right side,*" apparently still seated upon the stone. Matthew also says that he invited the women into the tomb saying, "*Come, see the place where the Lord lay*" (Matt 28:6). Like all heavenly personages, the angel was modestly "*clothed in a long white garment.*" The words "*young man*" are translated from a single Greek word that means "youth," or "lad," THAYER or "a young man beyond puberty but before marriage." LOUW-NIDA **The idea seems to be that the least among the heavenly host are more aware of reality than the most mature among men.**

Luke reports that there were "*two men,*" or angels, and they "*stood by them in shining garments*" (Lk 24:4). This took place when they were in the interior of the tomb. Either the angel on the stone entered with the women and another angel joined him, or the two angels were in the tomb, and the inviting angel remained outside.

HE IS RISEN AS HE SAID. The angel told the woman not to be afraid, saying "*Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified.*" Matthew reports the angel saying, "*I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified*" (Matt 28:5). He added, "*He is not here, He is risen.*" Matthew adds, "*He is risen as He said*" (Matt 28:6). That saying is recorded in Mark 8:31 and 9:31.

Luke provides further details: "**Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but**

is risen” (Lk 24:5-6). To holy angels, it is wholly unreasonable to seek for the living among the dead, or the dying. Yet, men still insist on doing this, seeking for insight within a dying creation, or within the reasoning processes of those who are dominated by death.

Notice the knowledge possessed by these holy angels. They know that Jesus was crucified – “*Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified.*” They also know why the women have come to the tomb – “*I know that ye seek Jesus.*” They are also aware that Jesus has risen from the dead – “*He is risen.*” Additionally, they are very conscious of what Jesus has said – “*He is risen as He said .*” Luke is even more precise: “*remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again*” (Luke 24:6-7). **In this whole incident, the only people who are uninformed are those who are upon the earth.** All of this accents the suppressive impact that sin has upon the human intellect. Even the pointed and clear words of the Lord Jesus can be forgotten, only days after they were spoken. Oh, the assistance that we mortals need to even recall the words of the Lord, to say nothing of embracing them and acting upon them! Those who insist on overstating the capacity of the natural mind, or the human ability to reason must reassess their views.

REMEMBER WHAT JESUS SAID. The angel then tells the women to “*tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you .*” Matthew adds, “*behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you*” (Matt 28:7). Both Mark and Matthew report this word of Jesus, spoken to the disciples on the night of His betrayal: “*But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee*” (Mk 14:28; Matt 26:32).

Once again, behold how aware the angelic hosts are of the words of the Lord Jesus – even though those words were not spoken to them! See, they are not encumbered with the flesh, or hindered by vision, faulty views, and the infirmity of ignorance.

“ 8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.”

THEY REMEMBERED JESUS’ WORDS. Luke tells us that upon hearing the words of the angel, the women “*remembered His (Jesus) words*” (Lk 24:8). And, what is it that prompted the recollection of those words? **It was the precise quotation of the angel:** “*The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again*” (Luke 24:7). Both time and circumstance had moved these words from their memory. It is also important to note that the angel said these words were actually spoken to the women themselves: “*remember how He spake unto you.*” The words were spoken earlier in Christ’s ministry (Mk 8:31 and 9:31), and toward the close as well (Lk 18:33). These women were apparently present when they were spoken. Now, upon hearing those words again, they recalled that it was Jesus Himself who spoke them, even though they had forgotten.

THEY WENT OUT QUICKLY. Upon receiving the commission from the angel, the women “*went out quickly,*” or without delay. Matthew says they “*departed quickly,*” or “*hurried away*” NIV (Matt 28:8). Mark also adds that they “*fled from the sepulcher,*” running away in fear. Even though they ran, they did so in the right direction! However, even though there was a sense in which fear, confusion, and wonderment were mingled within them, yet they did not delay to obey the word given to them. Their immediate response under such circumstances highlights how serious it is to delay or even refuse to be obedient.

THEY TREMBLED AND WERE AMAZED. The women ran because they “*trembled and were amazed,*” or because “*trembling and bewilderment and consternation had seized them.*” **AMPLIFIED** The versatility of the soul is seen in Matthew’s account of this hasty and fearful departure from the tomb. “*And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word*” (Matt 28:8). Their flesh was trembling, but their hearts were rejoicing. Their understanding lagged behind as they were “*bewildered,*” NIV but faith had stimulated their hearts and brought “*great joy*” in the place of unspeakable sorrow.

JESUS MET THEM ON THE WAY. Matthew provides some information that is not included in any of the other accounts. As the women were running to tell Jesus’ disciples the good news, with trembling hearts and confused minds, they are met by the risen Christ Himself. It is as though He does not want them to be in a state of trembling when they bear witness to His disciples. He thus appears to them to bolster their confidence and calm their fears – and it all takes place while they are in the act of obeying. “*And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them*” (Matt 28:9a). The angel has already prepared them for this confrontation, affirming that Jesus “*is risen.*” And now, that word is confirmed to them.

ALL HAIL. When Jesus meets them He says, “*All hail!*” Other versions read, “*Rejoice!*” NKJV “*Greetings,*” NIV “*Hail,*” NRSV “*Be glad!*” BBE “*Shalom!*” CJB “*God save you!*” GENEVA The Greek word translated “*All hail:* is **Cai,rete**, , and means “*to rejoice, be glad.*” THAYER Here, Jesus dispenses His own joy, just as He did later when He dispensed His own peace to His disciples (John 14:27). Jesus’ resurrection was accompanied with great joy, as Peter affirmed on the day of Pentecost, fulfilling the prophecy of David: “*Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; Thou shalt make Me full of joy with Thy countenance*” (Acts 2:28; Psa 16:11). Now Jesus commands the blessing upon these women as they are in the process of doing His will.

THEY HELD HIM BY THE FEET AND WORSHIPED HIM. Matthew’s account says, “*they came and held Him by the feet, and worshiped Him*” (Matt 28:9). Who is able to measure the blessedness of that moment! They had come to anoint the body of Jesus, and now they are holding the feet of the risen Jesus, who is alive for evermore (Rev 1:18).

It ought to be noted that Peter and John came to the same tomb, saw the interior of the tomb, and yet were not addressed by either the angels or the Lord Jesus. In fact there is no evidence that saw anything except the interior of the tomb and the garments laid there. Jesus did not appear to them, choosing instead to speak to the women, commissioning them to bring the word of His resurrection to them, and instruct them what to do.

BE NOT AFRAID. Jesus first says to the women, “*Be not afraid!*” (Matt 28:10a). Their hearts must be calmed before they receive further revelation. Fear is distracting, and therefore must be quelled. How often Jesus spoke these words to His followers (Matt 14:27; 17:7; Mk 5:36; ; 6:50). **TELL MY BRETHREN.** The One with all power in heaven and earth says to the woman, “*go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me*” (Matt 28:10). This is not a testimony, but is a word of instruction. It fortified the word of the angel who told them to tell the disciples Jesus would meet them in Galilee just as He said (Mk 16:7; Matt 28:7). Thus the disciples will have a four-fold testimony: (1) The word of Jesus prior to His death. (2) The commission of the holy angel. (3) The second word of Jesus on the matter. (4) The word as it was delivered by the women. Surely that will be enough to convince them!

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 173

Mark 16:9 *“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. 10 And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.”* (Mark 16:9-11; Matt 28:11-15; John 20:11)

INTRODUCTION

The events related to the resurrection of Christ are filled with insights as well as provocative details. In them we find a confirmation of the power of unbelief, as well as the potency of faith. It also becomes evident that Jesus does not always operate according to outward protocol. Sometimes He works in a manner that is conducive to humility, teaching us that apparent privilege is not something in which men are to trust. The fact that Jesus had spent over three years with the twelve, losing only Judas, as it was determined, did not mean they would always be the first to whom revelations would be made. Although they had heard the most, ranking first in privilege, they would be among the last of the ardent disciples who would experience the confirmation of the risen Christ. These are things that cannot be viewed as statistical data from which patterns can be derived and taught. Jesus works in such a way as to accent who He is, thereby promoting faith and hope. Too, sometimes the first to see and know a thing are the last ones to believe – which makes no sense to the flesh. Further, the fact that this is contrary to the mind of the flesh did not move Jesus to cater to the flesh, working in a manner that was less offensive and more apparent to the natural man. Of course, these are all things that are *between the lines*, so to speak. However, they do shed light on some of the tendencies of religious flesh. As we go through this text, it will become apparent that the manner in which the resurrected Christ made Himself known does not conform to man’s way of thinking. In the appearances themselves, there is a sense in which the first is last, and the last are first. Also, people that were mentioned very little during the ministry of Jesus are accented in the initial appearances of Jesus, and those who were mentioned much during His ministry appear, for a time, to be secondary. All of this is being done that *“no flesh should glory in His presence”* (1 Cor 1:29). Jesus will always work in such a manner as to accent Himself, confirming that men are totally dependent upon Him for both blessing and insight. If He does not *“manifest”* Himself, men will not know Him (John 14:21).

“ Matt 28:11 *Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept. 14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.”*

Matthew alone reports the activity of the soldiers who were witness to the descent of an angel from heaven, the rolling away of the stone before the tomb, and the angel sitting triumphantly upon the stone as one in command of the situation. Remember, the soldiers had felt a great earthquake, and seen the angel whose “*countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.*” They shook with fear at the sight “*and became as dead men*” (Matt 28:2-4).

WHILE THE WOMEN WERE GOING. Matthew reports that an angel instructed the women who came to the tomb to “*go quickly*” and report to Christ’s disciples “*that He is risen from the dead,*” and would meet them in Galilee. The women “*departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word*” (Matt 28:7-8). On their way they met Jesus who confirmed the word of the angel and restated their mission. It is following this that the soldiers awoke from the stupor into which they had been thrown. Then “*some of the watch*” went into the city – how many we do not know. A Roman “*watch,*” or “*guard,*” NKJV consisted of “*four to sixteen soldiers,*” STRONG’S and therefore we assume that a fair number of witnesses made this journey into Jerusalem.

SOME REPORTED TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS. Because the chief priests were the ones Pilate had appointed over them (Matt 27:65), the soldiers make their report to them. For all practical purposes, this was regarded as a Jewish matter, and not one pertaining to Roman rule. These soldiers rehearsed their experience, showing to the chief priests “*all the things that were done.*” That would include the earthquake, the descent of the angel, the removal of the sealed stone, and the angel sitting on the stone. Additionally, they probably examined the tomb, and reported that it was, indeed, empty. These men had not seen Christ rise from the dead, and therefore could not report that singular event. However, they did know enough to conclude something supernatural had happened – something over which they had absolutely no power. Rather than setting the battle in array, they simply fell to the ground as dead men.

THE CHIEF PRIESTS TOOK COUNSEL. Although these were key men in the Jewish community, associated with the Law, its ceremonies, the Scriptures, and the Temple, they were not men of faith. This confirms that the Law “*is not of faith,*” or “*is not based on faith*” NIV (Gal 3:12). Because of their unbelief, they could make no correlation between the report of the soldiers and the word of Jesus. Although they had heard reports of Him raising the dead, and perhaps even seen some of those raised, such as Lazarus, they could not deduce that Jesus Himself had risen from the dead. So far as holy conclusions are concerned, their minds were impotent. Their learning, however astute it might have appeared before men, was absolutely ineffective in matters pertaining to Christ.

When these chief priests and elders took counsel together, it was not to review the report with honest and good hearts. Rather, it was to seek means to suppress the report, lest their blunder in rejecting Jesus might become apparent to the people. Therefore, they gave the soldiers “*large money,*” or “*a large sum of money,*” NKJV instructing them to say “*His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept*” (Matt 28:13). When these very men stood before Pilate, they told him Jesus had said “*After three days I will rise again*” (Matt 27:63). However, now they have no recollection of those words, for unbelief has so hardened their hearts that they have become totally unreasonable. They assured the soldiers that if Pilate heard about this, “*we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble*” NIV (Matt 28:14). Oh, the power of delusion and hardness of heart! If we knew nothing more than this account, it should cause us to fear the entrance of unbelief, as the Scriptures say (Heb 3:12)!

It ought to be noted that this report was considered to be perfectly believable. They had told Pilate they feared the disciples would do this (Matt 27:64). The obvious commitment of the disciples brought them to this conclusion. How does the commitment of the professed disciples of our time compare with that of the real disciples of Jesus' time?

THEY TOOK MONEY AND DID AS THEY WERE TAUGHT. The soldiers quickly acquiesced to this arrangement and began spreading the word. No doubt the word spread rapidly, which would make Jesus appear to be a liar, and His disciples as foolish men.

THEIR REPORT BECAME COMMON AMONG THE JEWS. It is generally thought that the book of Matthew was written between 60 A.D. and 75 A.D. This being the case, at least thirty years after Pentecost and the rapid spread of the Gospel, this report was still being circulated among the Jews. This accents the thoroughness of their rejection of Christ.

“Mark 16:9 *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.”*

JESUS WAS RISEN EARLY. *“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week.”* Mark is the only Gospel writer to make this specific statement. When the day dawned on that first day of the week, Jesus had already risen from the dead, triumphing over death and the grave. The resurrection itself was a confirmation of the nature of the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, no Divine recognition was realized until men had done the commandments (Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:11; Lk 10:28; Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12). Thus, the Sabbath day, which was the day of rest, came **after** man had worked, confirming the nature of the Old Covenant. The Scriptures make clear that the Jews never did enter into God's rest, even though they kept the Sabbath (Heb 3:18-19). The resurrection of Christ, however, confirms that life precedes work, for it is what Jesus is doing now that saves us (Rom 5:10; Heb 7:25).

HE APPEARED FIRST TO MARY MAGDALENE. Mark makes a point of the fact that Jesus appeared *“first”* to this woman. Luke also reports that Jesus cast *“seven demons”* out of Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:3). The actual details of that event are not provided. However, it is obvious that Mary had experienced a great deliverance, for even one demon can work havoc in a mortal (Matt 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; 17:18). Now, while she was exhibiting an unusual and bold love for the Master, He honors her with being the first one to see Him in a risen state. John provides the details of this appearance.

MARY REMAINED. John reports that after Peter and John had come to the tomb, went into it, and returned to their homes, *“Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher”* (John 20:11). She saw two angels sitting on the place where the body of Jesus had been lying – one where His head was, and the other where His feet were placed (10:12). These angels asked Mary why she was weeping, and she replied, *“Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him”* (John 20:13). What a tender-hearted person! She thinks that Jesus is dead, and that His body has been moved to another location – yet she refers to Him as *“my Lord!”* In this, she actually displayed more devotion to what she thought was a dead Jesus, than many do to the living Christ. How must the disinterest and indifference of professing Christians appear to holy angels? That is a sobering question to ponder.

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY. The angels do not reply to Mary, no doubt deferring to Jesus, who is standing behind her. As Mary turns to go, she confronts the risen Lord. She *“saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus”* (John 20:14). Jesus asks her the same

question the angels asked, and adds another one: “*Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?*” Mary thinks this is the gardener, or caretaker of the area, and no doubt supposes that he will be able to answer her question. “*Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away*” (John 20:15). She gives no thought to how she will move the body, for love does not postulate possibilities. She has already determined what she will do, and will take care of the details when given the opportunity.

“**MARY!**” Knowing that His sheep recognize and treasure His voice, Jesus simply calls Mary by name. At once she recognizes His voice, for “*He calleth His own sheep by name*” (John 10:3). Mary responds, “*Rabboni, which is to say Teacher.*” NKJV

“**TOUCH ME NOT!**” It ought to be apparent that the word “*touch*” does not mean to merely make contact with the body of Jesus. Not much later the other women will hold Him by the feet (Matt 28:9). After that, He will invite the disciples to “*handle*” Him, confirming they were seeing a very real body (Lk 24:39). He will also tell Thomas to put his finger into the nail prints of his hands, and thrust his hand into His side (John 20:27).

Here, the word “*touch*” means to take hold of, or cling to – as in “*touch not a woman*” (1 Cor 7:1), “*touch not*” (Col 2:21), and “*that wicked one touched him not*” (1 John 5:18). “*Touch*” is to handling what “*taste*” is to eating. Other versions make this distinction by reading, “*Do not cling to Me,*” NKJV “*Stop clinging to Me,*” NASB “*Do not hold on to Me,*” NIV and “*do not hold Me.*” AMPLIFIED There is a twofold explanation for Jesus not permitting Mary to cling to Him. First, He had not yet ascended to the Father – meaning that the risen Christ was not intended to be embraced in bodily form by those in the flesh. Second, Jesus had a mission that He would assign to Mary, and that would not allow for her to remain with Him.

There are some who teach that Jesus did, in fact, ascend into heaven and present His blood first, then return to appear to the rest of the disciples. This, however, is nothing more than a theory, for Jesus is expressly said to have “*entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*” (Heb 9:12). The Scriptures do not teach expressly, nor do they infer, that Jesus ascended multiple times into heaven. If this erroneous view was true, Jesus would have ascended and returned before He confronted the other women later this very morning.

“**10 And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.**”

I AM NOT YET ASCENDED. John reports that Jesus said to Mary, “. . . *for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God*” (John 20:17b). As I have already pointed out, this cannot mean He was going to ascend at that time, then return, spend forty days with His disciples, and ascend again. Early in Christ’s ministry He told the people, “*What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?*” (John 6:62). He also told His disciples on the night of His betrayal, “*I leave the world, and go to the Father*” (John 16:28). Again, during His prayer on that very night, He told the Father He had finished what He was given to do on the earth: “*I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do*” (John 17:4). And again, “*And now I am no more in the world*” (John 17:11). Both Paul and Peter spoke of Jesus’ return to heaven as a single event (Eph 4:8; 1 Pet 3:22). Paul associates that return with the giving of gifts to men. Peter identifies it with the subjection of all powers to Him. The Gospel writers affirm that He was “*received up into heaven*” (Mk 16:19), and was “*carried up into heaven*” (Lk 24:51). Luke states in Acts that He was “*taken up*” (Acts 1:9). Prophetically, Daniel saw Him

returning to heaven one time (Dan 7:13-14). Prior to His ascension, Jesus spoke of that event as entering “*into His glory*” (Lk 24:26). Peter proclaimed that once the heavens received Christ, He would remain there until everything spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets had been fulfilled (Acts 3:21). Jesus, therefore, ascended one time – and it was not a secret ascension. Rather, it was a public one, taking place before chosen witnesses.

TELL MY BRETHREN. Jesus told Mary to tell His disciples He was ascending to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God. These words would confirm the conclusion of His earthly ministry, and His imminent return to God. He had spoken repeated of this on the night of His betrayal. Twelve times He said to them “*I go*” (John 14:2,3,4,12,28; 16:5,7,10,16,17). Once He said He was going to “*prepare a place*” for them (14:2). Three times He said He was going “*to My Father*” (John 16:10,16,17). So far as the ministry of Jesus is concerned, it would commence in its fulness when He returned to heaven. His forty days with the disciples was to confirm with “*many infallible proofs*” that He was alive, and was the one to whom the prophets had born witness. There is no record of any major revelations of Himself or the nature of salvation being given during that time. It was a time of confirming.

THE MEANING OF THIS. All of this was intended to teach the disciples that the effectiveness of salvation would be worked out from heaven. That is where Jesus would perform the ministry referred to as men being saved “*by His life*” (Rom 5:10). Intercession and mediation would be made from there (Rom 8:34; Heb 8:6). Gifts would be sent from there (Eph 4:8). The Holy Spirit would be poured out from there (Acts 2:33). The rule of the kingdom would take place from there (1 Pet 3:22). Now He is speaking from heaven (Heb 12:25). Here is where we are to put our affection and fix our gaze (Col 3:1-2). A person or church that is not heavenly minded has no hope of being saved.

MARY WAS OBEDIENT. Mark reports that Mary “*went and told them that had been with Him , as they mourned and wept ,*” or “*while they were mourning and weeping.*” NASB John reports that Mary “*came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her*” (John 20:18). An eye witness and a faithful report! The witness was one who had traveled with Jesus and ministered to Him. She had been present with the disciples during many of His discourses (Lk 8:1-2). She had been the recipient of great grace, having seven demons cast out of her. Her faithfulness and devotion were beyond question. Surely her words will be good news to Jesus’ own disciples, to whom He had repeatedly made known that He was going to rise from the dead and return to heaven.

THEY DID NOT BELIEVE HER. “*And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not,*” or “*refused to believe it.*” NASB Not knowing he was speaking to the risen Christ, Cleopas later told Him that the reports of the women, as well as that of Mary, “*seemed to them as idle tales,*” or “*nonsense*” NIV (Lk 24:11). That is precisely what unbelief does – it makes truth appear to be nothing more than nonsense: at the best irrelevant, and at the worst the unintelligent ranting of a madman. Thus, the report of Joshua and Caleb seemed to be nothing more than foolishness to the unbelievers of their time (Num 13:30-14:1).

When the word of the Gospel, or any part of the apostles doctrine, is not received, it is because it is not believed. When men do not rejoice in the truth, it is because they do not believe it. When they ignore the word of God, it is because they have refused to believe it. There is no way to paint such responses in pleasant colors, or explain them away as though they were innocent. Unbelief is serious, and unless men recover from it, they will be “*damned*” (Mk 16:16).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 174

Mark 16:12 *“After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”*
(Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-32)

INTRODUCTION

The Spirit spends a considerable amount of time on the activities of Jesus and His disciples AFTER He had risen from the dead, and prior to His ascension into heaven (Matt 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-21:25; Acts 1:1-9) – 158 verses. These are a record of Jesus’ last activities in a visible form, and before the eyes of men. It was a period of forty days in duration, during which Jesus engaged in two primary activities. Luke sums them up in these words in the book of Acts: *“To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion [suffering] by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1:3). This is the time covered by the sixteenth chapter of Mark’s gospel. It is a kind of interim period during which the minds of the disciples were refocused with eternity in mind. During this time Jesus stressed how He had fulfilled the words of Moses and the Prophets, which highlighted the obtuseness of the disciples as well as the objective of the God of heaven. During those forty days, the Lord Jesus clarified that the world is the arena in which salvation is being worked out. However, it is not the fundamental place, nor is life on earth the fundamental thing. Therefore Jesus emphasized *“the Kingdom of God”* rather than the kingdoms of men. That means that Divine activity supercedes human activity, and that heaven is more important than earth. Had this emphasis not been made, the ascension of Jesus would have been most confusing. It is this very perspective – that of heaven being superior to earth – that has been obscured by Babylon the Great. The great falling away of which the Spirit warned could not have occurred without this world being perceived as the primary place, and the present as the fundamental time (2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5). With a consistency that is staggering to the intellect, Jesus refuses to dwell upon the present as He spoke with His disciples. He will turn their hearts and minds toward the future, and will equip them to view things from a heavenly point of view, with the purpose of God in mind, i.e. *“the Kingdom of God.”* **Jesus will prepare His disciples to live without his visible appearance** – something that will be a completely new experience for them. Since we are to live in the same manner, this is very relevant to us.

“Mark 16:12 *After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.”*

AFTER THAT. Other versions read, *“and after these things,”* ASV *“and after that,”* NASB *“afterward,”* NIV *“after this,”* NRSV and *“later.”* GWN The point of reference is the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene and her report to *“them that had been with Him”* (16:9-11). On the surface, this may appear to be incidental, but it is not. **Notice that the stress is being placed upon Jesus and what He did.** People are included only when their activities relate to Him. This is

true of everyone mentioned in the Gospels – both friend and foe. Individuals are mentioned **only** within the context of Jesus, whether they are coming to Him, or He is going to them. Even religious dignitaries come into the picture only when they have to do with Christ, whether chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, or lawyers. Political figures are also noted only when they have to do with Jesus: i.e. Herod and Pilate.

All of this indicates that a Divine agenda is really driving the affairs of this world. That is the precise reason why things in this world obtain importance only to the degree they relate to the Lord. They are altogether right when they are in harmony with His nature and will, and they are altogether wrong when they are averse to such associations.

It is also important to note here that the commentary is on what Jesus is doing, not what men are doing. “*After that*” does not relate to what Mary did, but to what Jesus did. He is the theme, men are the incidentals.

HE APPEARED IN ANOTHER FORM. Jesus “*appeared in another form.*” Other versions read, “*appeared in different form,*” KJV “*was manifested in another form,*” ASV “*under another aspect,*” MRD “*showed himself under another form,*” NJB “*in a strange figure,*” TYNDALL “*He had changed His appearance,*” LIVING and “*used a different form to appear.*” IE

The word “*appeared*” is a key one. In the Gospels, it is never applied to the manner in which individuals are ordinarily seen. It is used fourteen times in the Gospels. Angels “*appeared*” (Matt 1:20; 2:13; Lk 1:11; 22:43). The Lord “*appeared*” to Joseph in a dream (Matt 2:19). The Savior’s star “*appeared*” (Matt 2:7). Moses and Elijah “*appeared*” at Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt 17:3; Mk 9:4; Lk 9:8,31). Those who rose from the dead when Jesus died later “*appeared*” to many in Jerusalem (Matt 27:53). The resurrected Jesus “*appeared*” to Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9). Jesus “*appeared*” to the eleven as they were eating (Mk 16:14). Jesus “*appeared*” to Simon following His resurrection (Lk 24:34). Jesus referred to His second coming as the time when He would “*appear*” (Lk 24:30). The only other use of this word has to do with the interpretation of what men see (Matt 6:16,18; 23:27-28; Lk 11:44; John 7:24).

This confirms that the resurrected Christ could not be seen unless He accommodated Himself to human vision. He was of a different order, meaning that He could not be seen unless He manifested Himself. The word “*manifest*” in any of its varied forms is used a single time in Genesis through Revelation KJV (Eccl 3:18). The NASB uses it twice, speaking of a future time (Ezek 28:22,25). It is of the same literary gender as “*appear.*”

The appearance of our text was, in fact, a manifestation, or revelation. Jesus had plainly told His disciples that after His death “*the world seeth Me no more*” (John 14:19). The only people that would ever see Him again were those to whom He chose to reveal, or manifest, Himself. **Even then, He was only recognized when He said or did something.**

Here, “*another form*” does not speak of shape, but of external appearance. He appeared as an ordinary individual, and yet these two could not recognize Him. In other words, they could not see past the outward appearance – and they saw nothing in that appearance that led them to think it was the Jesus with whom they had walked. Luke says of this appearance, “*But their eyes were holden that they should not know him*” (Luke 24:16). Other versions read, “*their eyes were restrained,*” NKJV “*their eyes were prevented,*” NASB “*they were kept from recognizing,*” NIV and “*their eyes were held.*” AMPLIFIED Keep in mind that this is said of those to whom Jesus “*appeared.*” They were kept from recognizing Jesus, even though they could see Him. The King James Versions says they did not have the ability to “*know Him.*” In other words, they could not correlate the One they saw with the One with whom they had walked and with whom they were intimately acquainted – the One

they had heard, and the One whose works they had seen.

This accounts for why some people can read the Scriptures, yet fail to see what is declared in them. Jesus is in every aspect of the Scriptures, for they testify of Him (John 5:39). Yet, some are not capable of perceiving Him. They can, at the very best, see only laws, guidelines, instructions, and various things they call *patterns* or *guidelines*. Their eyes are “holden.”

TWO OF THEM. Mark says that Jesus appeared to “*two of them . . . that had been with*” Jesus, and to whom Mary testified (Mk 16:10-11). These two were there at that time. Luke also says they were “*two of them*” to whom the women testified, numbering them with “*all the rest*” who were “*with the eleven*” (Lk 24:9-11). Luke identifies one of them as “*Cleopas*” (Lk 24:18).

“ Luke 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.”

Luke provides an extensive record of this appearance, and it is worthy of our consideration. Concerning Christ’s appearance on the day of His resurrection, Matthew gives **two** verses relating to the appearance of Jesus to the women (Matt 28:9-10). John has **nine** verses relating to Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-19). John also contains **thirteen** verses relating to Christ’s appearance to His the eleven and those with them (John 20:19-31). Luke devotes **fourteen** verses to the same account (Lk 24:36-49). The account of Jesus’ appearance to the two on the road leading to Emmaus contains in **twenty** verses (Lk 24:13-32).

THAT SAME DAY. The activities being reported took place on the same day Jesus was raised from the dead – the “*first day of the week*” (Mk 16:9). What a remarkable number of things took place on that day – and they all related to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no record of what the chief priests and their cohorts were doing on this day. The doings of Pilate and Herod during this time are not known, nor is the state of the city of Jerusalem.

A VILLAGE CALLED EMMAUS. These two, numbered among those who were assembled together “*with the eleven*” when the Mary Magdalene and the women gave their report, were journeying back to their home, which was in “*a village called Emmaus.*” This is the only mention of this “*village*” in the entire Bible – and the **only** reason it is mentioned is because some of those to whom Jesus appeared lived there.

It is the manner of the Lord to dignify certain places because of people lived there of whom He approves. Thus we read of “*the land of Uz*” in association with Job (Job 1:1), “*the city of Thyatira*” being the residence of Lydia (Acts 16:14), Bethsaida, which was “*the city of Andrew and Peter*” (John 1:44), and “*Cana of Galilee,*” which was identified with Nathanael (John 21:2). Take, for example, the worldly famous city of Athens. In the Scriptures, it is only mentioned when it relates to the activities of men of God (Acts 17:15,16,22; 18:1; 1 Thess 3:1). Without spending an inordinate amount of time on this point, this gives some indication of what being “*the salt of the earth*” involves (Matt 5:13). If God ascribes any value to a place in this world, it is only because of its identity with Himself (Canaan – His land), or those who are favored in His sight.

A “*village*” is a small town, and was generally regarded as a place where laborers in the fields returned for rest. In our time, such places are referred to as “bedroom communities,” away from the activities of a busy city and employment of the masses. This village was located “*about three thousand furlongs*” from Jerusalem. That is “*about seven miles,*” NKJV a “*furlong*” being equal to

606 feet 9 inches. McCLINTOK-STRONG'S Keep in mind what had taken place up this time – particularly after Jesus has risen from the dead. The disciples had gathered together in Jerusalem, and spent some time mourning and weeping (Mk 16:10). Mary had reported to the disciples that the tomb was empty, and she did not know where the body of Jesus had been taken (John 20:1-2). At the report, Peter and John had ran to the tomb to confirm the report that the body was not there (John 20:2-10). Jesus had appeared to Mary, telling her to tell His disciples He was ascending back to the Father (John 20:15-18). Other women also came to the tomb, saw angels, were instructed by them, confronted Jesus who confirmed the message given to them, and had reported to the disciples what they had seen and heard (Matt 28:1-10; Mk 16:1-8).

THEY TALKED TOGETHER. Now, we are well into the day – the first day of the week – and these two men are on a seven-mile walk back to their home. There is no mention of them being fatigued or worn out with all of the stress, sorrow, and activities that had taken place during the last three days. Indeed, they had been busy days for them all. Not only that, the greatest grief of their entire lives was now being experienced. These individuals were under the cloud of sorrow, and not even a small cloud of hope was in their sky.

One might imagine that such men would engage in some distracting activity to get away from the grief of that time. After all, their hopes had been dashed upon the rocks of futility, and the One to whom they had given themselves was no longer with them.

Notwithstanding this rather human assessment, there is something else to be seen here. They “*talked together of all these things which had happened.*” They had been associated with Him who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6), and they could not easily forget it. That is the nature of the Lord’s Christ – to deliver an impact upon the hearts and minds of men that they cannot easily dismiss, No person can come in contact with “*God manifest in the flesh*” and treat that confrontation as something ordinary. There are holy influences brought to bear upon the souls of those who are confronted with Jesus. To dismiss them, one must quench the Spirit, and violently thrust holy inclinations from themselves. **These people did not do this.** Even though it appeared hopeless, they “*were talking with each other about everything that had happened.*” NIV We will now see how the Lord responds those who are engaged in such a conversation.

“ Luke 24:15 *And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. 16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know im. 17 And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?*”

IT CAME TO PASS. Other versions read, “*so it was,*” NKJV and “*it came about.*” NASB This is a significant expression in Scripture – “*it came to pass.*” Those four words are translated from a single Greek word (**evge,neto**). The word means “ to come into being, begin to be . . . happen.” THAYER This is speaking of an effect that can be traced back to a cause. It is not speaking of happenstance, or something that takes place randomly, or incidently, or unintentionally. The phrase itself (“it came to pass”) is mentioned four hundred and fifty-three times in Scripture. It is a way of speaking of the Lord being the Governor, and causing certain things to take place, even though, from an earthly perspective, it does not appear likely, or even possible.

WHILE THEY COMMUNED. The preceding verse said they “*talked together,*” giving us the subject about which they were walking “*all these things which had happened.*” Now, the nature of their talking is unveiled. It is said that they “*communed*” and “*reasoned.*” Other versions read, “*conversed and reasoned,*” NKJV “*conversing and discussing,*” NASB “*walked and discussed,*” NIV and “*communed and questioned.*” ASV The word “*communed*” means discuss together, emphasizing that both were involved in the communication. The word “*reasoned*” means to

examine, question, and even to dispute. It is an effort to see the logic of a thing, or how “*the things that had happened*” related to one another, and to what they had known about Jesus. The thing that makes something reasonable is when all seeming contradictions have been resolved, and the conclusion does not conflict with any other known reality. This is what legitimate debate is all about – arriving at a conclusion that does not require the repudiation of any established verity.

In this case, you might say they were trying to put everything together. How did the death of Jesus fit in with what they had perceived Him to be, and with what they understood Him to have declared. In other words, they wanted to understand, but were unable to do so. However, they were not willing to throw away all of that time they had spent with Jesus, or to forget what they had seen Him do and heard Him say.

It ought to be noted that there are countless numbers of professing Christians who have never had such a discussion. They have never really probed the things to which they have been subjected, or examined them with care and interest. In fact, the structure of the nominal church does not encourage such an approach to truth. It rather presents positions and approaches that are said to have been proven true. That is sufficient reason to accept them, whether they have been substantiated to the heart or not. However, this is not the manner of the Lord of glory. When, for example, the apostle Paul was faced with some kind of contradiction, he went about to cast down what was false and establish what was true. He confirmed the soundness of truth and the corruption of the lie. This is how he showed the wrongness of fornication (1 Cor 6:12-20). It is how he unveiled the absurdity of being justified by the works of the Law (Rom 4:1-25). It is also how he established the blighting effects of human philosophy (Col 2:9-23). A truly unreasonable religion cannot possibly be a true one. All truth is integrated and harmonious with a common objective.

JESUS DREW NEAR. Confirming that what “*came to pass*” had to do with Divine initiatives and not lifeless principles, “*Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them,*” or “*walked along with them.*” NIV He did not do this because He had to, but because the subject being discussed was one in which He could engage. He was further attracted to people who talked about such things, just as surely as God was to those who “*feared the Lord*” and “*spoke often to one another*” because of it (Mal 3:16-17). One of the monumental hindrances in an assembly that does not speak of the things of Christ is that He does not join the people. He affirmed that He can only be found where people have gathered together in His name (Matt 18:20).

Appearing in “*another form*” with which the two were not acquainted, they were not aware of who it was that had joined them. Their eyes were “*holden,*” “*restrained,*” NKJV “*prevented,*” NASB or “*kept from*” NIV seeing or recognizing Him. **This was the work of God, who will not allow men to see His Son correctly until they have believed the truth about Him!** Those who insist on maintaining incorrect views of Jesus are still not allowed to see Him in truth. That view is promoted exclusively by the Gospel, which is “*record God has given of His Son*” (1 John 5:10-11). Until that specific view is declared, espoused, and discussed, Jesus will remain incognito, and in such a circumstance, spiritual advantages are not likely to occur.

WHAT MANNER OF COMMUNICATIONS ARE THESE? Being fully aware of what they are discussing, Jesus presses the issue. He specifically wants to know what kind of discussion had promoted sadness in them as they walk and talk. What kind of reasoning has produced such a burden? Let us learn from this question to trace our reactions back to their cause, whether they are comely or uncomely. Also, clarity is often realized by reasoning with Jesus Himself.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 175

Mark 16:12 *“After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”*

Luke 24:18 *And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him.”* (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:18-20)

INTRODUCTION

Appearing in “*another form*,” Jesus has joined two disciples as they journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are returning from being with the eleven and others, who were morning and weeping in despair. As they walked they talked to one another concerning the things that had taken place. Even though they did not comprehend what had happened, it was the topic of their conversation. Although their hopes had been blasted, and it appeared as though there was no hope, they continued to speak about what had taken place. They were not angry over what had happened, but were perplexed. They did not charge God with injustice, and question why He had allowed such things to take place. They were not speaking about various views of God, but of the things that had happened. This was nothing less than the effects of being with Jesus, beholding His works, and hearing His wondrous words. Jesus had brought a perspective of God to them that did leave them question the wisdom of God, or His purposes, or what He does. They were confused, but God was still at the center of their thinking. They will not question the promise of God concerning the Messiah, but confess to being unsure whether or not Jesus was the One God had sent. They do not question what the validity of what Jesus had done, and did not question the truth of what He had taught them. Seems to me that it is important to note these distinctions in view of the kind of conclusions professing Christians often draw in our time. They appear to reason in a different manner, thus indicating their view of God is corrupted.

“ Luke 24:18 *And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?” 19a* *And He said unto them, ‘What things’”*

It is assumed that Christ’s appearance to these two took place between 4-6 PM. This is based upon the fact that evening drew on as they walked. It was still the first day of the week.

ONE OF THEM NAMED CLEOPAS. The precise identity of this man is not sure. Some from early centuries say this was Alphaeus, the father of James the less (Matt 10:3). Others think it was the Cleophas of John 19:25, husband of the other Mary. We simply are not certain

of the identity of this man. **However, we do know that these two were chosen witnesses, selected by God to see the risen Christ.** Peter said of Christ's post-resurrection appearances, "*Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead*" (Acts 10:40-41). Not only were the "*witnesses*" chosen by God, they also "*did eat and drink*" with the risen Christ. Although they were not apostles, these two men qualify on both requirements. Jesus appeared to them, and they ate and drank with Him. We do know that these were numbered among "*all the rest*" who were with "*the eleven*" when the women reported that Jesus was risen from the dead (Lk 14:9). Mark specifically says they were "*two of them*" who were with the disciples who "*believed not*" when Mary Magdalene reported Jesus was alive (Mk 14:10-11). This record confirms that the Lord takes note of those who think upon Him, even though their thoughts may be flawed.

JERUSALEM WAS THE PLACE. Jesus had asked, "*What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?*" (Luke 24:17). So far as Cleopas was concerned, this suggested the One speaking was not a local resident, but "*one visiting Jerusalem.*" NASB Although Cleopas was abiding in Emmaus, he does not mention anything that was taking place there. Nor, indeed, does he mention any of the surrounding cities like Bethany, or Bethlehem, or Bethel, or Gilgal – or any of the other many cities, towns, and villages in that area. Jerusalem was the place where the significant things had taken place. There is a lesson to be learned here. Profitable conversation will come from a proper focus. If you want to talk about proper things, you must speak of the place where they were accomplished.

THE PUBLIC NATURE OF "THE THINGS." Cleopas refers to "*the things which are come to pass there in these days.*" There were no doubt many "things" that took place in Jerusalem during the last few days. The Passover had been observed. There were no doubt political matters that took place in the government. So far as the ministry of Jesus was concerned, He had cleansed the Temple (Matt 21:12-14). Many blind and lame had been healed in the Temple (Matt 21:14). However, these were not the nature of "*the things*" of which Cleopas spoke. He is speaking particularly of the things pertaining to Christ's death.

The public nature of the matters relating to the crucifixion of Jesus is worthy of note. Some years after the events of this text, Paul was stand before king Agrippa and bear witness that "*That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles*" (Acts 26:23). He then referred to the public nature characterizing the suffering and death of Jesus. "*For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner*" (Acts 26:26). The "*thing*" of which Paul spoke is what God did, accomplishing it through the Jews and the Romans in a public arena. God "*delivered Him up for us all*" (Rom 8:32). Even though the public did not see it, God "*made Him to be sin for us*" (2 Cor 5:21), and "*made Him a curse*" (Gal 3:13). Even though the people did not know it. Jesus was rejected and crucified according to the "*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*" (Acts 2:23). Even the ministry of Jesus was a display of God's approval of Him "*by miracles, signs, and wonders*" (Acts 2:22). It was all done publically, and every knew they had happened, even though they did not know why they occurred or what was accomplished in them. The latter is what is to be expounded by those of understanding. It is not enough to say that Jesus died. Even Cleopas knew that.

"WHAT THINGS?" Jesus responds as though He was a stranger in those parts. And, from one point of view, He was. He will draw out of Cleopas what he perceived had happened. This is the manner of the Lord, for the proper ministration of the truth is will expose the ignorance of men, and show them things they ought to have known. God asked Adam, "*Hast thou eaten of the tree?*" (Gen 3:11). He asked Cain, "*What hast thou done?*" (Gen 4:10). He asked Elijah, "*What doest thou here,*

Elijah” (1 Kgs 19:9). Jesus asked His disciples, “*What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?*” (Mark 9:33). When we have dealings with Jesus, even though He knows what is in man, and “*needed not that any should testify of man*” (John 2:26), yet He draws our thoughts out of us in order to minister to us.

“Luke 24:19b *And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.”*

Cleopas does not hesitate to answer Jesus’ question. He had already been discussing these matters with his companion, and now he will continue the discussion with what he conceives to be, a “*stranger*” who was not familiar with what had happened in Jerusalem. In view of the fact that they had been saddened by the events, and really did not have a proper understanding of them, it will be interesting to hear how he speaks about Jesus.

CONCERNING JESUS OF NAZARETH. First, Cleopas focuses on a particular person: “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” Other people had been involved in the events, but he does not speak particularly of them. He does not focus his attention on the religious leaders – the high priest, the scribes, the Pharisees, the elders, and the Sadducees. He does not draw the attention to Judas who betrayed Jesus, or to Pilate who tried Him. Everything that he reports will be within the context of “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” Even though he thinks that Jesus is dead, He is still the center of his thinking. Although it appeared as though He had been overcome by His enemies, He has no demeaning thoughts about Jesus.

WHICH WAS A PROPHET. He does not say he *thought* Jesus was a Prophet, but that He “*was a prophet.*” That was His first consideration of Jesus, and pertained to what Jesus had to say, for prophets are noted for what they say. Moses had said the Messiah would be “*a Prophet*” (Deut 18:15,18). Jesus had referred to Himself as “*a Prophet*” (Matt 13:57). Even the multitude had said, “*This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee*” (Matt 21:11). The woman at the well of Samaria said to Jesus, “*I perceive that Thou art a prophet*” (John 4:19). The blind man who was healed when he washed off the clay Jesus had put upon his eyes said of Him, “*He is a prophet*” (John 9:17). The common people “*heard Him gladly,*” hanging on every word He spoke (Mk 12:37). The multitudes referred to His sayings as “*gracious words*” (Lk 4:22). During His ministry, Jesus was noted for His words!

I have observed that over the years people have become less aware of what Jesus said. He is not commonly perceived as a “*Prophet,*” even though He is the ultimate Prophet, delivering the ultimate word. Even within the professed church, there is a general ignorance concerning what Jesus taught, particularly about Himself, His accomplishments, and the Kingdom of God – His ministry as the Prophet.

MIGHTY IN DEED AND WORD. Cleopas confesses Jesus was “*mighty,*” or “*powerful in deed and word.*” The word “*mighty*” accents the ability of Christ – that when He worked or spoke, something happened. Both His deeds and His words were **effective**. People could not easily forget what they saw Him do, or what they heard Him speak. The people said of His deeds, “*He hath done all things well*” (Mk 7:37). When Jesus challenged them to do so, His foes could not find a work done by Him that was worthy of taking His life (John 10:32-33). Jesus could say with all confidence to those He had healed, “*Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee*” (Mark 5:19). Even His enemies said, “*never man spake like this man*” (John 7:46). The people who heard Him knew beyond all doubt that “*His word was with power*” (Lk 4:32).

BEFORE GOD. Other versions read, “*in the sight of God.*” NASB Cleopas knew God well

enough to be convinced that what Jesus did and said stood the test of Divine scrutiny. In the sight of God, Jesus was mighty in deed and word. Before God, His works were right, and His words were true. **This is because everything Jesus did and said were an expression of the will of God.** When He worked, He said He did so *“in My Father’s name”* (John 10:25). He said His works were shown to the people *“from My Father”* (John 10:32). When Jesus spoke, He delivered “the word of God” (John 3:34). He said of His teaching, *“My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me”* (John 7:16).

Having some understanding of God, and knowing the Scripture, Cleopas knew that God was well pleased with what Jesus did and said. Although it is tragic to make such an observe action, I am not sure that a significant percentage of professing Christians can make such a confession. Their ignorance of both God and Scripture has greatly restricted their understanding.

AND ALL THE PEOPLE. Christ’s deeds and words were of such magnitude, that *“all the people”* recognized their greatness. Even His enemies, particularly the chief priests and Pharisees, said, *“this man doth many miracles”* (John 11:47). Even though His enemies were astute in their intellect, and shrewd in their strategies, they could not find a flaw in His words (Lk 20:26). As for the general populous, they were *“astonished”* at His *“wisdom”* and *“mighty works”* (Matt 13:54). Nicodemus confessed that Jesus could not work and speak as He did *“except God be with Him”* (John 3:2). Even though some were not sure whether or not He was the Christ, they observed, *“When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?”* (John 7:31). *“All the people”* were amazed when they saw Him work (Matt 12:23). *“All the people”* were *“astonished at His doctrine”* (Mk 11:18). Everyone knew there was nothing ordinary about Jesus of Nazareth!

“ Luke 24:20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him.”

Remember, Cleopas is relating to a supposed stranger what was common knowledge among those in and around Jerusalem. Although it is a secondary matter, this accents the interest that Christ’s disciples had in things that pertained to Him – even His unjust condemnation and death. **Their world did not revolve themselves.** While this may appear rather rudimentary, our society has been shaped by a Satanic initiative that has compelled people to think primarily of themselves. In the wake of this influence, cogent thoughts concerning the Person and work of Jesus are becoming more and more unusual. A valid *church* ministry is now considered to assisting people in their crises rather than bringing them into a cognitive and productive relationship with the Lord of glory. This is a serious dilemma.

THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND OUR RULERS. The disciples of Jesus were keenly aware of both the nature and work of the *“chief priests”* and *“rulers”* of the people. Cleopas does not mention what Pilate or Herod did, but what the Jewish leaders did. Although he did yet have a fuller understanding of the matter, he says precisely the same thing as Peter would say some days later, when He was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 3:17). The *“chief priests and the rulers”* had been addressed by Pilate who told them they had brought Jesus to him (Lk 23:13). Prior to His betrayal, Jesus had told His disciples He would be *“betrayed unto the chief priests”* (Matt 20:18) – not to the political authorities, but to the primary religious authorities. These were the people who gathered together at *“ the palace of the high priest”* to discuss how they might *“take Jesus with subtlety, and kill Him”* (Matt 26:3-4). In that text, *“the rulers”* are defined as *“the scribes and the elders of the people.”* In Matthew 26:59, they are called *“the elders and all the council.”* When Jesus was brought before Pilate *“the elders”* accompanied the *“chief priests,”* making the official

accusation against Jesus (Matt 27:13). Matthew also says that “*the chief priests and the Pharisees*” came to Pilate, requesting that a guard be placed before the tomb (Matt 27:62). Luke refers to the accusers as “*the chief priests and the rulers of the people*” (Lk 23:13).

The word “*rulers*,” therefore, includes scribes, Pharisees, elders, and the council, or Sanhedrin. All of them were religious authorities. None of them were civil authorities. With Jesus, the civil injustice that was executed against him was driven by religious corruption. This is an illustration of the extraordinary depths to which religious rottenness can drive a person. Some of the most atrocious deeds in human history, as well as in our time, have been brought about in the name of religion, and devotion to a god of some sort.

DELIVERED HIM TO BE CONDEMNED . Peter charged the Jews with carrying out the death of Christ “*by wicked hands*” (Acts 2:23). They were the ones who “*delivered him up*” to Pilate ad his heathen court (Acts 3:13). The chief priests and rulers sought for the death sentence to be carried out by the civil authorities, although later they will have no compunctions at all about stoning Stephen to death. And why was this so? It was because the death of Christ was to be carried through an effort in which both Jews and Gentiles, common people and rulers, conspired. The conspiracy against Jesus is described as one in which “*For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, “both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together”* against God’s “*holy child Jesus*” (Acts 4:27). This, insightful believers confessed to God in prayer, was “*to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:28).

In other words, all for whom Jesus died joined together in carrying out His death, thus confirming their guilty, and the depravity to which the human race had descended.

AND HAVE CRUCIFIED HIM. Even at this time, Cleopas knew that the chief priests and rulers were themselves guilty of crucifying Jesus. This was precisely true, as was confirmed in later proclamations by Peter and Paul (Acts 2:23,36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39; 13:27-28). In other words, from a circumstantial point of view, Jesus would not have been crucified if the Jews leaders did not press the point – and Cleopas knew it. Perhaps he was among those who recalled the warnings of Jesus concerning these leaders (Mat 16:6,12; 12:38-39).

KNOWING THE FACTS, BUT BEING IGNORANT OF THEIR MEANING. As is confirmed in this text, it is possible to know many of the facts relating to Jesus, yet fail to see their significance. At this point Cleopas knew nothing of the sins of the world being taken away, Satan destroyed, principalities and powers plundered, and the world being reconciled. He did not know that peace had been made through the blood of the cross, or that a new and living way had been opened to God. In fact, he did not know that Jesus had actually risen from the dead, and that he was presently speaking to Him. He only *knew in part* (1 Cor 13:9,12), and it was not sufficient knowledge to lift him out of the doldrums of sadness. Let us learn from this incident to now be content with a knowledge that contributes to sadness and melancholy. Rather, seek the knowledge that liberates, enabling you to “*know the truth*” (**John 8:32**).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 176

Mark 16:12 *“After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”*

Luke 24:21 *But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. 22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; 23 And when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. 24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not.”* (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:21-24)

INTRODUCTION

There is a lot to be learned about Jesus in His initial post-resurrection appearances. His confrontation of the two on the road to Emmaus is His third recorded appearance. The first was the Mary Magdalene, and the second was to the woman after they left the tomb. He told Mary to tell His brethren that He was ascending to the Father (John 20:17). He told the women to tell His brethren He would meet them in Galilee (Matt 28:9). Now He will speak extensively to two non-apostles. Until this time, He has not yet appeared to any of the apostles. I do not believe a stereotyped theology can account for this sequence. However, in these appearances we see the Lord's inclination toward those who maintain a focused interest in Him, even if they do not yet have a good understanding. Mary and the other women extended themselves to come to the tomb. The two on the road extended themselves to speak about what had happened to Jesus, and to reason on these things. The other disciples were mourning and weeping (Mk 16:10). This text, together with the verses and events that follow, will also confirm the strength of unbelief, and how utterly unreasonable it is. It will establish why the Spirit speaks of an “*evil heart of unbelief*” (Heb 3:12). As we progress through the text, we will also see how Jesus deals with unbelief, and what is involved in recovering from it. The approach of Jesus to this matter will be in sharp contrast with the wisdom of men.

“ Luke 24:21 *But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.”*

Cleopas has summarized the ministry of Jesus and the manner in which the Jewish leaders responded to Him. His diagnosis is vastly superior to that of many professing believers in our day. He saw Jesus as “*a prophet mighty in deed and word,*” and declared Him to be so “*before God and all the people.*” His assessment made no statement about any personal advantages he had received – although I do not doubt he himself had realized many benefits. Now, however, He speaks more of the person of Christ, and of the nature of His deeds and words. He makes a point of

how He was perceived by God first, and “*all the people*” second. I think you will find such an assessment of Jesus exceedingly rare in our time, which is dominated by personal and selfish interests that pertain to this world and time.

WE TRUSTED IT HAD BEEN HE. Here we are exposed to the thinking of a faithful Jew. Such lived in the prospect of the coming Christ, or Messiah. This kind of anticipation was the result of their exposure to the Scriptures – Moses and the Prophets. How often this expectancy was voiced. Simon, who dedicated the infant Jesus is described as a man who was “*waiting for the consolation of Israel*” (Lk 2:25). When the holy child Jesus was brought to the Temple to be dedicated to the Lord according to the Law, Anna the prophetess saw it and “*spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem*” (Luke 2:38). When John the Baptist appeared, there was an expectancy among the people. “*And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not*” (Luke 3:15). When the people witnessed Jesus, they thought of the Messiah: “*And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this Man hath done?*” (John 7:31). After Philip had seen Jesus, he found Nathanael and said to him, “*We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*” (John 1:45). Joseph of Arimathaea is described as one “*who also himself waited for the kingdom of God*” (Lk 23:51; Mk 15:43). Even the woman at the well of Samaria responded to Jesus, “*I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things*” (John 4:25).

The expectation of the Messiah, or “*He which should have redeemed Israel,*” was birthed because of the exposure of the people to the Scriptures – particularly those that spoke directly of God sending a particular Person to deliver the people. Jesus Himself affirmed that the Scriptures testified of Him (John 5:39), and the belief of that testimony is what produced the anticipation of the coming Deliverer.

Cleopas had correlated the Person and ministry of Jesus with Scripture, and, together with the other disciples, had concluded that Jesus was the One they had been expecting. Now, he will admit that their hopes have been dashed to the ground by the events of the last three days. However, we must carefully consider the expectation they had, for that is the very thing that Jesus will awaken. He will confirm that their thoughts were right, even though their conclusions about the “*things*” that had recently transpired were wrong.

In this regard, if we were to parallel the church with Israel, we will be led to believe that it also is living in expectation. The Scriptures led the people to look for a Messiah to be sent by God to deliver them. The church is to look for the return of the Savior to gather them. In fact, the grace of God teaches them to do so (Tit 2:13). Also, those who *turn to God* are described as doing so in order to “*wait for His Son from heaven*” (1 Thess 1:10). However, this is not at all the posture of the nominal church, and that is a most serious condition.

BESIDE ALL THIS, TODAY IS THE THIRD DAY. This confirms that the disciples had heard and pondered the frequent references of Jesus to rising again on “*the third day*” (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mk 9:31; 10:34; Lk 9:22; 13:32; 18:33). When Peter, James, and John were coming down from the mount of transfiguration with Jesus, He told them not to tell anyone what they had seen “*till of Son of man were risen from the dead.*” Mark records that they kept this saying “*with themselves,*” and questioned among themselves “*what the rising from the dead should mean*” (Mk 9:9-10). Cleopas and his companion are returning from Jerusalem where they were meeting with the eleven and others. Perhaps “*the third day*” was mentioned during that time, as hope appeared as a smoldering flax. They may have looked for something to occur on the third day – but, alas, Cleopas says it is the third day, and nothing had taken place.

But Cleopas was wrong! A great many things had really taken place, and he was not aware of them. Jesus had put away sin (Heb 9:26), reconciled the world to God (2 Cor 5:18-20), destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14), spoiled principalities and powers (Col 2:15), made peace through His blood (Col 1:20), conquered death and the grave (Acts 2:27), opened up a new and living way (Heb 10:20), and was “*alive for evermore*” (Rev 1:18). Although very real, these are things that unbelief cannot see, and so Cleopas admits to a seemingly hopeless condition.

“ Luke 24:22 *Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; 23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.*”

To this point, and prior to the resurrection of Jesus, these men, together with the others, had the following testimonies about Jesus. (1) The testimony of Moses (Gen 3:15; 49:10; Deut 18:15,18). (2) The testimony of the Psalms (Psa 118:22-26; 40:6-10). (3) The testimony of the Prophets (Isa 9:6; 11:1; 42:1; 53:1-11; Jer 23:5;). (4) The testimony of John the Baptist (John 1:29,36). (5) Peter, James, and John had the testimony of God Himself, speaking out of heaven (Matt 17:5). (6) The testimony of Jesus Himself during His ministry (John 8:23-24; 10:24-25; 36). (7) The testimony of demons (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:41).

CERTAIN WOMEN ALSO OF OUR COMPANY. Notice what is said of these women: “*of our company,*” “*among us,*” NASB “*our group,*” RSV “*amongst us,*” DARBY “*our group of His followers.*” NLT Notice who Cleopas identifies by the term “*us.*” Peter and John were among the “*us*” (Lk 24:24; also, Lk 24:12; John 20:1-10). These “*women*” were not only present with the eleven and the others, but were considered part of their number, or group. They were also present with them during the ten days prior to Pentecost, when they continued with one accord in prayer, and even chose the one God had determined to fill the bishopric vacated by Judas, who fell by transgression (Acts 1:14). Those who make an effort to isolate believing women from “*us*” are only displaying their lack of understanding. This is a record inspired by the Holy Spirit. Not only does the Spirit **not** declare that Cleopas spoke hastily, He will move the writer to later record Jesus siding with the women, and rebuking the men for not believing them. Additionally, It was Jesus Himself who sent the women to the disciples.

MADE US ASTONISHED. Cleopas admits that what the woman said amazed them. That is, their report was not within the limited circumference of their understanding. It did not blend with what they were thinking. This, of course, is an invariable trait of unbelief. It refuses anything that it does not think is logical – and “*logical*” is defined by the manner in which they think. In his record of the actual report of the woman, Luke says “*And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not*” (Luke 24:11). At this point, the perspective of Cleopas is quite different from that of the Holy Spirit!

Of course astonishment is a form of unbelief. It is when men are staggered by what is true rather than illuminated by it. Often the people were “*astonished*” at the words and works of Jesus (Matt 7:25; 13:54; 22:33; Mk 7:37). Prior to His death, the disciples themselves were often astonished by Jesus’ words and works (Mk 10:24,26). Thus, while Cleopas says they were “*astonished,*” the Spirit says “*they believed them not.*” We must not allow ourselves to gloss the seriousness of astonishment, as compared with believing. Jesus will rebuke these men for being astonished, and, later that evening, the rest of the disciples as well.

THEY SAID THEY HAD SEEN A VISION OF ANGELS. Notice how Cleopas refers to this: “*And when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels.*” Here were two seemingly contradictory circumstances: “*they found not His body,*” and

“they saw a vision of angels.” If the disciples focused on what the angels said, they would have been able to conclude that Jesus had risen from the dead. However, if they made their focus the absence of the body of Jesus, they would not be able to believe. They chose to do the latter, and therefore *“believed not.”* This confirms that faith is itself the evidence, and cannot be fueled by outward attestation (Heb 11:1). Faith receives the **testimony** of reality, and does not demand the reality itself.

WHICH SAID HE WAS ALIVE. Cleopas summarizes the word of the angel, saying that he said Jesus *“was alive.”* Remember, Luke has already reported that they considered the message of the women to be nothing more than *“idle tales,” “nonsense,”* NASB and *“as a feigned thing.”* GENEVA That is a cultured way of saying they thought the women were lying. Here is what the angels actually said: *“He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and , behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you”* (Matt 28:6-7). This word confirmed what Jesus had told them before He died: *“But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee”* (Matt 26:32; Mark 14:28).

However, because they *“believed not”* the women, they overlooked the word about them meeting with Jesus in Galilee. Although this condition will eventually be corrected, at this point their unbelief led to disobedience. Jesus had told previously that He would go before them in Galilee, inferring that they were to meet Him there. Now a word is delivered to them that declares the time of meeting has come. Notwithstanding, unbelief renders the individuals obtuse, so that no association can be made between related sayings. What seems very apparent to faith is totally obscured to unbelief. Therefore, with a brush of the hand, so to speak, Cleopas sweeps away the testimony of the women as though it was nothing more than an imagination.

“ Luke 24:24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not.”

I am reasonably sure that Luke is reporting a summation of the words of Cleopas, giving the kernel of what he said instead of the whole of it. However, all of the essential elements are there, so that the whole of what he said can be understood. It is still true that whatever men say is, as it were, built upon certain pivotal perceptions. It is what men see that dictates what they say. However, only the Spirit can so summarize the sayings of men as to capture the way they are thinking, and what has got their attention. Holy men will often reason upon the sayings of men, mentioning what their words infer (Psa 14:1; 1 Cor 15:14; Gal 5:3-4).

CERTAIN OF THEM WHICH WERE WITH US. This is a reference to Peter and John, with the details of the event being recorded by John (John 20:1-10). The thing to see here is that Cleopas referred to them in the same way as he referred to the women: *“them which were with us”* and *“of our company.”* Observe how they thought of those who were followers of Jesus: *“us.”* We do not know how many were actually in their number. Paul says the risen Christ appeared to more than *“five hundred brethren at once”* (1 Cor 15:6). Following the ascension of Jesus, *“about an hundred and twenty”* were gathered together with one accord (Acts 14-15). Behold the manner in which they referred to one another. Certain *“women”* were said to be *“among us,”* and Peter and John were described as *“certain of them which were with us.”* Although *“the unity of the faith”* (Eph 4:13) and *“the unity of the Spirit”* (Eph 4:3) had not yet matured, yet it was present in embryo among those whose hearts were knit with Jesus.

The expressions *“among us”* and *“with us”* parallel the frequent references of the apostles to *“us”* (Rom 4:16; 5:5; 8:31; 1 Pet 1:3; 3:18; ; 1 John 1:7) *“we”* (Rom 5:1; 6:2; 8:2; 2 Pet 3:13; 1 John 2:3), and *“our”* (Rom 5:5; 6:6; 13:11; 1 Pet 4:3; 1 John 1:9; 5:4). The perspective, which is a

most comforting one, is destroyed by sectarianism. When professing Christians are divided, the words “we,” “us,” and “our” are redefined, being applied to a sect or particular group of professed believers rather than to the body of Christ itself. Such a posture is beneath the perception of the disciples **before** they knew Jesus had been raised from the dead.

THEY FOUND THE TOMB EMPTY, AS THE WOMAN HAD SAID. Unbelief moved the disciples to receive one part of the women’s testimony, but reject the other part. This is because sight could not confirm the second part – and the only reason they believed what they had said about the body of Christ not being in the tomb, is because Peter and John had verified that this was the case. Luke says that Peter came to the tomb, stooped down, “*beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass*” (Luke 24:12). John says Peter went into the sepulcher and saw the linen clothes and the napkin that had been around Jesus’ head “*wrapped together in a place by itself.*” John then went into the tomb, “*and he saw and believed*” (John 20:6-8), adding that at that time both Peter and John “*knew not the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead*” (John 20:9). This was apparently not “*believing in the ordinary sense of the word.*” Augustine, Erasmus, and Luther take the position that he believed the report of the women. At the very best, this was the expression of infant-like faith which is much like a bruised reed or a smoldering flax. This is apparent because Jesus will afterward rebuke His disciples for their unbelief, and He does not cite John as an exception to that circumstance. It appears to me that John did, in fact, believe, but that the reality of it all left him – just as Peter when He confessed Jesus was the Christ, then straightway seemed to forget it (Matt 16:16-23). Faith must be “*kept*” to be profitable. It appears clear that faith is most difficult to maintain until it is matured and becomes robust.

BUT HIM THEY SAW NOT. Here is where it becomes evident that unbelief bases its conclusions upon sight, while faith bases its decisions upon testimony. At this time, there were some among the disciples who **had** seen Jesus: Mary Magdalene and the other women (Mk 16:9; John 20:14-17; Matt 28:9-10). However, unbelief will not except the testimony of another, even if it is an eye witness. Of course, the ultimate eye witness was Jesus Himself, who declared that He said what He had “*seen with My Father*” (John 8:38). John the Baptist said that Jesus testified what He had “*seed and heard,*” yet “*no man receiveth His testimony*” (John 3:32). Jesus said of what He declared, “*whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak*” (John 12:50). Even so, the women who testified to the disciples told them what Jesus had given them to say – but they “*believed them not.*” At this point, they all conducted themselves like Thomas who said, “*Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe*” (John 20:25). Unbelief wants evidence, and to it an empty tomb is not the attestation of a risen Christ. Thus, when Peter and John reported the empty tomb to the rest of the disciples, they did not conclude that Jesus had risen from the dead. They, together with Cleopas and His companion, rather concluded that they probably were wrong about Jesus being the One for whom they had waited.

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The Study of

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By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 177

Mark 16:12 *“After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”*

Luke 24:25 *Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. 28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. 29 But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.”* (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:25-29)

INTRODUCTION

It is still the first day of the week – the day Jesus had risen from the dead. To this point, we know He has revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene, and to the women who came to the tomb. The two with whom Jesus is now walking were there when Mary and the women reported that they had seen Jesus alive (vs 22-25). They knew Jesus said He would rise on “*the third day*,” and had themselves taken note of the fact that it was now “*the third day*” (v 21). Yet, they do not yet believe that Jesus is, in fact, risen from the dead. How will Jesus respond to their obtuseness? To be sure, He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax. However, that does not suggest that He will ignore their condition. He will speak candidly and forthrightly to them, and there will be no question about what He says, or what He means. It is important to note that faith, even in a severely weakened state, is always able to bear up under the word of the Lord – even when it is a sound rebuke. Jesus is gentle, yet firm. He is “*lowly in heart*” (Matt 11:29), yet does not fail to deal with the human condition. These two men will have occasion to recall the words of Solomon, to which the book of Hebrews alludes: “*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*” (Heb 12:5). In our time, there is a need for knowing **this** Christ!

“ Luke 24:25 *Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? ”*

O FOOLS. Other versions read “*foolish ones*,” NKJV “*How foolish you are*,” NIV “*How unwise*,” CSB “*deficient in understanding*,” MRD and “*foolish ones [sluggish in mind, dull of perception]*.” AMPLIFIED As used in Scripture, this word means “not understanding, unwise, and foolish ,” THAYER “ without understanding, the opposite of wise. ” FRIBERG This is

not a word denoting a lack of scholastic attainment, but is describing one who has not availed himself of what **can be** understood. It denotes an attitude more than a condition or state. A fool is someone who has ignored the evidence, and refused to think upon what has been made known.

This is Jesus' response to the explanation of Cleopas: "*O fools!*" It is a word designed to stab them awake. After spending so much time with Him, and being among those who were constantly exposed to the Word of God, they were still "*without understanding*" – a condition that Jesus did not excuse among His disciples, even **before** He died (Matt 15:16).

Among men, being a fool, or without understanding, can be a condition that is a debility, or handicap. In such a case, the person has been unwillingly deprived of understanding. It is not a condition caused by neglect or stubbornness. However, in the Spirit this is not the case. It is inexcusable for a person who has been exposed to Christ and His teaching to be a "*fool*." To be in the presence of the Lord, and yet remain without understanding, is a state worthy of rebuke – and, in this text, that is what Jesus is delivering.

SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE. Other versions read, "*how slow you are to give belief,*" BBE and "*find it so hard to believe.*" NLT As used here, the word "*slow*" means "dull, inactive, in mind; stupid, slow to apprehend or believe," THAYER and "of mental and spiritual slowness slow, dull, stupid." FRIBERG **There is a condition of heart that causes the individual to be slow to receive what God has said – to believe it, and shape one's life around it.**

God is declared to be "*slow to anger*" (Neh 9:17; Psa 103:8; Joel 2:13; Nah 1:3). That is, He is patient and long suffering, giving men a space to repent rather than destroying them instantly. Believers are admonished to be "*slow to speak,*" and "*slow to wrath*" – not being hasty in either area (James 1:19).

However, being "*slow of heart to believe*" is in another category, and can never be justified. Both Jesus and Paul referred to this condition as being "*dull of hearing*" (Matt 13:15; Acts 28:27; Heb 5:11). This is a condition in which it is difficult for a person to pick up on the truth, so that they can be able to believe it and trust in it. Man does believe "*with the heart*" (Rom 10:10). When, therefore, a person is "*slow of heart to believe,*" it means that one cannot believe quickly, or when they are initially exposed to the truth of God. While men may be disposed to view this condition as not being serious, do you suppose Cleopas and his friend thought of it that way when Jesus spoke these words?

Mind you, at this point, Jesus is not rebuking them for not understanding His words, or the testimonies of the women. Rather, they were "*slow of heart to believe **the prophets**,*" which were regularly read in their synagogues (Acts 13:27). They had been without understanding concerning something of which considerable had been said by the prophets – and Jesus rebuked them for it.

OUGHT NOT TO HAVE SUFFERED. Other versions read, "*Was it not necessary,*" NASB and "*Did not Christ have to.*" NIV That is, the Prophets had made clear that Christ **would suffer** prior to being glorified (Psa 22:6-21; 69:7-20; Isa 50:6; 52:13-14; 53:1-12; Micah 5:1; Zech 11:12-13; 13:6-7). Peter also makes this precise point, declaring that the Holy Spirit "*testified beforehand,*" through the prophets, "*the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*" (1 Pet 1:11). Although, from an academic point of view, their prophecies were somewhat obscured, Jesus still affirms that these men were "*slow of heart*" to believe their word. They should have concluded the necessity of Christ's sufferings, not being dumbfounded when they

occurred. Their exposure to the words of the prophets was reason enough for them to have embraced their words with faith. Instead, they were “*slow of heart to believe.*” At the very best, and unlike their father Abraham, they were “*weak in faith*” (Rom 4:19).

AND ENTERED INTO HIS GLORY? This was the glory “*that should follow,*” as Peter affirmed. It commenced with His resurrection, involved His ascension into heaven, and included His exaltation at the right hand of God, having received all power in heaven and earth.

And, what can be said of those who are living in “*the day of salvation,*” when “*the sun of righteousness*” has risen to its zenith, with “*healing in His wings*” (Mal 4:2). What can be said now of those who still find it difficult to believe, and who are in a spiritually retarded state? What kind of defense can be presented for whole congregations who still have a flawed view of the Christ who is declared in the Gospel?

“ Luke 24:27 *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.*”

How will Jesus address the slowness of their hearts? What will He do in dealing with their failure to understand? Will He make an attempt to account for their slowness to belief? Will He salve their conscience by affirming they were in a helpless condition, and were really unable to believe? Will He reveal some genetic weakness – a condition that could be traced back to their fathers, and over which they really had no control? An resounding “*God forbid!*” to all of those questions! Of course, there is no need to speculate about what Jesus would do, for we have the record of His response.

BEGINNING AT MOSES. Jesus shows them that from the very first written revelation (Genesis through Deuteronomy), **He** was the focus of Scripture. Moses recorded the first prophecy of Jesus, spoken by God Himself to Satan, in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:15). He recorded the promise of Christ made by God to Abraham (Gen 12:3), and through Jacob (Gen 49:10). Moses himself spoke of the coming of Jesus (Deut 18:15,18). These were clear enough to have awakened a strong faith that could have carried His disciples through the time of His suffering having concluded that Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah.

In addition to the **direct** references to the Christ, there were also the numerous types and shadows of the Old Covenant. These acquainted men with the concept of the Christ: i.e. the sacrifices, the high priest, the tabernacle, and the various feasts.

AND ALL THE PROPHETS. The prophets spoke frequently and poignantly of a coming Savior. A sampling of those included are as follows: **David** (Psa 40:6-10; 68:18; 118:22-26); **Isaiah** (Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-16; 22:22; 28:16; 32:2; 40:11; 42:1-3; 49:1-26; 53:1-12; 55:3-5; 59:16-20); **Jeremiah** (Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-18); **Ezekiel** (Ezek 34:23,29; 37:24-25); **Daniel** (Dan 7:13-14; 9:24-27); **Haggai** (Hag 2:7); **Micah** (Mic 5:2); **Zechariah** (Zech 3:6; 9:9; 13:1); **Malachi** (Mal 3:1-3; 4:2).

This, of course, does not include the prophet that was raised up during the time of Jesus of Nazareth – John the Baptist. He was specifically sent to prepare the way for Christ, and to clarify that **He was the One foretold by the other prophets** . John himself was prophesied by the prophets (Isa 40:3). John spoke of one who would “*come after him,*” who would be “*mightier*” than him (Mk 1:7). Jesus referred to John as a “*prophet*” (Lk 7:26). Some of the things John said of Jesus of Nazareth include the following. “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). “*And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God*” (John

1:34). *“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom”* (John 3:29).

HE EXPOUNDED. Other versions read, *“explained,”* NASB *“interpreted,”* NRSV *“made clear,”* BBE and *“explaining and interpreting.”* AMPLIFIED Jesus did not merely read the Scriptures to them – they were already familiar with Moses and the Prophets. He now *“expounded”* the Scriptures to them, clarifying their meaning. In all of its varied forms and tenses, the word *“expound”* is used twice in the King James Version from Genesis through Malachi KJV (Judges 14:14,19 – a “riddle”); none in the New King James, Once in the New American Standard (Deut 1:5 – the “Law”); twice in the New International (Deut 1:5; Psa 49:4 – “Law” and “riddle”); none in the New Revised Standard, and once in the Revised Standard (Deut 1:5 – “Law”).

As used here, the word *“expound”* means *“to unfold the meaning of what is said, explain.”* THAYER In Acts 11:4, Peter *“expounded”* point-by-point what had occurred when he preached to those at the house of Cornelius. Aquila and Priscilla *“expounded the way of God more perfectly”* to Apollos (Acts 18:26). In his ministry, Paul *“expounded and testified of the Kingdom of God”* (Acts 28:23). The same Greek word is translated *“interpret”* in First Corinthians, and refers to opening up what was spoken in a foreign language (1 Cor 12:30; 14:5,13,27).

The point to be seen here is that faith, or believing, is associated with understanding. Jesus told these men they were *“fools and slow of heart to believe,”* and now He ministers to their understanding. This confirms the necessity of understanding, comprehending, or discerning. It is not good when professing Christians have no understanding.

Jesus told His disciples that He spoke in parables to the multitudes, obscuring the truth, because they did not understand (Matt 13:13). He affirmed that when a person did **not** understand the Word, the wicked one snatched it from his heart (Matt 13:19). He also said that the one who bears fruit is the one who **does** understand the Word (Matt 13:23). Our Lord told the multitudes to not only hear, but to *“understand”* also (Matt 15:10). He also expressed His discontent with the disciples not understanding (Matt 16:11; Mk 7:18; 8:17,21).

THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF. The essential element in true understanding is the Son of God Himself. If we do not understand, or *“know Him,”* all other knowledge is rendered useless, and cannot bring about any spiritual advantage. This is why Paul made it his constant aim to *“know Him”* (Phil 3:10), whom to know *“is life”* (John 17:3).

“ Luke 24:28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. 29 But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.”

We do not know when Jesus joined the pair, as they walked seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but I do not doubt that it was early during their trip. Our text states that Jesus *“expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* I doubt that this could have fit into the small time-frame that many associate with hearing about the Scriptures. Now, we are projected to the end of the journey. The destination is in view, and the trio is approaching the village where Cleopas and his companion will reside.

HE MADE AS THOUGH HE WOULD HAVE GONE FURTHER. Other versions read, *“He indicated,”* NKJV *“He acted as though,”* NASB *“He appeared to be going further,”* NRSV and *“He walked ahead as if He were going on.”* RSV The picture here is that of two men arriving at their destination and commencing to turn off of the road. Jesus, however, does not turn with them, but proceeds down the road as though headed for another place. He has been with them for a considerable length of time, but it has not been long enough for His presence to be

guaranteed. He makes quite clear that without some further request from them, this will terminate their time with Him: “*Jesus acted as though He didn't plan to stop there.*” ISV I suppose a novice might interpret this as though the time with the Lord had come to an appointed end. You may rest assured that the time of rare and insightful fellowship with Jesus would have terminated abruptly if these two did not press the matter.

THEY CONSTRAINED HIM. Other versions read, “*urged Him,*” NASB “*urged Him strongly,*” NIV “*kept Him back,*” BBE “*pressed Him to stay,*” NJB “*begged Him,*” NLT “*earnestly urged,*” WILLIAMS and “*urged and insisted.*” AMPLIFIED The word translated “*constrained*” is an especially strong one, meaning: “to employ force contrary to nature and right, to compel by employing force,” THAYER and “literally use force; figuratively urge strongly, constrain, successfully persuade.” FRIBERG There is no indication that they used outward force to compel Jesus to remain with them. Perhaps they took hold of His arm, or laid their hands gently on Him, but their persuasiveness was in their words, not their an outward act. It was the reasoning that appealed to Jesus.

They reasoned that it was “*toward evening,*” and that the day was “*far spent,*” or “*almost over.*” NIV In other words, the ordinary time for traveling was about to end, and, in their minds, it was not reasonable for this stranger to continue on. Besides this, they were relishing their time with Jesus – even when they did not know who He was. They did not suggest a local inn, or some other place where he could remain, but said, “*Abide **with us!***” or “*Stay with us.*” RSV Here is an example of taking the Kingdom by force (Matt 11:12; Lk 16:16), seeking first the Kingdom of God (Matt 6:33), and striving to enter the strait gate (Lk 13:24). There is no hint in Scripture that any other posture will be dignified by the prolonged presence of the Lord.

This is the text that, in 1847, prompted Henry F. Lyte to write the hymn “*Abide With Me.*” The first lines of that hymn read, “Abide with me, fast falls the eventide; The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide.

AND HE WENT IN. How precious are the words of this text: “*And He went in to tarry with them.*” Other versions read, “*to stay with them.*” NKJV He honored their request because of its fervency and obvious sincerity. That is the nature of the Lord. It is also the nature of sincere hearts to press for more time with the Lord Jesus – more fellowship, and more communion.

In this text, it was the listeners who asked for more time with Jesus. Underscoring the very nature of salvation, believers are apprised that they have been “*called into **the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord***” (1 Cor 1:9). It is inconceivable that any discerning person would settle for a brief time with Jesus, or would be content with a small portion of what He has to give. There is not the slightest indication in Scripture that faith is so characterized. People like the Gadarenes asked Jesus to leave (Matt 8:34). There were also Samaritan villages that did not receive Him because “*His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem*” (Lk 9:53).

Many a poor soul is in a weakened, and perhaps depraved, state simply because they did not pursue the presence of the Lord. They settled for a brief exposure to the truth, and for limited time in His presence.

The *Christian* trends of our time are dangerous beyond description. They have taught people to be content with brevity and shallowness. Any exposure to the things of God is actually being tailored for the disinterested and casual. Cleopas and his companion would not fit into such a culture. They would be among those who want more, and who insist on having

it.

You may be sure that Jesus will test your capacity, and your response will determine how much time He spends with you. As in our text, it will also determine how much you know, and how clear Christ and His accomplishments are to your heart. It will determine whether you “*go on to perfection*” or not (Heb 6:1).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 178

Mark 16:12 *“After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”*

Luke 24:30 *And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. 32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?”* (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:30-32)

INTRODUCTION

Commencing with Jesus joining these two on the road (24:17), until the conclusion of this portion of the text (24:32), Jesus is referred to twenty-four times. Three times we read that *“He said.”* Jesus is referred to as *“a prophet,”* and one who was *“mighty in deed and word.”* Cleopas said they trusted He was the *“One which should have redeemed Israel.”* There is reference to Him being *“delivered,” “condemned to death,”* and *“crucified.”* There is mention of His *“sepulcher”* and His *“body,”* and to Him being reported as *“alive.”* Jesus referred to His *suffering* and His *“glory.”* There is mention of all of the Scriptures *“concerning Himself.”* It is written that He *“made as though He would go further,”* that *“He went in to tarry with them,” “sat at meat with them,” “took bread,” “blessed”* the bread, *“gave it to them,”* then *“vanished from their sight.”* The two *“knew Him,”* and referred to the time He *“walked with us,”* and *“opened to us the Scriptures.”* **Tell me, who is the subject of this text?** Is it Cleopas? The women? The Jews? Is this simply a narrative of the experience of two travelers? The answer is apparent – **Jesus Christ is One who brings relevance and clarity to this text.** This is a sterling example of what Jesus meant when He said to His critics, *“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me”* (John 5:39). Actually all of Scripture is like this. There are others mentioned – like Cleopas, his companion, the chief priests and rulers, the women, Peter and John, and the company of disciples – but Jesus Christ is the Theme, the Subject, the Person of consequence in this text!

“ Luke 24:30 *And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.”*

Having arrived at their destination, Jesus, at the request of the two on the road to Emmaus, has *“went in to tarry with them.”* The word *“tarry”* means *“ to remain, abide ,”* and to *“ continue to be present .”* THAYER In this case, it does not mean that Jesus moved in with them, so to speak, for He had already told Mary to tell His disciples He was going to ascend to His Father. The intent here is that Jesus purposed to remain until He had finished what He set out to do while with them. Actually, this is always the intention of Jesus. He does not simply abide with us, like living in

the house. He has come to “*give us an understanding,*” (1 John 5:20), and to “*perform*” the work He has begun “*until the day of Christ*” (Phil 1:6). Technically speaking, just as in this text, Jesus identifies with us in order to ensure that we are properly prepared for His return, the day of judgment, and to dwell with Him forever. While there is some truth to the idea that Jesus is with us to assist and care for us in this world, that is really a subordinate objective. This will be clarified in this text, as the very same evening during which He went in to remain with them, was the evening in which He disappeared from their sight. This confirms that the seen realm is not the primary one.

IT CAME TO PASS AS. Here, the emphasis is on the word “*as.*” Other versions read “*when.*” NIV Grammatically, “*as*” is primary preposition denoting a fixed position in place, time, or state. In a way, this is rather simplistic, and yet it conveys a very essential view of the working of the Lord. **Here it means that what follows took place while He was remaining with them.** The opportunity to learn and to perceive occurred while they were conscious of His presence – while they were involved with Him, and in fellowship with Him.

HE SAT AT MEAT WITH THEM. Not only was Jesus in their presence, they were eating together – “*he sat at the table with them.*” NKJV Jesus also “*sat at meat*” at the house of Matthew, who prepared a great feast for Him (Matt 9:10). He did the same at the house of “*Simon the leper,*” at which time a woman with an alabaster box of ointment poured it upon His head (Mk 14:3). After His time with Cleopas and his friend, Jesus will also “*sit at meat*” with the eleven (Mk 16:14). You may remember that the institution of the Lord’s table took place while Jesus was with His disciples, and “*as they were eating*” (Matt 26:26). The early church also “*ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*” (Acts 2:46). The thing to be seen is that time spent with Jesus is time well spent.

HE TOOK, BLESSED, AND BRAKE BREAD. Although Jesus was in their home, and eating their food, **HE** “*took bread and blessed it.*” When Jesus fed the multitudes with five loaves and two fishes, He also “*took the loaves*” and gave “*thanks*” (John 6:11). When He fed the four thousand. He also “*took the seven loaves, and gave thanks.*” He also “*blessed*” the “*few small fishes*” that were also served to the multitude (Mk 8:6-7). With Jesus, this was not a mere formality. It was rather the recognition of the true Source of food. Isaiah reminded men that God not only gives “*seed to the sower,*” but also gives “*bread to the eater*” (Isa 55:10).

HE GAVE TO THEM. One might have thought Cleopas or his partner would have given Jesus the bread. Instead, He gave it to them. This is also what He did with the disciples on the night of His betrayal, when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. He “*took bread,*” “*gave thanks,*” and “*gave to them*” (Mk 14:22). There is more here than the mere eating of a meal. By eating with them, Jesus was confirming that His presence was real. They were experiencing a very real communion with Jesus.

In this regard, we must view the Lord’s Table in the same manner. This is not an empty routine, although many have so considered it. Solemnly, Paul tells the church, “*ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s Table, and of the table of devils*” (demons) (1 Cor 10:21). It is not that a person ought not do this. It is impossible to do it. We can really only sit at one table, and every person makes a choice which one it will be. By sitting at the table, we also partake of the spirit and ways of the one who is managing it – whether demons or Jesus.

A VITAL LESSON TO LEARN. There is something vital to learn in this text. It is that while we are with Jesus, we do well to eat with Him, and have Him serve the bread that comes down from heaven. This is not a time to be distracted by other things, as was Martha when Jesus was at her house (Lk 10:41-42). Many a soul has drifted into dangerous places simply because they did not take advantage of the presence of the Lord. When Jesus was present, teaching and feeding, they were

occupied with other things, giving no heed to Him. Their minds were not set on things above, but were rather mired down in the affairs of this life. It could have taken the form of anything from lusts to undue care – but they did not capitalize on the moment. This kind of thing is heightened when people profess to gather in the name of Jesus, but spend their time teaching and discussing the things of this world. In such a case, Jesus is really not even present, for He comes only to those who gather in His name (Matt 18:20).

“Luke 24:31 *And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.*”

THEIR EYES WERE OPENED. As they were with Jesus, and as they were eating with Him, *“their eyes were opened.”* These were the same eyes that were before *“holden,”* or *“prevented.”* NASB They did not open their own eyes, just as they were not the ones who had caused them to be *“restrained.”* NKJV When it comes to beholding Jesus, and knowing that you are doing so, heavenly action is required.

All spiritual misunderstanding proceeds from not being able to see Jesus properly. The varied doctrines concerning Christ death, present enthronement, and second coming are the result of some not being able to see Jesus as He really is. Such contradicting doctrines are not the result of what men understand, but of what they do **not** understand. They do not proceed from differing persuasions, but of the lack of godly persuasion.

THEY KNEW HIM. Other versions read, *“they recognized Him,”* NASB *“had knowledge of Him,”* BBE and *“clearly recognized Him.”* AMPLIFIED As long as they entertained erroneous views of Jesus, they were unable to recognize Him – even though they had spent three years in His presence – following Him, and being devoted to Him. However, when a false view of Christ is embraced, that very view obscures the real Christ, so that He cannot be recognized.

Ungodly distractions, whether they have directly to do with Jesus, or cause us to be turned to other things, cause a sort of haze to fall over the Lord’s Christ. God will not allow us to look at what is false with one eye, and gaze at Jesus with the other. When men choose to entertain false notions, they forfeit a proper view of Christ. Some, like Saul of Tarsus, have been shaken to the core by the revelation of the real Christ. Of course, Paul was acquainted with what the Scriptures had said about the Messiah, but had been unable to correlate them with Jesus of Nazareth. But when the real Jesus broke through the darkness that surrounded him, Saul made the connection, and immediately asked what he should do (Acts 9:6). We know that Saul was familiar with what the Scriptures said about the Christ, for as soon as he was converted, he was found *“confounding the Jews”* that *“dwelt in Damascus, proving that this is very Christ,”* or *“is the Christ”* (Acts 9:22).

No one can *“recognize”* Jesus, or have their eyes opened to His reality, who has not been exposed to Him in an intelligent manner. With the two on the road to Emmaus, they knew the Scriptures, and had been in the presence of the Messiah Himself, beholding His wonderful works, and hearing His powerful words. The same was true with the people on the day of Pentecost, for Peter reminded them that they knew very well about the real Jesus (Acts 2:22). The Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius had also been introduced to what God had said about Jesus through Moses and the prophets (Acts 8 and 10). When, therefore, their eyes were *“opened,”* or their understanding became fruitful, it was because they recognized the real Jesus, associating Him with the truth that had been previously revealed concerning Him.

But what of those who have little or no knowledge of the Savior God said He would give to the world – or of the Gospel of Christ in which both His Person and work are delineated. How are their eyes to be “*opened?*” It should be apparent that a generation that has not been appropriately taught concerning the Lord’s Christ are really incapable of recognizing Him. Wherever the church has influence, it is to see to it that this circumstance does not exist. If such a condition does exist, it has been recreant and derelict in its duty.

HE VANISHED OUT OF THEIR SIGHT. As soon as they recognized Jesus, they could no longer see Him with their natural eyes. They were not allowed to know Jesus any longer “*after the flesh.*” The outward view of Jesus immediately faded when the real Jesus was made known to them. Here is another case where the truth of Scripture was lived out: “*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more*” (2 Cor 5:16).

It is a day of great significance when we come to see Jesus as He really is! He is not of this world. He Himself declared, “*I am not of this world*” (John 8:23). He twice said to God the Father, “*I am not of the world*” (John 17:14,16). It stands to reason, therefore that only those who recognize that “*they are not of the world*” (John 17:16) are capable of knowing Jesus. When men present a Jesus that blends well with this present evil world, they have presented “*another Jesus*” (2 Cor 11:4). Those who can only think of Jesus in relation to their worldly needs have embraced “*another Jesus.*”

For at least part of that first day of the week, Cleopas and his companion entertained a false view of Jesus, thinking that He probably was **not** the One spoken of by the holy prophets. However, before the day was over, that misapprehension had been corrected, and they were able to recognize that He was not only the same Jesus with whom they had companied, but was also the same “*Christ*” that God had promised to send into the world.

“ Luke 24:32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?”

THEY SAID TO ONE ANOTHER. If these men had not seen Jesus correctly, they would have been disappointed when He vanished out of their sight. But this is not at all what happened. They did not resume talking as they did when they were walking along the road, and were sad, even though they were now without the bodily presence of Jesus, just as they were before. This time, however, they spoke differently, because they were thinking of Jesus correctly.

DID NOT OUR HEARTS BURN. The Amplified Bible reads, “*Were not our hearts greatly moved and burning within us.*” And, what is the meaning of such an expression? What does it mean for the heart to be ignited, and “*ablaze within us?*” CSB Their hearts were taken up with what Jesus had been saying. Their minds were fertile, expectation had been awakened, and they were deeply stirred. It was late, but they were not tired. Their minds were recalling and correlating the refreshing facts of Jesus – putting them all together in such a way as to strengthen and embolden them. They were knowing the truth, and the truth was making them free (John 8:32). The Son of God had masterfully liberated them from delusion, and they had been given the oil of joy for mourning (Isa 61:3). They were drawing water with joy out of the wells of salvation (Isa 12:3), rejoicing in hope (Rom 12:12), and the peace of God was ruling their hearts and their minds (Col 3:15). They were joying in God (Rom 5:11), rejoicing in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:3), and filled “*with all joy and peace in believing*” (Rom 15:13).

A burning heart is one that is filled with faith, hope, and rejoicing. It is one in which the dross of sin cannot remain, and in which no place for the world can be found. Such a heart

finds heaven closer than earth, and heavenly things more precious than perishing ones. Such people are not lukewarm. They are “*hot*” and are not “*old*” (Rev 3:16).

We are living in a time when the society of burning hearts appears rather small. It is a time when men are not found rejoicing in “*the light*” (John 5:35), “*hope*” (Rom 5:2), “*the Lord*” (Phil 3:1), or that their names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20). A burning heart is not only joyful, it is confident, and filled with assurance. It does not stagger, but is strong in faith.

HE TALKED WITH US BY THE WAY. What was it that has ignited their hearts? Was it the food that Jesus had served them? Or the delight of having Him come into their house? Indeed, that was not the cause of their burning hearts. It was the **speaking** Jesus – the **teaching** Jesus – that had set their hearts aflame. It was the one who “*talked*” with them along the way. I suppose it is possible to consider the speaking of Jesus only from a legal point of view, where He tells us what to do and what not to do. However, Jesus is not at His speaking peak when He is talking about us, correctly us, and rebuking our unbelief. Oh, such things are often necessary, but they are not the pinnacle of spiritual experience! Jesus is, so to speak, at His best when He is clarifying to us God the Father, His eternal purpose, and His own Person. Those are the matters that elevate the human spirit, strengthen the heart, and fortify the mind. They are the things that cause cleansing and refreshing waves to cover the soul.

HE OPENED TO US THE SCRIPTURES. As these two blessed men spoke with one another, they were precise about what had thrilled their souls. It was when Jesus “*opened to us the Scriptures.*” Oh, they were not speaking of Scriptures that clarified human responsibility, or supposedly expounded a novel view of the end times. Luke specified the exact nature of Jesus’ words. “*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27). Oh, what a marvelous experience that must have been – and it is still going on! Perhaps you have experienced the teaching Jesus, when He showed You Himself in all the Scriptures – Scriptures with which you were familiar.

Unlike much of the preaching of our time, neither Jesus nor the apostles started with the perceived needs and situations of humanity, then relating Jesus with them. They did not present Jesus as the solution to domestic, social, and other difficulties related to life in the flesh. They rather set forth a Christ who precisely fulfilled the promises of God to deliver from sin, fill with righteousness, and make fit for an eternal inheritance. Moses and the Prophets presented a Christ who would personally please God as the Representative of men, reconcile them to God, and lead them on to glory. For those who made a practice of feeding upon the Word of God, an expectation and profound longing for such things were awakened within the core of their being. A hearty exposure to Scripture, “*mixed with faith*” (Heb 4:2), awakens a compelling desire for what God has promised. Further, what God has promised is completely realized in Christ Jesus. It is in this sense that the “*exceeding great and precious promises*” of God become the means through which we “*participate in the Divine nature*” NIV (2 Pet 1:4). Of course, as you must know, where there is a prevailing ignorance of the Scriptures, none of these blessed realities are available. In such a case, Satan is given the advantage, and the flesh, governed by Satan, becomes the ruthless tyrant of the soul.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 179

Mark 16:13 *“And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”*

Luke 24:33 *And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.”* (Mark 16:13; Luke 24:33-35)

INTRODUCTION

It is still the first day of the week, now near the close of the day. As should be apparent, Jesus has been busy throughout the day, appearing to Mary, the women, and the two on the road to Emmaus. In every case, there was no casual discussion. He was the center of attention, and the point of whatever was said. Also, whenever He appeared, none of those who saw Him knew that He had risen from the dead, and all of them were in a state of sadness. Following the revelation of Jesus, the state of those to whom He made Himself known was instantly changed, and they were no longer under the grip of melancholy. Also, all of them reported the resurrected Christ to the other assembled disciples. In this, we have a foreshadowing of the changes that attend the life in Christ Jesus, and the reason for the them. Now that Jesus has been enthroned in glory, all that have come to know Him have been lifted from the pit of despair. The perception of Jesus has changed the entirety of their lives. The thought of a triumphant Savior brings joy, and faith and hope rise to flourish. The perspective of life itself is significantly altered, for no one can walk in the newness of life with a distorted view of the Christ. As our text will confirm, life in Christ is accompanied by a compelling desire to communicate to kindred spirits what has been realized. This is because God *“sets the solitary in families”* (Psa 68:6) – an environment in which spiritual life can be nourished and brought to maturity. This is in order that the redeemed may realize the joy of Divine employment, and become productive in the Kingdom of God. If rewards are to be dispensed upon the basis of one’s work (Rev 22:12), such employment is truly a blessing.

“ Luke 24:33 *And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.”*

THE SAME HOUR. It is interesting to observe that these disciples had restrained Jesus from further travels during the close of the day: *“for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent”* (Luke 24:29). Yet now, there is no thought of the lateness of the hour being inconvenient for travel. The knowledge of the Lord has changed even their perspective of such things as the appropriate time to journey. Remember, we are speaking of a seven-mile walk. It is quite refreshing to consider the practicality of faith. While the unlearned labor to make the truth *practical*, faith effectively addresses that aspect of life. It seems that no one who is basking in the

light of the knowledge of the glory of God has the slightest notion that there is anything impractical about being impelled by faith and the joy of the Lord.

THEY RETURNED TO JERUSALEM. It is quite common in our time for men to emphasize telling the world of our experience in Christ Jesus. It is certainly not that this is wrong, and God forbid that anyone should conclude that is the case. Here we are speaking of **priorities**, not of right and wrong. The first ones to hear of the blessings enjoyed will be those located in Jerusalem – the place where God had been pleased to place His name. This is the place where all of the events critical to the reclamation of humanity took place. It is where the two had been, and now it is where they will return.

There is a sense in which believers are like homing pigeons, who have an intuitive sense of where they should go. A “*homing pigeon*” has been trained to return home – no matter where it is released. It differs from the believer in the sense of being “trained,” but the results are the same. The believer has a kind of sixth sense that directs where he is to go. It is something that is resident in faith, which is obtained directly from God (2 Pet 1:1).

When men walk by this faith, they gravitate, so to speak, to Jerusalem. In our case, it is the “*Jerusalem which is above,*” which “*is free,*” and “*is the mother of us all*” (Gal 4:26). This is “*the heavenly Jerusalem*” to which we “*are come*” (Heb 12:22).

THEIR TRIP BACK. The trip **back to** Jerusalem was much different than the initial one **from** Jerusalem to Emmaus. Their spirits must have been much like that of Abraham and Isaac as they came **down** that mountain in Moriah where Abraham had been sent to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering to God (Gen 22:1-19).

THEY FOUND THE ELEVEN TOGETHER WITH OTHERS. Note that these enlightened ones did not go to Pilate, or Herod, or the chief priests. They did not report to the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, or lawyers. They did not run to the multitudes who consented to Christ’s death, reporting that He was alive and had appeared to them. It is true that such reports were, indeed, made later by key individuals. **But these were not the first to hear of the risen Christ!** Indeed, they had seen and heard Jesus, and had rejected Him. Jesus had left their house “*desolate*” because of this rejection (Matt 23:38). Now, the news will be brought to those who had a heart for Christ, yet were not aware of His present state. Those who had a genuine beginning will now experience further enlightenment.

This is an exceedingly rare perspective. The first order of business is for those who have a knowledge of Christ, but are deficient in their understanding, to be brought up to speed. Before any outreach endeavors are put into place, the disciples themselves must be brought into the light! This is the manner of the Kingdom, and is evident in our text.

These two found “*the eleven*” apostles – and they were not alone. There were other disciples who were “*with them.*” The exact number is not known, but it must have included “*the women,*” Mary Magdalene, Justus and Matthias (Acts 1:23), and perhaps even “*the seventy*” (Lk 10:17), as well as others. John refers to this occasion taking place on “*the same day at evening, being the first day of the week,*” adding that the door was shut “*where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews*” (John 20:19).

Thus, the two returned to “*their own,*” as Peter and John would do later when they were threatened by the Jewish authorities (Acts 4:23). When Paul was en route to Rome, and the boat had landed in Sidon, he was given leave to “*go unto his friends to refresh himself*” (Acts 27:3). For that matter, following His resurrection, when Jesus appeared, it was only to His own disciples –

and even then, it was only to those who had been “*chosen before of God*” (Acts 10:41).

The point to be seen here is the priority of those who have been identified with Christ. They are to be the first to know of fresh and new insights. They are like laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, who are to be the first to partake of the fruit (2 Tim 2:6). When Paul revealed the insights he had received concerning “*the mystery*” of redemption and of God and Christ, he shared it first with the body of Christ. Even when the Gospel was preached, it was “*to the Jew first,*” who had some working knowledge of God (Rom 1:16). Personal testimonies of insight will have greater power when they are properly reported at the first.

“ Luke 24:34 Saying, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.*”

How will these disciples report to the others? What will they accent? Will their own experience be the primary thing? How will they refer to Jesus? We will see in this report the manner in which the truth affects those who believe it.

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED. Other versions read, “*is really risen,*” NASB “*It is true! The Lord has risen.*” NIV and “*has truly come back to life.*” BBE There was nothing ambiguous about the report. They did not say this was their perception, but that this is what really had taken place. In the days that follow, similar statements will be made concerning the risen Christ. “*God hath raised Him up*” (Acts 2:24; 3:15). “*This Jesus hath God raised up*” (2:32). “*God, having raised up His Son*” (3:26). “*God raised from the dead*” (4:10; 13:30; 17:31). “*Him God raised up the third day*” (10:40). “*He hath raised up Jesus again*” (13:33,37). **These are all affirmations.** An affirmation is a positive assertion and solemn declaration. It is not the announcement of possibilities or probabilities. It is not stating the ideal, or setting a goal before the people. What is affirmed already exists, and in this case, cannot be altered.

Concerning the Person and accomplishments of Christ, there is a certain power in affirmation that is scarcely realized in our time. This is the kind of word faith requires, for faith is the “*substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb 11:1). When men major on human experience, which is the religious fad of our time, affirmation is, at the best, very weak. This is because man-centered statements tend to be largely theoretical, and deal with the abstract. Those who speak of such things are prone to major on goals, ideals, and disciplined procedures. That is because they really have little or nothing to say.

HATH APPEARED TO SIMON. The first report of the “*two*” had nothing to do with them directly. Rather, it had to do with Christ’s appearance to someone else. In this we see how they had, in a manner of speaking, consented to the agenda of Jesus. Also, here is a bit of new knowledge – something that must have been revealed to them by Jesus, or on the way back Jerusalem. Paul alludes to this appearance in First Corinthians. “*And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve*” (1 Cor 15:5). We do not know when this appearance took place. We do know that the angel told the women to “*tell His disciples and Peter*” to meet Jesus in Galilee (Mk 16:7). Things that we **do** know include the following: 1) The appearance took place on the same day Jesus rose from the dead. 2) It was after Mary and the women had seen Jesus. 3) It was after Peter and John had been at the sepulcher. 4) It was before the return of the two from Emmaus to Jerusalem.

The fact that we know very little about this special appearance confirms that it was of a more private and personal nature. It may very well have been because of the sorrow that accompanied Peter’s denial of Jesus during the night of His betrayal. Also, because Peter was the lead apostle may have required this initial appearance.

THEY TOLD WHAT THINGS WERE DONE IN THE WAY. Concerning their own experience, they first declared “*their experience on the road.*” NASB This was when it is said of Jesus, “*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself,*” or “*went on explaining and interpreting to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning and referring to Himself*” AMPLIFIED (Luke 24:27). Later, after their eyes had been opened and they recognized Jesus, they said of that time: “*Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?*” NIV (Luke 24:32). There is a common experience for those who are walking in newness of life: **the spiritual exhilaration of perceiving Jesus in the Scriptures.** It is unfortunate that this appears to be an exceedingly rare experience in our time. People with some inclination to Jesus are being served up a message that revolves around them, their problems, and their potential. It all appears to have a good sound to it, emitting the idea that this is evidence of a genuine concern for the people. However, such mental edifices are like houses made of cards when compared with the words of the One who has a real interest in the people. No person will promote burning hearts by a man-centered and experience-driven message.

AND HOW HE WAS KNOWN OF THEM. In referring to when Jesus was “*made known to them,*” NKJV they actually were recalling a brief moment of time. As soon as they “*knew Him,*” “*He vanished out of their sight*” (Lk 24:31). However, the impact of that insight filled their hearts with light and joy. That is because their faith had been restored, and their hope refueled. It is well to remember that a moment of spiritual insight will compensate for three days of weeping, lamenting, and hopelessness. If ever the people can see Jesus as He really is, they will experience a rejuvenation that cannot be enjoyed any other way. That kind of insight remains with the individual. It is enhanced and strengthened through the ministry of “*the Spirit of truth,*” who causes the words of Jesus to come alive and be understood.

“Mark 16:13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”

THEY WENT AND TOLD IT. Mark does not provide the details of Jesus with the two on the road, or His presence with them in their house. He only says that Jesus “*appeared in another form*” to them “*as they walked, and went into the country.*” He then records what they did **after** Jesus had disappeared from their vision: “*They went and told it .*” Other versions say they “*reported it,*” NIV “*told,*” NRSV “*gave news of it,*” BBE “*brought word,*” DARBY and “*told this.*” **IE That is, they reported the things relating to Jesus** – what He had done, and what He had said. Their report was a Christ-centered account, not an experience-centered one. Their purpose was not to compare what had happened to them with what had not happened to the others. Rather, it was to confirm that Jesus was risen from the dead, just as He said, and that this had been confirmed to them through His exposition of the Scriptures concerning Himself.

I am painfully aware that this may appear overly simplistic. However, it is essential that the people of God learn to speak out of the reservoir of their faith instead of the cistern of human experience. When men and their experience becomes the center of attention, Jesus is seen primarily as man’s Helper, and not as the Savior. He is perceived as addressing the self-perceived needs of men, rather than fulfilling the will of God the Father. When our interests focus on men instead of upon Christ Jesus, however noble it may appear, it tends to blur our vision, promote incorrect priorities, and actually place Christ into the background.

THE RESIDUE. Other versions read, “*the rest,*” NKJV “*the others,*” NASB “*the remnant,*” GENEVA and “*the other followers.*” **IE** Here we have a most intriguing distinction. When the women told the things they had experienced at the tomb, they reported it to “*the eleven, and to all the rest*” (Lk 24:9). When Luke reported the response of the Jews to the peaching

of Peter, he referred to “*Peter and to **the rest** of the apostles*” (Acts 2:37). After Ananias and Sapphira had died, it is written that all, who believed were “*with one accord,*” while “*of **the rest** durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them*” (Acts 5:13). When Paul accounted for the election obtaining the promise of God, he added, “*and **the rest** were blinded*” (Rom 11:7). When Jesus upbraided some within the church in Thyatira, He also gave a promise to “***the rest** in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan*” (Rev 2:24).

Now, it is apparent in all of these cases that “*the rest*” are being compared with those who had obtained greater advantage. Apart from the circumstances being reported by Cleopas and His partner, they themselves would have been identified among “*the rest,*” having, in some way, been inferior to the apostles. However, in this circumstance, and because of the time Jesus had spent with them, they were in the superior position. They had seen more and heard more than “*the residue,*” who had not seen and heard what had been made known to them.

Without spending an inordinate amount of time on this matter, within the body of Christ, those who have perceived the most default to the highest order. They are the ones to whom we told to be subject, who have “*spoken*” to us “*the word of God*” (Heb 13:7). So far as we know, there is no known limit concerning who can be in this category – unless it be the position into which God has placed them in the body (1 Cor 12:18). Even then, for those who believe, there are no fences around Jesus.

In view of this situation, it is incumbent upon every believer to submit their minds and hearts to truth and fresh insights, regardless of the one who makes them known. There is a view of *church* and *teaching* that does not allow for this kind of submission. Such a view would forbid the testimony of Mary, the women, and the two from Emmaus. However, in the light of our text, such souls, at the best, are classified as “*the rest,*” or “*the residue.*”

NEITHER BELIEVED THEY THEM. Modern versions omit the word “*neither,*” even though it is a proper translation of the Greek word used here. The word is one denoting **continuing negation** – that is, there was some unbelief that preceded that which is mentioned in this verse. Mark specifies it in verse eleven, recalling the testimony of Mary. Verse thirteen is a continuation of that thought: “*And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, **believed not***” [Mary] . . . “***neither believed they them***” [the two].

At this point “*the rest*” had the testimony of Mary, the empty tomb, and the woman. Now, they also have the attesting testimony of the two from Emmaus. Yet, unbelief has such a grip upon “*the residue*” that they reject this third confirmation – to say nothing of Christ’s pre-death prophecies of His resurrection, saying He would rise again on “*the third day*” (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Lk 9:22; 13:32; 18:33).

Well ought we to give the more earnest heed to the warning of the Spirit: “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*” (Heb 3:12). Unbelief is totally unreasonable, rejecting the most powerful testimonies, forgetting the words of Jesus, and stubbornly clinging to delusion.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 180

Mark 16:14 *“Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.”*

Luke 24:36 *And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.”*

(Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-39; John 20:19-20)

INTRODUCTION

The Four Gospel accounts of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, together with the first chapter of the book of Acts, provide us with the extensive details of those events. In this regard, the Gospels are different, yet harmonious. Acts tells us that He spent forty days with the apostles, showing them many infallible proofs (Acts 1:2-3). Although some have concluded that this meant *only* the apostles, the Gospels inform us that His appearances and teaching were not limited to them, although certain words were addressed to them specifically. Our text will expose us to Christ's initial appearance to the apostles, informing us that others were with them at the time. While this may appear to be an insignificant point, the failure to take all of the accounts into consideration has led some to develop certain pivotal doctrines that require the presence of the apostles alone during these key appearances. For example, some men have taught that only the apostles were promised they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This is a rather elaborate teaching, but is designed to address some erroneous conceptions of that promise. However, no doctrine can be valid that fails to take into account all of the inspired statements that have been made concerning that subject. Our text will provide some details that will assist us in evaluating what is taught by men. It also reveals the heart of the Savior concerning those who do not believe the testimony of the truth, and how serious it is to be so classified. In it, we will also be exposed to the extent to which Jesus will go to make Himself known, bringing confidence and assurance to those who are aware of Him.

“ Mark 16:14 *Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.”*

Matthew omits the appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene and the two on the road to

Emmaus. He also omits much of what took place during the forty days Jesus was with His disciples, referring only to the time He told them to go and disciple all nations (Matt 28:16-20). That commission will also be mentioned by Mark and Luke, who, together with John, will provide some additional details of His various appearances.

AFTERWARD. In using this word, Mark is telling us of what Jesus did after He had spent time with the two on the road to Emmaus. It was no doubt “*after*” He had also appeared to Simon (Lk 24:34). **This is the language of purpose and objectivity**, revealing something of the tenderness of the Lord toward sensitive spirits. All of His initial appearances were to those of tender heart. Their understanding was flawed, but their hearts had been obviously knit with the Savior. This confirms that tenderness of heart is the prelude to revelation and fellowship.

HE APPEARED UNTO THE ELEVEN. It might appear from this account that Jesus appeared only to “*the eleven.*” However, other Gospel accounts confirm that the eleven were not alone at this appearance. Luke informs us that Jesus appeared to them while the two from Emmaus were with them: “*And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you*” (Luke 24:36). Luke also tells us that these two witnesses spoke to “*the eleven . . . and them that were with them*” (Lk 24:33). John also informs us that it was the same day that Mary Magdalene had told the disciples “*she had seen the Lord*” (John 20:18-19).

I am laboring this point because of certain teachings that tend to obscure the universal nature of salvation and all of its benefits. To be sure, the apostles were chosen to be unique messengers. They were given insights that were not vouchsafed to others (Eph 3:5). However, the benefits of salvation and Divine fellowship were in no way confined to them.

HE UPBRAIDED THEM WITH THEIR UNBELIEF. Other versions read, “*rebuked their unbelief,*” NKJV “*reproached them for their unbelief,*” NASB and “*rebuked them for their lack of faith.*” NIV The word translated “*upbraided*” means “*deserved reproach.*” THAYER Some of the linguistic synonyms are reproach or revile, THAYER scold or reprimand FRIBERG and denounce. USB

Among other things, this means that the failure to believe the witness of the truth is never justifiable, and is always wrong, being worthy of rebuke. **Unbelief is always deliberate, and is never incidental or innocent.** Nor, indeed, can it be conveniently excused. Men may be tolerant of refusing to embrace the testimony of truth, but the Lord is not. Were this to be received, it would transform the activities, demeanor, and attitude of the modern church.

AND HARDNESS OF HEART. Other versions read “*stubborn refusal to believe,*” NIV “*stubbornness,*” NRSV “*spiritual insensitivity,*” CJB “*obstinacy,*” NJB and “*stiffness of heart.*” YLT Unbelief and hardness of heart are like siamese twins that are joined together with the same backbone. A heart that is “*hard*” is a stony heart – a heart that is stubborn against the truth, refusing to accept it, even though confronted with a harmonious witness. It may seem unjustifiably strong to speak in such a manner. However, unbelief must be seen for what it is, else it cannot be overcome. The Holy Spirit refers to “*an evil heart of unbelief,*” and warns us of its subtle and intrusive nature (Heb 3:12).

BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED NOT THEM. The Lord is very focused in His rebuke. They had been exposed to two kinds of witnesses. First, there were the witnesses that were specifically **sent** to them. First, a holy angel told the women, “*go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead*” (Matt 28:7; Mk 16:7). Second, Jesus Himself told those women, “*go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me*” (Matt 28:10). Also, Jesus told Mary

Magdalene, “*go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God*” (John 20:17). These commissioned witnesses did as they were commanded. Secondly, the two on the road to Emmaus provided an even more extensive witness, reporting what Jesus had taught them on the road, and how He had been made known to them in the intimacy of the breaking of bread (Lk 14:34-35).

There was no flaw in the report of the witnesses – yet the disciples did not believe them. There was perfect harmony and accord in what they said – yet they were not believed. Their witness was concordant with what Jesus Himself had repeatedly taught them prior to His death – yet the disciples did not believe. The witness agreed with the testimony of Moses and the Prophets, as reported by the two from Emmaus – yet their testimony was not believed. Do you wonder why Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief? Does anyone imagine that He was too hard on those sad and weeping disciples? You can see in this text that tenderness does not exclude rebuke, and gentleness does not avoid upbraiding and reprimand.

“ Luke 24:36 *And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.*”

Luke provides more extensive details of this appearance – one that occurred toward the close of the day Jesus rose from the dead: the first day of the week. John tells us that the disciples were behind closed doors, “*assembled for fear of the Jews*” (John 20:19). The fears were no doubt related to the report that was beginning to be circulated, that they had stolen the body of Jesus. The elders had instructed the soldiers who had guarded the tomb of Jesus to begin broadcasting this report. They also feared that the absence of Christ’s body would cause people to believe that He had risen from the dead as He said He would (Matt 27:62; 28:13-15). According to appearance, these are the circumstances that put the disciples in jeopardy.

AS THEY THUS SPAKE. As the two from Emmaus were delivering their testimony, Jesus joined them – just as He did when they were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. This time, however, **they** were not sad. Now sadness belongs to the ones to whom they were witnessing.

JESUS HIMSELF. The phrase “*Jesus Himself*” emphasizes that this was the very One of whom the men were witnessing. It was the same Jesus that Mary and the women had testified was alive – risen from the dead. It was the very same Jesus of which the two from Emmaus were still bearing testimony.

Considering this text, some have considered the body of Jesus to be the kind that could pass through walls and doors. However, as confirmed by the doctrine of First Corinthians, the resurrection body is of another order, not subject to the natural senses (15:35-44). An immortal body, of itself, cannot be perceived with mortal senses. That would involve the integration of Divine glory and corruptible flesh, and that is not possible. Therefore, Jesus is said to have “*appeared unto*” the disciples (Mk 16:14) – that is, He was **revealed**. Mark, Luke, and John say that Jesus “*stood in their midst*” (Mk 16:14; Lk 24:36; John 20:19). Through His power, Jesus accommodated Himself to their sight, granting them eyes to see what could not otherwise have been detected.

PEACE BE UNTO YOU. Both Luke and John report this saying of Jesus: “*Peace be unto you!*” (Lk 24:36; John 20:19). John reports that on this very same occasion, Jesus **again** said “*Peace be unto you*” (John 20:21). This is a remarkable word. It is the kind of word He delivered to the woman who was healed of an issue of blood : “*go in peace*” (Mk 5:34). He said the same thing to the woman who washed His feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair: “*go in peace*” (Lk 7:50). He said

a similar word to a raging sea: *“Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm”* (Mark 4:39).

This is more than an admonition or exhortation. It is more related to an effective commandment, when peace is brought about through His word. Seeing this, David wrote, *“He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints”* (Psa 85:8). Zechariah spoke of a time when the Lord would *“speak peace unto the heathen”* (Zech 9:10). Only the lord can calm a troubled and agitated heart, and He will do so for the disciples during this time, when they were experiencing great difficulty. They were, in fact, being sifted by the wicked one. Now, however, the King of glory has appeared, and will bring Satan’s work to an end. In this case Jesus will not simply speak a single word, but will *“make peace”* by making Himself more fully known (Isa 45:7). In the words of Isaiah, He will *“create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him”* (Isa 57:19).

Another vital thing to be seen here is that **peace is a required prelude to understanding**. A troubled heart – one that is in turmoil – cannot take hold of the truth. An agitated heart tends to wither the hands so they cannot grasp the truth or profit from Divine tutelage. No one truly knows the Lord until they have first experienced *“peace with God.”*

THEY WERE TERRIFIED AND AFFRIGHTED. For *“terrified,”* other versions use the word *“startled,”* NIV *“confounded,”* DARBY *“abashed,”* GENEVA *“in a state of alarm,”* NJB and *“amazed.”* YLT The idea is that they had confronted something that extended beyond their understanding, and therefore did not know how to respond. The appearance itself was intimidating. This same rational holds true when God is not understand, and the real Jesus is not comprehended. That produces a fear that compels a backward and withdrawing motions when They are made known.

THEY SUPPOSED THAT HAD SEEN A SPIRIT. Eliaphaz told Job, *“a spirit passed before my face,”* and *“the hair of my flesh stood up”* (Job 4:14). Something like that took place in our text. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they thought they had seen a spirit and *“they cried out for fear”* (Matt 14:20). In a day when a certain revival of agnosticism is taking place, such an expression can scarcely be imagined. Yet here was a people who had been cultured by the Word of God, and by the presence of the Savior Himself, and they had no difficulty considering the realities of the spiritual realm.

“ Luke 24:38 And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.”

It is important to note the manner in which the Lord speaks. He does not engage in a kind of psychological approach to relieving the disciples of their fear – like saying, *“Everything will be all right.”* Instead, He moves them to account for their response to Him, and then to turn their attention to Him and confirm that this is not an apparition or a mere vision.

WHY ARE YOU TROUBLED. This is, indeed, a difficult question to answer when you are consciously in the presence of the Lord. Think of similar questions Jesus asked. *“Why take ye thought for raiment?”* (Matt 6:26). *“Why beholdest thou the mote in thy brother’s eye?”* (Matt 7:1). *“Why are ye fearful?”* (Matt 8:26). *“Why do ye transgress the commandment of God?”* (Matt 15:3). *“Why reason ye among yourselves?”* (Matt 16:8). *“Why stand ye here all day idle?”* (Matt 20:6). *“Why are ye so fearful?”* (Mk 4:40). *“Why doth this generation seek after a sign?”* (Mk 8:12). **The point is that there are matters that are totally unreasonable when the Lord is in**

our midst. When faith takes hold of the reality of Christ, what room is left for trouble? How can a person be in a state of turmoil when he is with “*the Prince of peace*” (Isa 9:6). If we do not avail ourselves of the benefits of being in Christ, He will not hesitate to ask us to give a reason for our condition. This is one reason why it is imperative to maintain sensitivity to the Lord – and that is something that can only be maintained by faith.

WHY DO THOUGHTS ARISE IN YOUR HEARTS? Thoughts can be a blessing or a curse, debilitating or strengthening. The thoughts of which Jesus speaks in this text are ones that produce consternation, fear, uncertainty, and a shaking within. These are corrupt thoughts that are the result of flawed reasoning. That is why Jesus once asked His disciples, “*Why reason ye these things in your hearts?*” (Mk 2:8). And, how do you respond to a question like that, when you are fearful, troubled, and unstable within? As in this text, in such a circumstance it is best to keep silence, and listen to what the Lord has to say. David reflected this spirit when he was deeply concerned about God’s anger being leveled against His people. After pleading for mercy and salvation to be granted to them he said, “*I will hear what God the Lord will speak*” (Psa 85:6-8).

BEHOLD MY HANDS AND MY FEET. Now the Lord presents evidence that He is really alive. It is not the superior evidence. That is why He would say later, “*blessed are they that have **not** seen, and **yet** have believed*” (John 20:29). Here the Lord is confirming that they are not beholding a spirit, but have been allowed to see a very real body, though technically different from their’s.

The first evidence consists of the marks of His death. This is an extraordinary experience that bears similarities to the vision John had on the Isle of Patmos. There he saw “*a Lamb as it had been slain*” (Rev 5:6). The Living Bible reads, “*on the Lamb were wounds that once caused His death.*” The meaning is that the freshness, as well as the evidence, of His death were apparent. By showing them His hands and feet, Jesus drew their attention to **the means** by which men thought they put Him to death – a death that was attested by the soldiers, Pilate, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, and the women who witnessed His burial.

There is also another thing to be seen here. **The resurrected Christ is ministering the effects of His death.** By still bearing the marks of His death, He confirms that what that death was designed to accomplish has, in fact, been achieved.

HANDLE ME AND SEE. Other versions read, “*Touch me and see.*” NIV The word “*handle*” means to “touch and feel.” THAYER Think of this text as the Lord’s invitation to examine Him more closely – not to speculate about Him, but to set out to confirm the truth of the matter. With them, this had to do with establishing that they were not dealing with a spirit, an angel, or some other type of personality that had no frame or body. With us, it is an invitation to, by faith, examine the things that have been revealed of Him, and see if they are not wholly true. **A real Jesus will pass any honest test!** His word will be found to be true. His ministry will be confirmed to be effective. His Presence will be established as sustaining and refreshing. Oh, that men would heed His word to “*Handle Me and see!*”

A SPIRIT HATH NOT FLESH AND BONES. These are important words, for they establish that Christ’s resurrection was a **bodily** one, not a spiritual one! When the angels attending Jesus’ ascension spoke of Him to the disciples, they referred to Him as “*this same Jesus*” (Acts 1:11). When Peter spoke of the Jesus who had ministered among the people prior to His death, He said, “*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses*” (Acts 2:32). **Jesus has been glorified in His totality: spirit, soul, and body.** God is a Spirit, but Jesus is “*the Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 2:6). He is not only a Man by experience, but by constitution as well. His

body is very real, though of a different order. Before He went to heaven, He permitted this to be established sensually to His disciples. It is one of the “*infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). Now that He is in heaven, this is no longer what He does. Now men must live by faith, and by faith alone.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 181

Mark 16:14 *“Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.”*

Luke 24:40 *And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42 And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43 And He took it, and did eat before them. 44 And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning He.”* (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:40-44; John 20:21-24).

INTRODUCTION

The initial appearance of Jesus to the apostles and those gathered with them proved to be a rather extensive one. It is as though Jesus would not let the first day of the week pass until His followers had been convinced of His resurrection. Even so, the occasion proved to be a very difficult one for them, for unbelief and hardness of heart are difficult to overcome. They are like the demons who cannot easily be dispelled (Mk 9:29). Those who labor for and with Christ must maintain this attribute: **they cannot be content while the people of God remain in a state of ignorance of unbelief.** This is what prompted much of the apostolic writing. Part of true spiritual life is knowing and confidence, even though they are often omitted in the current church setting. Following His resurrection Jesus was with His disciples over a period of forty days, confirming His presence and power with *“many infallible proofs”* (Acts 1:3). Those were *“proofs”* designed to stabilize the knowledge and understanding of the disciples. He was not content to leave them in a state of doubt and wonderment. That is a revelation of the heart of the Good Shepherd. It confirms what is involved in feeding His flock. It is not serving up tantalizing hors d’oeuvres that tease the palate but provide no sustenance for the soul. The food that Jesus serves is substantive, as is confirmed in His post-resurrection appearances to His disciples. At this point, Jesus will not deal with any of their personal lives, but will focus on their comprehension of Himself.

“ Luke 24:40 And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42 And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43 And He took it, and did eat before them.”

HE SHOWED THEM, HIS HANDS AND FEET. Jesus had just said that a spirit did not have a bodily form as they were seeing in Him. That is, a spirit is distinct from a form or tangible body. Technically speaking, a spirit cannot be seen by men unless it takes some form. Otherwise, as comprehended in the Holy Spirit, the evidence of what a spirit does is the means of perceiving its reality (John 3:8). In this appearance, Jesus will take upon Himself a *“form”*

(Mk 16:12) that can not only be seen, but touched and handled as well. John mentions this in his first epistle, referring to Jesus as the One “*which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life*” (1 John 1:1). He was speaking of the glorified Christ prior to His ascension into the realm of glory, for which His risen body was suited. In His risen state, Jesus had to accommodate Himself to the limitations of the disciples. However, there was no such accommodation when He entered into the realm of glory.

I want to underscore that this was a revelation – an “*appearance,*” although Jesus had entered into His glory, as He told the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:26). This is what Jesus meant when He had told His disciples He would be “*perfected*” on the third day (Lk 13:32). I take it that this appearance was similar to that of Moses and Elijah, who appeared “*in glory*” with Jesus during His transfiguration (Lk 9:31). Such appearances were not the ultimate glory, but were only introductory in nature – an accommodation to the frailty of the flesh. The point Jesus is establishing is that He has really risen from the dead, and possesses a very real body, even though He must accommodate Himself to their senses.

John adds that He showed them “*His side*” as well – another mark of His death, to which John bore special witness (John 19:34-35). By showing them His hands and feet and side, Jesus is establishing that He is the same One who died on the cross. The Redeemer is the very One who was commissioned to “*taste death for every man*” (Heb 2:9). Jesus must be perceived as He who “*was dead,*” and is “*alive for evermore*” (Rev 1:18). In other words, it is never right to think of Jesus independently of His death, for it was at that precise point that He took away sin (Heb 9:26), made peace (Col 1:20), destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14, and plundered principalities and powers (Col 2:15).

Those who present Jesus as a problem-solver, the answer to everyday dilemmas, and the means of a happy and secure life in this world, are tampering with truth. Although Jesus is, indeed, the appointed Means of any valid recovery and purposeful life, the issues that were addressed in His death are really the fundamental ones. In fact, they were the only issues that directly related to our reconciliation to God and eternal destiny. There is a sense in which the Gospel provides a thorough, yet concise, view of the hands and feet of the risen Christ. It convinces us of the reality of the risen Christ, for without that persuasion we can neither call upon Him nor trust in Him.

THEY BELIEVED NOT FOR JOY, AND WONDERED. How joyful the disciples were to see Jesus! John says they were “*glad when they saw the Lord*” (John 20:20). But, alas, it was not “*the joy of faith*” (Phil 1:25), or “*joy . . . in believing*” (Rom 15:13). At this point, they still did not associate the One before them with the testimony of Mary, the women, and the two from Emmaus. Their joy was a carnal joy that was fostered by vision, not by believing. This is confirmed by the fact that they “*wondered,*” marveling at the appearance they saw rather than the One who was being made known to them. I have long been of the opinion that a considerable amount of contemporary Christianity fosters this kind of joy – a joy that is neither deep nor powerful, and soon fades away. It is a very real joy, but is not related to faith, or the spiritual perception and assurance that spring forth from it.

HE ATE BEFORE THEM. At this point, Jesus is extending Himself to persuade them that He had risen from the dead, just as He had foretold previous to His death. Spirits not only do not have a body of flesh and bone, they are not required to eat as those in the flesh. Here Jesus does not eat because He is hungry, as He was when He was tempted (Matt 4:2). He asks the disciples if they have anything to eat, for their sakes, that they might be the more convinced that the One who died is the

same One who now stands before them. Now, when they give Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb, He ate in their presence. Modern versions omit the word “*honeycomb*.” However, ancient (pre-KJV) English versions contain it (Wycliffe 1385, Cloverdale 1585, Tyndall 1534, Bishops 1595, Geneva 1599). The point here is that a thorough outward substantiation of the reality of the risen Christ was provided. The true value of this appearance will be realized after He ascended into heaven.

“ Luke 24:44 *And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning He.*”

Having eaten before them, Jesus does not proceed as though that provided adequate proof of His Person. He must not be known “*after the flesh*” (2 Cor 5:16), and to this point that is the manner in which those who “*believed not for joy*” know Him.

Oh, there is something of vast importance to be seen in this text. Christ is not to be known merely by what He has done for us, or how He has intervened in our outward lives. There is measured value in such things, but it is not sufficient to sanctify the soul, enable endurance, or foster everlasting consolation and good hope. There is a sense in which shallow religion is lethal. This is because it leaves the person largely “*in the flesh*” rather than “*in the Spirit*.” Spiritual life cannot be maintained in a state of extended spiritual infancy.

THESE ARE THE WORDS. While He was with His disciples during His ministry on earth, Jesus had frequently referred to His resurrection and ascension (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Lk 9:22; 18:33; John 3:13; 6:62; 16:28), Now, confirming that His words would never pass away, just as He said (Mk 13:31), Jesus reminds His disciples that He had adequately prepared them for both His death and His resurrection.

WHILE I WAS WITH YOU. That is, while He was with them before His death. This period began with the baptism of John, and extended through His prayer and Gethsemane and His arrest in that garden. Following that, His ministry no longer had focused upon them. He then addressed Himself wholly to the matter of laying down His life and taking it up again. During the last evening He spent with them, the Lord had given them a staggering number of details concerning what was going to take place. John devotes 24% of His Gospel to that evening (John, chapters 13-17). In that interim between the conclusion of His intercessory prayer and the time He was standing before them, they had been kept by the Father, as Jesus requested in that prayer (John 17:11,15).

ALL THINGS MUST BE FULFILLED. Now, Jesus will anchor them in the truth of Scripture. Beholding Him with their eyes is not enough! Handling Him with their hands was not sufficient. Seeing Him eat and hearing His words are not enough to sustain them. They must see Jesus as He is represented in the Scriptures.

THE LANGUAGE OF PURPOSE AND OMNIPOTENCE. These words, “*all things must be fulfilled*” speak of Divine purpose and Omnipotence. Jesus is not saying that what God knew ahead of time would happen, must necessarily take place. Rather, it is what God **purposed** that must take place. The Scriptures contain a revelation of what **God** would do, not merely what men would do. Divine purpose cannot be based upon the foreknowledge of what men will do, for men are vacillating and fickle. They change and are unstable, thus prohibiting anything sure being in any way determined by them.

THE LAW OF MOSES, THE PROPHETS, AND THE PSALMS. Here is the only place in Scripture where the Scriptures themselves are so described: Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. “*Moses*” refers to Genesis through Deuteronomy. The Prophets refer to Isaiah through Malachi. The Psalms contain expressions from David (over 80 credited to him), Moses (90 th), Asaph (50 th ,73 rd ,77 th ,79 th ,80 th ,81 st ,82 nd ,83 rd), and Solomon (72 nd ,127 th). **The point here, however, are the specific prophecies concerning Christ that are found in these categories of Scripture.** There is no doubt also the matter of types and shadows that were contained in the Law – representations of the details associated with the accomplishments and ministry of the coming Savior. For example, Moses gave the initial promise of a Savior who would decimate the devil, Himself suffering a wound (Gen 3:15). He also identified the Savior as the offspring of Abraham (Gen 22:18), and a Prophet (Deut 18:15,18). He presented the type of Melchizedec (Gen 14:18-20), later expounded in Hebrews 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:1-22). Jesus was foreshadowed in the office of the High Priest, instituted through Moses, as well as the sacrifices offered by him. The deliverance that Jesus would effect was seen in the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and their inheritance of the promised land.

The Prophets and the Psalms declared the nature of the coming Savior, together with His accomplishments, ministry, and intercession. They included terms like “*Son,*” “*King,*” “*Branch,*” “*The Lord Our Righteousness,*” “*Deliverer,*” “*Cornerstone,*” “*Messenger of the Covenant,*” “*Desire of all nation,*” etc. It is tragic beyond description that these revelations are so little known within the professing church. As difficult as it may be to receive, this is undeniable evidence that Jesus is **not** their chief minister, for this is the way He ministers. I do not know that it can be substantiated that Christ can be truly known independently of the testimony of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. If such a thing is remotely possible, then one must explain why Jesus took the time expound these realities when He appeared to His disciples.

“ John 20:21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: 23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. 24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”

John provides some further details concerning this initial appearance. He identified this occasion as the time when Jesus first stood in the midst of them while they were behind closed doors (John 20:19). It was also when He showed them His hands, feet, and side (John 20:20). These particular words were introduced by Jesus saying to them “ **again** , *Peace be unto you.*” This was to the state of the soul what the second touch was to the blind man who only saw partially when initially touched (Mk 8:23-25). It was a kind of enhanced peace.

SO SEND I YOU. What A remarkable word to say at this time! “*As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.*” NIV This is like a statement of the grand objective for the disciples. The purpose was not for Jesus to answer all their needs, but for them to be employed in a Divine initiative. This is the kind of statement through which you can arrive at a conclusion concerning the purpose of life. It is all about being engaged in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1-2). Other Gospel writers also mention this commission, stating it in a more detailed way (Matt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:47). I will address this more directly from the Mark text.

HE BREATHED ON THEM. “*He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy*

Spirit.” NKJV This was not the fulness of the Spirit that would be theirs after waiting for the promise of the Father – something Jesus instructed them to do (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4). This is a most arresting word, reminding us of the creation of Adam, when God “*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*” (Gen 2:7). Here it is substantiated that spiritual life, just as fleshly life, is realized when God imparts His own life to men. In creation, it brought life to the soul. In the new creation, God’s Spirit brings life to the human spirit – man’s essential being.

This conferment of the Holy Spirit was intended to keep them during the interim that would take place between then and Pentecost. It would also enable them to profit from Christ’s words more than they did while ye was among them. In some sense, this was not only necessary, but preparatory.

While I must approach this subject with great caution, there is a sense in which those in Christ have the Spirit, yet are admonished to “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph 5:19). There is such a thing as beginning in the Spirit (Gal 3:3), yet coming to the point where one is “*controlled*” by the Spirit NIV (Rom 8:6,8). This was a beginning, not the consummation. It prepared them for the time when they would be filled with the Holy Spirit.

SINS REMITTED AND RETAINED. “*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*” NKJV The disciples did not receive authority to forgive or retain sins with mere human discretion. This is rather a view of proclaiming reconciliation and the terms of its acceptance. On the day of Pentecost, Peter announced something to be done “*for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). On the other hand, he retained the sin of Ananas and Sapphira (Acts 5:4-5,9-10). He announced “*remission of sins*” to the household of Cornelius (Act 10:43), yet told Simon the Sorcerer that he had “*neither part nor lot in the matter*” (Acts 8:21).

This same authority was expressed to Paul when he was called into the apostleship: “*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me*” (Acts 26:18). Yet he announced to Elymas with great authority, “*O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*” (Acts 13:10).

Let it be clear that the proper representation concerning both the remission and retention of sins has been expressed by the apostles. No other doctrine is to be presented on this matter – like “the sinners prayer,” “the Roman Road,” “repeat after me,” or some humanly constructed “plan of salvation.”

BUT THOMAS WAS NOT WITH THEM. On this grand occasion, Thomas was absent. It appears that he was originally with the other ten (Lk 24:9,33), but had chosen to leave. There is no record of the Lord making up to Thomas what he missed when He “*breathed on them.*” Thomas did recover himself, and was with the others who were praying and waiting for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:13). He was also included with “*the twelve*” during the succeeding history of the church (Acts 6:2). However, on this occasion, he was not there – an occasion during which considerable was said, and a lot happened. I speak as one with experience in this area: there are benefits that can be willfully missed, which never can be recovered. Blessed is the person who knows this and avoids such losses.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 182

Mark 16:14 *“Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.”*

Luke 24:45 *Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”*

(Mark 16:14; Luke 24:45-49).

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is still speaking with His disciples – the eleven and those with them – on the evening of the very day He rose from the dead. The passage before us, however, has proved to be one of considerable controversy. Some notable commentators are of the opinion that this is a summation of all that Jesus revealed throughout the forty day period that He was with His disciples. I will proceed in the persuasion that the record of Jesus’ discourse to His disciples on the day of His resurrection concludes with verse forty-nine. Luke then proceeds directly to the day of Christ’s ascension. Mark does the same (Mk 16:15ff). Matthew omits this appearance altogether, and also goes straight to the time of Christ’s ascension. John provides considerable details concerning events that took place during the forty days Jesus spent with His disciples, showing Himself alive *“by many infallible proofs”* (Acts 1:3). In the initial discourse we are reviewing, Jesus establishes a priority concerning our view of Him. Once perceived, it will be seen as contrasting sharply with many of the common representations of Him. However, we must give due heed to the fact that this is the Son of God speaking, and that He is shaping the manner in which His disciples will think about Him. He reduces the significance of His personal presence with them, and establishes that He has, and continues to, fulfill the Scriptures. As soon as this perspective is lost, the real Jesus fades into the background, becoming obscure to the understanding, and consequently removing the experience of the benefits that He brings.

“ Luke 24:45 Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

It is important to recall what Jesus said prior to this statement: “ . . . all things must be

fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me” (Luke 24:44). It is imperative that we comprehend that Christ’s relationship to the Scriptures, and to the God who gave them, is more important than His relationship to us. This does not diminish the value of personal identity with Jesus. It does mean that our association with Him must be seen within the context of Scripture, not our personal lives.

HE OPENED THEIR UNDERSTANDING. Other versions read, “*opened their minds,*” NIV “*wits,*” TNT and “*thoroughly opened up their minds.*” AMPLIFIED The word translated “*understanding*” or “*mind*” means: “the mind, comprising alike the faculties of perceiving and understanding and those of feeling, judging, determining; hence, specifically, a. the intellective faculty, the understanding,” THAYER and “as the total inner orientation or moral attitude way of thinking, mind (set), disposition.” FRIBERG Thus, the “*understanding,*” or “*mind*” has to do with **the way a person thinks**, as well as **what** they think. It includes the idea of reasoning, deciding, and attitude. Now the significance of a matter can be seen as well as the fact of it. Its implications are perceived, and how they impact upon conduct and one’s approach to the Word of God itself.

It ought to be noted that spiritual maturity actually takes place in the understanding – the manner in which a person reasons, and the realities he tends to peruse. All of this directly impacts upon the way a person thinks, speaks, and works – for “*as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Prov 23:7), and “*out of*” the heart proceed “*the issues of life*” (Prov 4:23). Jesus said that “*good things*” proceed out of “*the good treasure of the heart*” (Matt 12:35).

In opening “*their understanding,*” Jesus widened the circumference of their capacity to reason. He enlarged their mental ability so they could see and comprehend more than they did before, all the while looking at something they had seen before. Therefore, before Jesus began to teach them, he first gave them a greater power to understand. In other words, this would **not** be a session in which He would address unanswered questions. It would rather be a time when they would be able to comprehend things to which they has already been exposed.

This kind of understanding is precisely what David was seeking when he cried out, “*Give me understanding!*” (Psa 119:34,73,125,144,169). Paul also admonished Timothy, “*Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things*” (2 Tim 2:7). Paul also prayed that God would bless believers by opening “*the eyes*” of their “*understanding*” (Eph 1:18). Although some versions use the word “*heart*” in this verse, NASB/NIV/NRSV the technical meaning of the word is “the mind as the faculty of understanding, feeling, desiring.” THAYER In other words, it deals with the capacity to comprehend. For men to benefit from Christ and His great salvation, this aspect of their nature must be “*opened*” and made more capable.

THAT THEY MIGHT UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES. Other versions read, “*so they could understand the Scriptures.*” NIV First, this confirms that the Scriptures are not open to a variety of interpretations. They were not written as an interpretation of what God had said or done (2 Pet 1:20), and they cannot be comprehended by the independent reasoning of men. If, after being exposed to the personal teaching of Jesus Himself for over three years, these disciples had to have their understanding opened and enlarged, what may be said of those of our time?

Second, the subject to be comprehend is worthy of note. He did not open their minds to understand mankind, but the Scriptures. The enlargement of the capacity to understand did not pertain to the events taking place in the history of the world, but to the Scriptures. He did not give them an understanding of why good things happen to bad people, or why bad things happen to good people – it was the Scriptures that He enabled them to understand. But what

of those who seek for an understanding of what is happening to them, or around them. What of those who engage in an eager quest to know who they are, and why they are here, and what they are to do? Is that really a matter of top priority? However such things are viewed, they must come behind the understanding of Scripture – particularly as it regards the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the sum and substance of Scripture.

So far as the capacity to understand itself is concerned, the Scriptures are the preeminent subject to be addressed. This is because they, and they alone, provide the means through which Christ can be comprehended and God the Father known. The reason for man, as well as the appointed vocation assigned to him is found in the Scriptures. A clear delineation of both time and eternity are also spelled out there, enabling the individual to establish God-honoring priorities – priorities that will determine one’s eternal destiny. They also contain the expression of all things pertaining to life and godliness. All of these are set within the context of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the salvation that is in Him with eternal glory (2 Tim 2:10).

“ Luke 24:46 *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*”

Confirming that the Scriptures do, in fact, *testify* of Him (John 5:39), and that “*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Rev 19:10), Jesus opens their understanding of the Scriptures concerning Himself.

THUS IT IS WRITTEN. What is “*written*” refers to all that was written by the inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16). In fact, the word “*Scripture*” means “writing, a thing written.” THAYER Jesus has already defined the specific writings to which He refers: things that “*were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me*” (Luke 24:44). Among other things, this substantiates that the understanding of Jesus trumps all other understanding. No field of intellectual expertise is equal to that! This is the ultimate fulfillment of Jeremiah’s word: “*But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD*” (Jer 9:24). Jesus and Jesus alone is the key to understanding God, the purpose of God, and everything related to His eternal salvation. All of this is reflected in the Scripture – what “*is written.*”

IT BEHOVED CHRIST. Other versions read, “*it was necessary,*” NKJV “*Christ should,*” NASB “*Christ will,*” NIV “*Messiah is to,*” NRSV “*would undergo,*” BBE and “*it was right.*” MRD The lexical meaning of “*behoove*” is “it is necessary, there is need of, it behooves, is right and proper.” THAYER This perfectly coincides with the meaning of the English word “behoove”: “to be necessary, proper, or advantageous for” MERRIAM-WEBSTER This is a prophecy, but it is more than that. By saying “*it behooved Christ to . . .*” Jesus was saying more than this is what was going to happen. He was declaring this was something that was necessary, and would yield the intended advantage. What follows is more than an expression of love for men. It is the expression of the inexorable will of God Almighty. It is something that **had** to be done.

TO SUFFER. It is interesting to note that Jesus did not say “*to die and to rise from the dead.*” The word “*suffer*” means “to suffer, to undergo evils, to be afflicted,” THAYER In Jesus’ case, the suffering eventuated in death. This it is written that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels “*for the suffering of death*” (Heb 2:9). Here the word “*suffer*” accents the feeling, or impact, of the affliction rather than the affliction itself. Although Jesus suffered many things at the hands of men (Matt 16:21; Mk 8:31; 9:12), His principle and redemptive suffering came from God Himself. “*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our*

peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed . . . Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief” (Isa 53:5,10). God is the One who “*spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all*” (Rom 8:32). He is the one who made Jesus a “*curse for us*” (Gal 3:13), forsaking Him at that critical point when the sins of the world were laid upon Him (Mk 15:34; Isa 53:6).

And why was this necessary? **It was because sin had to be judged and condemned.** It could not simply be erased, spoken away, or ignored as though it did not exist. God has always, and continues to be, repulsed by sin. Transgression awakens His indignation and wrath – that is why it is to be confessed and forsaken. It is in view of this that Jesus was necessary to God Himself. Only He could have the sins of the world placed upon Him, endure the curse of the Almighty, and come back from the experience. *Doing better* cannot induce God to forget our sin. Determining to “*sin no more*” and revenging our disobedience does not remove sin. Jesus alone removed sin by suffering the ignominy and unspeakable suffering related to the Divine judgment against sin – when God “*condemned sin in the flesh*” of His only begotten Son (Rom 8:3). The reality of Christ’s death is staggering to consider, but the **necessity** of it is even more arresting. That is what Jesus opened to His disciples.

AND TO RISE FROM THE DEAD. In order to validate the effectiveness and acceptance of Christ’s vicarious death, it was necessary that He come back from the dead. It is the **risen** Christ who saves us, making intercession for us (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). Thus it is written that we are “*saved by His life*” (Rom 4:25; 5:10). No resurrection – no salvation!

REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS. Some versions read “*repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*” NASB/NIV While repentance and remission are associated with each other, the point of this text is that both of them are “*preached.*” An example of preaching repentance is found in Acts 5:31. There Peter affirms that God exalted Christ to “*give repentance.*” In our text, it is the reality of repentance that is accented, not its necessity. That is affirmed elsewhere (Acts 17:30; 26:20). This preaching was to begin at Jerusalem, in which environs Christ’s death and resurrection occurred.

All of this was in strict accord with the prophecies of Scripture (Gen 3:15; Psa 22:6-21; 69:7-9,20; Isa 50:6; 52:14; 53:1-12; Dan 9:24; Mic 5:1; Zech 11:12-13; 13:7).

“ Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

YE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS. Other versions read, “*You have seen these prophecies come true,*” LIVING “*You saw these things happen,*” IE “*you are to continue to as witnesses to these things,*” WILLIAMS and “*You must bear testimony to this,*” MONTGOMERY This is a prelude to Christ’s commission, and not the commission itself. Their involvement in the declaration of this Word is preceded by their personal attestation to its truth. Testimony must be preceded by personal experience. To put it another way, “*The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits*” (2 Tim 2:6). This partaking consists of two things. First, they must have witnessed the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Second, their understanding must be opened to comprehend the significance of what was fulfilled. There will be even a third requirement, which Jesus will address in His next word – empowerment to give the witness.

I SEND THE PROMISE OF MY FATHER. “*The promise of the Father*” was foretold by

the Prophets. Through Isaiah the Father said, *“I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed”* (Isa 44:3). He also spoke through Isaiah of a time when the Spirit would be *“poured out upon us”* (Isa 32:15). Through Joel He said, *“I will out My Spirit upon all flesh”* (Joel 2:28). Through Zechariah He said, *“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications”* (Zech 12:10). On the evening of His betrayal, Jesus specifically told the twelve that He would send the Spirit to them. *“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter”* (John 14:16). *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name”* (John 14:26). *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me”* (John 15:26).

The prophets associated the pouring out of the Spirit with spiritual fruit (Isa 32:15); God’s blessing and growth (Isa 44:3-4); prophesying, dreams, and visions (Joel 2:28-29); and grace and supplication (Zech 12:10). Jesus associated the coming of the Holy Spirit with His abiding presence (John 14:12); truth (John 14:13; teaching and recalling to remembrance (John 14:26); testifying of Christ (John 15:26); the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-11); and guiding into all truth (John 16:13).

These days, a host of things are being credited to the Holy Spirit, and what He is purported to be doing today. Jesus, however, associated the Holy Spirit with what God had promised. It is on the part of wisdom for those professing to be His disciples to do the same.

Tracing the gift of the Holy Spirit back to the promises declared through the prophets, the body of Christ is told of *“the promise of the Spirit”* (Gal 3:14), and *“that Holy Spirit of promise”* (Eph 1:13).

STAY IN JERUSALEM. The disciples were not to launch out in the imagined power of their emotion, or their new understanding of what the Scriptures had said about Jesus. What they were experiencing was a beginning, and there was more to come. They were not to sally forth out in the energy of the flesh, as though their natural endowments were sufficient for the work. Luke also records this requirement in the book of Acts. *“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me”* (Acts 1:4).

ENDUED WITH POWER. The required power would come *“from on high”* – from the Father, and at the word of the exalted Christ. To be *“endued”* means to be arrayed, or covered with – as with a garment. THAYER Therefore several versions read, *“clothed with power”* NASB/NIV/RSV The idea is that of thorough adequacy, or spiritual completeness.

This requirement was repeated by Christ just before He ascended into heaven. *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). Here *“power”* means adequacy for the commissioned task. It is enabling power that causes the individual to be equal to the work assigned to him by the Lord.

It ought to be noted that over the years the religious world has been plagued with a powerless church. The situation is so serious that some actually see no need for empowerment from on high, imagining that only the apostles required such an investment of Divine enablement. However, if we are reading of Christ’s appearance to the eleven **and** those who were with them, more than the apostles were addressed by these words. Furthermore, when the disciples remained in Jerusalem awaiting the promise of the Father, there was at least one

hundred and twenty of them, who “*continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren*” (Acts 1:12-15) . This circumstance reveals the seriousness with which these people took the words of Jesus.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 183

John 20:25-29 *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe. 26 And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28 And Thomas answered and said unto Him, my Lord and my God. 29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believe.” (John 20:25-29).*

INTRODUCTION

Mark says that Jesus appeared “*unto the eleven . . . and upbraided them with their unbelief*” (Mk 16:14). Luke states that the two on the road to Emmaus testified to “*the eleven and them that were with them*” – and that as they spoke, Jesus appeared to them (Lk 24:33). Yet, John says that during that initial appearance, Thomas was not with them (John 20:24). That would have made only ten apostles, and those with them. The answer is either that Thomas had left the group while the two from Emmaus were testifying, or that Mark’s statement covers more than the initial appearance of Jesus – for He also addressed the matter of Thomas’ unbelief in His second appearance. It seems to me that the latter explanation is more likely. With that in mind, I have chosen to also deal with Christ’s next appearance to the group, during which He confronted Thomas. Notice that during these appearances the point was not to merely assuage the grief of the disciples, but to establish the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. **They were not the center of attention, He was!** While He dealt gently with them, it was not out of mere pity and kindness, both of which are resident in Jesus in Divine measures. However, it was critical that the disciples have a grounded faith and stable hope before Jesus returned to heaven. At this point, they had **not** believed because of their joy at the appearance of their Lord (Lk 24:41). However notable that may appear, that kind of joy was not sufficient to carry them into the work that was before them. It was not the kind of joy that can be sustained. That kind of sustaining joy is related to faith, not to sight – that is “*the joy of faith*” (Phil 1:26).

“ John 20:25 *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.”*

We cannot pass over this text without noting the importance of assembling together in the name of the Lord. Even though that does not thoroughly describe the reason for the disciples being gathered on that first day of the week, they were together because of Jesus,

their love for Him, and the fact that their lives had been wrapped up in Him. Were it not for Jesus, they would not have been together. Yet, for some reason, Thomas was not among them. This is of particular importance because of the dialog Thomas had with Jesus on the night of His betrayal. He is the one to whom Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me*” (John 14:5-6). Yet, perhaps in grief, he had chosen to absent himself from the gathering of the disciples. Like a hot coal separated from the fire, he began to cool, for spiritual life cannot be maintained in separation from kindred spirits. Even when Paul was isolated in prison, his spirit remained joined to the children of God (1 Cor 5:4; 2 Cor 11:28; Col 2:5). It is not without cause that we are admonished not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, even though that is the custom of some (Heb 10:25).

WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD. The “*other disciples*” no doubt included all those who had seen the Lord, and was not limited to the other ten, although they were the heart of the group. It is of interest to note that this testimony suggests these disciples were remaining together, cemented by the singularity of their devotion to Jesus. They were quick to tell Thomas that they had “*seen the Lord.*” This would have been the **fifth** testimony to the reality of the risen Christ. First, Mary Magdalene (John 20:18). Second, the testimony of the women (Matt 28:7-9; Lk 24:9). Third, the testimony of the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:33-35). Fourth, the testimony of Peter and John who witnessed the empty tomb – something that should have provoked further inquiry, as it did with Mary Magdalene (Lk 24:24; John 20:15).

EXCEPT I SHALL SEE. Unbelief will not receive the testimony of another. The ten unfaithful spies brushed aside the solid testimony of Joshua and Caleb, and the whole congregation of Israel did as well (Num 13:25-14:10). Just as faith is eager to receive valid testimony, so unbelief cannot do so. That is because it anchors the individual to the seen and temporal, and those so characterized cannot see beyond personal and sensual experience.

There is something essential to be seen here. When it comes to the revelation of Christ, genuine testimony is accompanied by the Holy Spirit. This is why faith “*comes by hearing*” the good news of Christ – and that is what Thomas was hearing from the rest of the disciples (Rom 10:14-17). When a person hears the truth of the risen Christ, and yet remains in unbelief, it is because the heart has been hardened against the Holy Spirit. Just as surely as Jesus could do no mighty works in His own country because of their unbelief (Matt 13:58; Mk 6:5), so the Spirit cannot do His work in the one dominated by unbelief. Human rationale is not sufficient to decipher the truth of God, nor can human senses be the means of obtaining the faith that saves the soul. Faith looks at things that are “*unseen,*” while unbelief demands visible attestation. Thus Thomas overestimates his natural capacities.

I WILL NOT BELIEVE. There is a remarkable tenacity in unbelief. It is no wonder that the Spirit refers to “*an evil heart of unbelief*” (Heb 3:12). The text suggests that the disciples spoke more than once to Thomas about this matter: “*the other disciples kept telling him.*” **AMPLIFIED** The word translated “*said,*” or “*kept telling,*” is an indicative imperfect verb, meaning that it was a continual action. It is quite possible that the testimony of the disciples took place over a number of days, and during a variety of occasions. Each time their testimony was given, there was another opportunity to believe. How appropriate are the words spoken through Isaiah, “*if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established*” (Isa 7:9).

God once told Habbakuk, “*I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you*” (Hab 1:5). That is exactly what took place when Jesus was raised from the dead. When it was told, the testimony was not believed! Now Thomas verbalizes his unbelief,

causing it to grip his heart and mind even more firmly.

Unbelief causes the person to “*stagger*” at the promises of God (Rom 4:20). If it is not overcome, it will move God to remove the individual from the Source of life-giving sustenance (Rom 11:20). It also prohibits those dominated by it from entering into the blessings of the Lord (Heb 3:19; 4:6), causing them to “*fall*” (Heb 4:11). If you have ever dealt with someone into whom “*an evil heart of unbelief*” has entered, you know how exceedingly difficult it is to deal with such a person. Unbelief hardens the heart and stupefies the mind, so that the individual becomes incapable of receiving the most accurate and reasonable testimony. This is why Jesus was so sharp with things like “*little faith*” (Matt 16:8), a “*faithless generation*” (Matt 17:17), and doubting (Matt 14:31).

“ John 20:26 And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”

It might be noted that all of the other disciples had also refused to believe. When they heard the testimony that Jesus was alive, “*they believed not*” (Mk 16:11; Lk 24:11). Thus, some reason that Thomas was no worse than the rest of them. Yet, that is not a proper way to reason, for Thomas disbelieved one more testimony. Furthermore, Jesus did not pass over the unbelief of the others, but soundly rebuked them for their unbelief (Mk 16:14; Lk 24:25).

AFTER EIGHT DAYS. This would make this appearance on the next first day of the week. Those who imagine that the first day of the week is no different than any other day must explain why Jesus chose to appear to His disciples on that day. What is more, the disciples also gathered together on that day.

Again, they were behind closed doors, perhaps in the same place where Jesus first appeared to them (John 20:19). It is probably true that certain dangers still were prevalent, just as they were when Jesus first found them sequestered “*for fear of the Jews.*”

THOMAS WAS WITH THEM. This time, however, Thomas was “*with them.*” His affinity with the disciples had not been severed – and that will be the means through which he will be recovered. As soon as men separate themselves from the disciples of Christ, they fall into more jeopardy than they will be able to handle.

PEACE BE UNTO YOU. I understand this to again be a commanded peace – like “*Peace be still.*” It suggests a quieting of the heart, the subduing of fear, and the calming of the mind. Peace is the proper environment for the nurturing of the soul. Thus James writes, “*the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace*” (James 3:18). If it is true that the wisdom that is from above is “*peaceable,*” then such an environment will surely accompany Him who Himself is “*the wisdom of God,*” and is “*the Prince of peace*” (1 Cor 1:24; Isa 9:6). One of the dreadful curses of division and animosity is that they remove a peaceful environment. The “*harvest of righteousness*” NIV will not be realized in such surroundings.

REACH HITHER. Jesus immediately addresses Thomas, challenging him to do what he said he required. Jesus not only knew Thomas had not been there the first time, He also was aware of his continued response to the testimony of his peers. He tells him to do precisely what he said he required: put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into Christ’s side. Of course, the requirements that appear so reasonable when men are unaware of Jesus, appear very foolish when there is a keen and undeniable awareness of Him.

BE NOT FAITHLESS. As well as an admonition, ponder what a stern warning is in these words. The word “*faithless*” is associated with perversity: “*O faithless and perverse generation . . .*” (Matt 17:17). The word translated “*faithless*” is also translated “*unbelievers*” (Lk 12:46; 1 Cor 6:6), and “*believeth not*” (1 Cor 7:13,14;. 10:27). It is also translated “*incredible*,” or outside the realm of believability (Acts 26:8). Being “*faithless*,” or not believing, is evidence of being blinded by “*the god of this world*” (2 Cor 4:4). Believers are not to yoke themselves with such people (2 Cor 6:14). It is said of the “*unbelieving*” ones that nothing is pure unto them, “*but even their mind and conscience is defiled*” (Tit 1:15). Those who remain in this state will eventually “*have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*” (Rev 21:8). It is no wonder that the Lord says, “*Be not faithless!*”

MY LORD AND MY GOD. Apparently Thomas did not do what he said he demanded. The powerful words of the Lord bound up that bruised reed, and fanned the smoking flax into a flickering flame. His words were a confession that He believed. This began the fulfillment of a word Jesus spoke to Thomas when he observed the Passover with them: “*If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen Him*” (John 14:7). Thomas’ faith had not altogether departed. Now he takes hold of something that could not be confirmed by putting his finger in the print of the nails or thrusting his hand into the Lord’s side. Though brief, this was a thorough confession. To my knowledge, during the ministry of Jesus, the only other person who referred to Jesus as “*my Lord*” was Mary Magdalene, who responded to an angel who inquired why she was at the tomb (John 20:13). Jesus had told Mary Magdalene to tell His disciples He was going to ascend to His God, **and to their God** (John 20:17) – but no one of record ever referred to Him as “*God*” while He walked among men, and certainly not as “*My God*.” However, in a burst of sudden insight, inspired by the presence of the Lord Jesus, Thomas saw it and confessed it. What is more, the truth of what he confessed is attested by our Lord’s reception of his words. He did not rebuke him or ask, “*Why callest thou me Lord and God*” – something like He had asked a certain ruler who had called Him “*good*” (Lk 18:18-19).

“ John 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Jesus now speaks in anticipation of the time of the administration of the New Covenant, when believing would be based purely upon the hearing of testimony. Following the resurrection of Jesus, and until this time, we have no clear record of someone believing on Jesus independently of sight. Yet, Jesus speaks of such an activity now as though it existed. However, He was speaking of things that were not, just as though they were – a prerogative that is peculiar to Deity (Rom 4:17). There are those who speak of a “*positive confession*,” calling upon people to confess what does not exist, then telling them they are, in faith, calling “*those things which be not as though they were*.” This, they say, is because faith has creative power. But this is only the outbreak of carnality, for no such doctrine was ever dispensed by the apostles. Only God can declare things as reality without the slightest chance of them failing to come into being.

BECAUSE THOU HAST SEEN ME. This is not the first example of someone seeing, and then believing. During His ministry, this was true of certain from the city of Samaria (John 4:42). This was also true of His disciples when Jesus showed forth His glory, turning water into wine (John 2:11). During His ministry, this was also said of those who saw His great works (John 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 11:45). This was true of Mary Magdalene (John 20:16), the women who came to the tomb (Matt 28:9), and the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:30-31). **But this was not the robust faith that comes by hearing.** It was a kind introductory faith that could keep them until the faith that brings justification could be received.

I do understand that *“the Lord’s hand is not shortened,”* and that He is *“able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”* (Isa 59:1; Eph 3:20). However, in the New Covenant this is not the avenue through which faith comes, but is rather the means through which faith works – and there is a vast difference between the two. This is the power that is *“Toward us who believe”* NKJV (Eph 1:19). Those who say they will be convinced by evidence addressed to the senses have taken their side by Thomas as he was prior to this text. As such, they also are subject to the correction of the Lord.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN. Notice, Jesus does not say to Thomas *“Blessed art thou!”* It is quite true that during Christ’s ministry He said to those who saw and heard Him, *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear”* (Matt 13:16). However, this pertained to the fulfilment of the prophets concerning the Messiah coming into the world. The generation that saw the Lord’s Christ was, indeed, blessed. However, that generation did not partake of the benefits that were poured out upon men when Jesus was enthroned in glory. None of the covenantal benefits were enjoyed prior to that time. Furthermore, to the point of our text, everyone who believed on Jesus had done so because they had seen Him: Mary, the women, the two on the road, and the eleven and those with them.

However, Jesus now speaks of the marvelous things that will happen after He has ascended *“up where He was before”* (John 6:62). In other words, so far as working with men is concerned, Jesus is doing more in heaven than He did when He was upon the earth. His earthly ministry was an introduction to His Person and power, but *“better things”* were yet to come (Heb 6:9; 11:40; 12:24). The times following His glory would be characterized by a robust and unrelenting faith that would be given without any sensible evidence. That faith would also be accompanied by a strong confidence and consistent hope – never before realized in the measure now vouchsafed to men.

In a sense, those disciples were much like Israel, going through what was required to get the tree rooted. Sorrow gripping their hearts when Jesus died, grappling with unbelief, and confronting circumstances that were beyond their comprehension, were difficult. Yet, they were necessary in order to provide them with a comparison that would validate the absolute superiority of a justifying faith. During His earthly ministry, Jesus cultured these initial souls, finally turning them over the Father to keep them until He returned to administer the affairs of the Kingdom. Everyone is not required to go through this kind of orientation. Now, upon hearing the Gospel of Christ, faith can spring up that will justify and keep the soul – during the bodily absence of Jesus. However, these preparations required the involvement of a people whom Jesus could teach and direct – a people who would taste the bitter dregs of sorrow, and wrestle with unbelief in unparalleled measures. Of course, they were also a comfort to Jesus as He entered into His sufferings. On the night of His betrayal Jesus said to His apostles, *“Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations”* (Luke 22:28). Ah, but that privilege was a costly one, for He also told them, *“sorrow hath filled your heart . . . ye shall weep and lament . . . ye now therefore have sorrow”* (John 16:6,20,22). But all of that was a kind of travail of soul until they received the promise of the Father. Now that Jesus is in heaven, those who believe can be sifted, and faith will keep and sustain them until the song of joy again fills the heart.

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 184

Mark 16:15 *“And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

(Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-8).

INTRODUCTION

We are apprised that Jesus spent forty days with His disciples following His resurrection, and prior to His ascension, during which *“He showed Himself alive . . . by many infallible proofs”* (Acts 1:3). The details of these appearances are few, and covered differently by each of the Gospel writers. Matthew records His appearance to the women who came to the tomb, alludes to His appearance to the disciples in Galilee, then covers His final words before His ascension. Mark records His appearance to Mary Magdalene, the two on the Emmaus road, and the disciples later that day, then leaps to the time of His final commission and ascension. Luke records His appearance to the two on the road to Emmaus, the disciples later that day, then leaps to the time of His ascension. John records His appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-18), and the disciples on that first day, stating that He breathed on the disciples and said *“Receive ye the Holy Ghost”* (John 20:19-23). He also recorded another appearance on the next first day of the week (John 20:26-29), and His later, and extensive appearance to the disciples on the sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-22). Mark, Luke, and Acts record the ascension of Christ, with Matthew and John omitting it, with Acts providing the most detailed account (Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9-11). The precise timing of all of these appearances is somewhat ambiguous, but I am proceeding with the assumption that Mark’s account took place immediately prior to His ascension, as verse nineteen suggests. These circumstances will not prove satisfactory to those with undue curiosity. However, it appears to me that there is a holy logic behind the way the reports have been given. They are given in such a manner as to accentuate the conclusion of Christ’s bodily ministry in the world, and the fact that He has departed from this world to assume His Mediatorial and Intercessory reign in heaven. They also underscore that His presence in this world was primarily to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Having completed that work, He only remained here long enough to substantiate the reality of His resurrection, and to duly prepare His disciples for life in the Spirit.

“Matt 28:16 *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.”*

THEY WENT AWAY INTO GALILEE. This preceded the ascension of Jesus, perhaps by a significant number of days. Galilee was the region in the northern extremities of Palestine, while Mount Olivet, from which Jesus delivered the discourse before us and ascended (Acts 1:12), was near Jerusalem, and in the proximity of Bethany (Lk 24:50-51). This is considered to have been the appearance during which Paul reports above five hundred brethren seeing the risen Lord (1 Cor 15:6).

Prior to His death Jesus said He would appear to them in Galilee (Matt 26:32; Mk 14:28). Following His resurrection, Jesus told the women they would see Him in Galilee (Matt 28:7). This was approximately sixty miles from Mount Olivet, from which He would ascend into heaven. It was also the location of the Sea of Tiberias, where Jesus appeared to His disciples as they were fishing.

I give these details to emphasis that a considerable amount of inconvenience was associated with beholding the risen Christ. Mary and the other woman had to come to the tomb early in the morning. The two from Emmaus had to engage in a long walk. In order to meet an appointment in Galilee with the Lord, the disciples had to journey about sixty miles – at least a three-day journey.

SOME DOUBTED. During the appearance in Galilee, “*some doubted.*” We assume that this was not the experience of “*the eleven,*” who had seen Him previously. If the assumption is true that this was the meeting to which Paul alludes in First Corinthians 15, these doubters would have been among the other disciples who saw Him. This appearance was no doubt designed to address and removed their incertitude also.

JESUS CAME AND SPAKE. Now Matthew leaps forward to the time when Jesus would ascend back into heaven. At this time, they are again in the environ’s of Jerusalem in the Mount of Olives, to which Jesus took the eleven on the night of His betrayal (Matt 26:30). This is the mountain in which He agonized in prayer that awful night, and it will be the place where He triumphantly ascends into heaven, leading captivity captive (Eph 4:8).

ALL POWER IS GIVEN UNTO ME. The Amplified Bible reads, “*All authority (all power of rule).*” The word “*power*” means “*authority.*” NKJV This kind of power or authority refers to the power of choice – to do whatever one pleases. It is the power of rule or government. It is not theoretical or idealistic. This is a power that cannot be contested, neutralized, or negated. It is a rule that is accomplished by a word, not a battle. The word “*all*” means “*the whole . . . everything . . . any and every.*” THAYER **So far as Jesus is concerned, there is no competing power!** Powers that compete do so with men, not with Christ. In His death He destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14), and spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them (Col 2:15). This means that those who are in Christ Jesus are, in reality, “*more than conquerors*” (Rom 8:37). Whatever difficulties may attend our lives, as we abide in Christ, we will be caused to triumph (2 Cor 2:14). Any religious methodologies that approach life ignoring this reality are nothing more than delusions from the wicked one.

This confirms that commensurate with His resurrection, Jesus was “*glorified.*” The fact that He took back His life also confirms He had received “*all power,*” including being over the domain of death itself. At the time of this utterance, the power had already been given to Him. It would be formalized when He returned to heaven, and would be publically declared when He poured forth the Holy Spirit – but it was in His hand at this time. Other versions read, “*has been given,*” NKJV “*I have been given.*” LIVING Paul refers to this circumstance when he wrote, “*Jesus Christ . . . declared to be the Son of God with power , according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead* ” (Rom 1:3-4).

IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH. Even when Jesus was in the earth, He had “*all power.*” His had authority over nature (Mk 4:39; Matt 14:25; 17:27; 21:19), disease (Matt 8:3,15; 9:5,29-30; John 5:8), death (Lk 7:14-15; 8:54; John 11:43-44), and demonic forces (Mk 1:24-25; 5:8; 9:25). He also affirmed that He had “*power on earth to forgive sins*” (Mk 2:10). Now, that power was enhanced that He might effect the salvation purposed by God. Salvation extends further than the body. It involves the removal of sin (Heb 9:26), reconciliation to God (Eph 2:16), breaking down the middle

wall between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14), the making of peace (Col 1:20), and the ending of the Law as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4). On a personal level, His present reign includes the power to give repentance (Acts 5:31), send the Spirit (John 15:26; Acts 2:33), remove a stony heart and confer a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26), and give faith (Eph 6:23). That authority, possessed by Jesus when He rose from the dead, would be formalized following His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33; Phil 2:9).

“ Mark 16:15 And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

HE SAID UNTO THEM. There is no question that these words were spoken particularly to the eleven. However, that is not the same as saying they were spoken “*only*” to the eleven. We know that one of the qualifications for an apostle was that the individual have been continually with Christ from the baptism of John until the time when He was taken up into heaven (Acts 1:22). We know of the names of two people who precisely fit that qualification: “*Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias*” (Acts 1:23). We also know that following these words, while they waited for the promise of the Father, there were others with the eleven: “*the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren*” (Acts 1:13-14). Luke also infers that the same people who saw Him when He appeared to a number of disciples on the day of His resurrection, were also led to Bethany where Jesus blessed them and ascended into heaven before them (Lk 24:36-50).

This word will be delivered primarily to the apostles because they would be given particular insight into the Person, accomplishments, and ministry of Jesus. Their doctrine would form the foundation of valid thought concerning Christ. But they were not the only ones who would preach this Gospel, as is affirmed by the early accounts of the preaching of Stephen, Philip, and all of the believers who were scattered by persecution.

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD. Never before had there been a commission of this magnitude delivered by the Lord. Until Jesus was enthroned in heaven, preaching had been narrowly confined. Moses delivered the Word only to Israel. The holy prophets spoke mostly to Israel, with occasional prophecies being delivered to wayward nations and kings. John the Baptist preached only in Israel, as well as the Lord Jesus Himself. Prior to His death, when Jesus sent out His disciples, it was only to “*the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt 10:5). Now, however, the world becomes the arena of announcement.

PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE. Other versions read, “*to all creation,*” NKJV “*to everyone.*” BBE/GWN Strictly speaking the words “*every creature*” or “*all creation,*” do not mean “*everyone.*” Here, the emphasis is on the fact that humanity is a created race, and is therefore responsible to God alone. While the Gospel is an announcement of salvation for sinners, it is also the declaration of provision for those who have been created by God, and are obligated to Him. Further, the Gospel is to be preached within the framework of that awareness. That makes the message more than a mere optional resolution.

Matthew expands on this word: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . .*” (Matt 28:19). “*Therefore*” means, in view of the fact that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Christ. Not only is it mandatory that the message be delivered, it is to be done in the confidence that it has power (Rom 1:16).

The word “*teach*” is not an academic word. Technically, the word means “*make disciples,*” and is so translated in other versions. NKJV/NIV To “*make*” disciples is to bring people to a point where they embrace and follow Jesus alone – for that is what a disciple does. According to

Jesus' own word, His disciples love Him more than any flesh-and-blood relatives (Lk 14:26). They whole-heartedly consent to taking up their cross every day and following Him (Lk 14:27). They forsake every competing interest to follow Jesus (Lk 14:33). Any other kind of convert is unacceptable, for salvation can only be received by those who meet the criterion. Those who do not so qualify are termed "*wood, hay, and stubble*" (1 Cor 3:12), and God has pledged to destroy those who attempt to add such people to Christ's church (1 Cor 3:14-17). I do not believe this word has been taken seriously by the church of our day.

The Gospel is calculated to produce this kind of people – disciples. A message that does not "*make disciples*" is not the Gospel, no matter how good it sounds. Professed Christians that have not forsaken everything to follow Jesus, putting all other priorities behind them, cannot possibly be the people of God. Either they have heard the Gospel and not believed it, or they have not heard the Gospel at all.

The gravity of preaching the Gospel is seen in the manner in which Jesus described His witnesses: "*ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Other versions read, "*My witnesses.*" NASB They are not delivering a "how-to" message, or a resolution to self-diagnosed problems. Christ Himself is the content of their message – the Subject of the Gospel. True preachers do not reason from human need to Jesus, but from Jesus to God-diagnosed need. That means that the Gospel is a universal message for a universal condition – "*THE Gospel.*" There is no such thing as a Gospel for this group or that kind of people. The message is singular, and it is tailored for sinners, for sin is the root of all human deficiencies and uncomely conditions. This may sound rather simple, but our generation is having great difficulty comprehending the real Gospel.

“Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Here is a saying that seems quite clear, and yet men continue to deal with it as though it was not even in the Scriptures. A few introductory thoughts will be in order. First, Jesus does **not** say, "He that believes and is saved shall be baptized." This, however, is what is taught by those who say baptism does not have anything to do with salvation, and that a person is saved prior to be baptized. Also, He does **not** say, "He that is baptized and believes shall be saved." This is what men infer when they say Jesus can be received as Savior, but not as Lord.

HE THAT BELIEVETH. Other versions read, "*has believed,*" NASB "*has faith,*" BBE "*trusts,*" CJB "*the person who believes it (the Gospel),* IE and "*believes [who adheres to and trusts in and relies on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth].*" AMPLIFIED The thing believed is the Gospel – the message that sets forth the Lord Jesus, and is referred to as "*the record that God gave of His Son*" (1 John 5:10). It is the Gospel that was preached by the apostles "*with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*" (1 Pet 1:12). We are told that if any man, or even an angel from heaven, "*preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Gal 1:8). No person is under any obligation to accept any message that is not the Gospel first preached by the apostles. That is an "*everlasting Gospel*" (Rev 14:6), that declares an "*eternal purpose*" (Eph 3:11), announces an "*everlasting covenant*" (Heb 13:20), and brings the "*hope of eternal life*" (Tit 1:2-3).

To believe that Gospel is to depend upon its truth (Eph 1:13), obey it (Rom 10:16), not be moved away from it (Col 1:23), and turn from idols to serve the living God (1 Thess 1:9). Believing is more than intellectual assent. It involves strong persuasion and a hearty embrace.

This is because the one who believes considers the word to have come from God, is convicted of its reality, and therefore has no alternative but to embrace it and structure all of life around it. No person who does not do this has really believed the Gospel. Further, until the Gospel is believed, no action toward God will be received, for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6).

HE THAT IS BAPTIZED. Here, being baptized is an act of obedience, as affirmed in Romans 6:17. It is also baptism “*with water*” (Acts 8:28; 10:47). This is not baptism with the Holy Spirit, for that is not an act of obedience. Because we are “*baptized into Christ*” (Gal 3:27), baptism is said to “*also save us*” (1 Pet 3:21). It is also in this sense that we are “*born of water*” (John 3:5). Baptism is the point at which we receive “*the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38), and obtain a “*good conscience*” (1 Pet 3:21). It is also the point at which we join Christ in both His death and His resurrection (Rom 6:3-5). From this point forward, we are to reckon, or reason, upon the basis of this revealed reality: we are “*dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom 6:11). The act of baptism itself is validated by the belief of the Gospel. Believing compels the soul to move into the position of conformity to the Gospel.

Matthew elaborates on the words of Jesus: “. . . *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matt 28:19). This accents an affinity with the Godhead. In this case “*in the name of*” does not mean by the authority of, for authority is never approached in such a threefold manner. The word translated “*in*” means “*into*,” and is so rendered in several versions. ASV/AMPLIFIED The idea is that of being baptized into identity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus believers are said to be “*in*” God (Col 3:3; 1 Thess 1:11; 1 John 4:15,16), “*in*” Christ (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:30; Gal :28), and “*in*” the Spirit (Rom 8:9; Gal 3:3; 5:25). This is the oneness for which Jesus prayed (John 17:21,23). Until this union has been experienced, the promised benefit cannot be realized. Matthew also adds the ongoing nature of preaching the Gospel to every creature: “*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*” (Matt 28:20). This has to do with continuing in the faith (Acts 14:22; Col 1:23).

SHALL BE SAVED. The word “*saved*” has the following lexical meaning: “keep safe and sound, rescue from danger of destruction . . . preserve.” THAYER This has to do with deliverance from the guilt and power of sin (Rom 6:7), the devil (Acts 26:18), the world (Gal 1:4), and the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10). Where enslavement to sin, the devil, and the world continues, salvation has not been realized. If that is the case, an evil heart of unbelief is present (Heb 3:12).

HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT. The person who does not believe the Gospel is the one who does not act upon it (Rom 10:16). It is the one who hears that word and does not understand it (Matt 13:19). According to John, this condition results from Divinely imposed darkness because of the hardness of their hearts (John 12:38-40; Isa 29:10-14). Men have not been given the liberty to not believe the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son!

SHALL BE DAMNED. Other versions read, “*condemned*,” NKJV and “*judged*.” BBE The word “*damned*” means “judged worthy of punishment.” THAYER In this case, that means having “*their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Rev 21:8).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 185

Mark 16:17 *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”*

(Mark 16:17-18)

INTRODUCTION

The passage before us is considered by many to be absent from the original manuscript – even though we do not have access to the original manuscript. Briefly stated, “As early as the 4th century A.D., the church fathers Eusebius and Jerome noted that the earliest Greek manuscripts in their possession did not contain verses 9-20. The earliest manuscripts of the gospel of Mark do not contain those verses, so they are an interpolation, a later addition not original to the writing of Mark and cannot be considered Scripture or claimed to be the words of Jesus Christ.” DISCERNING TRUTH The final twelve verses, 16:9-20, are not present in two fourth-century Greek manuscripts, the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.” D.C. PARKER, THE LIVING TEXT OF THE GOSPELS However, all English versions, from Wycliffe through modern versions, include the text, and the vast majority of reputable commentators accept the text as valid, and harmonious with the rest of Scripture. I am proceeding in the persuasion that these are the words of the Lord.

Jesus does not send His disciples out without His presence and power. Their work will be accomplished in an arena in which the devil and his hosts are aggressive, and they will not be able to confront his power in a powerless condition. Satan cannot be outwitted in human wisdom, and natural aptitudes are not sufficient to overthrow his charms. Also, his diabolical influence is directed toward the church – particularly those who are disseminating the Gospel, and invading territories he has long dominated. Those who go in the name of the Lord are doing more than simply increasing the base of knowledge among the people. Their primary work does not have to do with making the world a better place to live. Satan has no objections to that as long as the people make this world their home, living without eternity in view. He has no objection to peace as long as there is no corresponding righteousness, and *“the fruit of righteousness”* is not *“sown in peace by those who make peace”* NKJV (James 3:18). Neither, indeed, will he vigorously oppose philanthropic work, as long as the word of the Gospel is not delivered to them. But where that word is preached, his opposition is certain.

“ Matt 28:17a *And these signs shall follow them that believe . . .*”

Jesus is specifically referring to those who are preaching *“the gospel to every creature”* (16:15) – those who are making disciples, and teaching them to observe all things that Jesus

has commanded them (Matt 28:19). While it is quite possible that these “*signs*” can occur among all those “*that believe,*” this word is particularly addressed to those who have entered into the Lord’s “*harvest,*” and are engaged in the proclamation of the good news.

THESE SIGNS. Other versions read, “*these miraculous signs,*” NLT “*these tokens,*” GENEVA “*these miracles*” IE and “*these attesting signs.*” AMPLIFIED As used here, the technical definition of “*signs*” is “that by which a person is distinguished from others and known . . . an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature.” THAYER Here, the point is not **what** is done, but **the one** who does it. In particular, a sign is a validation that what the person has declared is the truth, and that the person who did it has been sanctioned and commissioned by God. There is no purpose for “*signs*” if the individual is not uniquely from God, and is delivering a word from God.

These “*signs*” also have an impact on the ones through whom, or in whom, they are done. Early in the history of the church, when opposition arose against its messengers, the disciples prayed for God to grant them “*all boldness*” to speak God’s word – and to do so “*by stretching forth*” His hand “*to heal; and that signs and wonders*” might be done by the name of His “*Holy Child Jesus*” (Acts 4:29-30). In this case, the purpose of the signs and wonders was not confined to validating the message and the messengers. It also bolstered their confidence, and gave them boldness to declare the Word in the face of hostility and aggression, and even personal suffering and hardship.

In these words Jesus is also assuring the disciples that His absence would not diminish the power that would be given to them. In fact, it would rather be enhanced. Even though Jesus had commissioned Mary Magdalene to tell His disciples He was ascending to the Father, it appears that they did not yet think in terms of Him bodily leaving them. On the night of His betrayal, as He ate the Passover with His apostles, He repeatedly told them He was going away (John 13:33,36; 14:2,3,4,12,28; 16:5,7,10,16). At that time some of the disciples reasoned among themselves, “*What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father?*” (John 16:17).

Further confirming that they had not yet perceived the fact that Jesus was going to leave them, just before He actually ascended into heaven, and after the words of our text were spoken, His disciples asked Him, “*Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” (Acts 1:6). Thus Jesus speaks to them of the special advantages they will receive when they set out to preach the Gospel and disciple the nations, even though, at this time, they doubtless associated such privileges with the bodily presence of the Lord.

SHALL FOLLOW. Other versions read, “*will accompany,*” NASB “*will be with those,*” BBE “*shall attend,*” MRD “*will be associated with,*” NJB and “*will go with.*” IE **The signs and those who were declaring the message were tied together.** The signs were not the primary thing, for they were an accompaniment, not the focus. The men were the primary focus of attention, and that was because of the message that they brought. They were unusual men, being sent forth by the Lord, and they had an unusual message. Therefore, Jesus said, unusual things would accompany them, validating that they were who they declared themselves to be. Those who are eager for signs to assuage their unbelief are referred to as a “*wicked and adulterous generation*” (Matt 12:39).

THEM THAT BELIEVE. Jesus delivers this word in such a manner as to quell an inordinate appetite for extraordinary external phenomenon. In this word, the promise extends beyond the apostles, including other believers who were preaching – like Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Philip (Acts 8:6-7). Observe that although Jesus is directly referring to those who would

“preach the Gospel to every creature,” He does not say the signs will follow those who preach, but those who *“believe.”* As with all Divine works, these signs would be discretionary. They would not always follow – such as when Stephen was being stoned (Acts 7:56), or when Paul was in prison (Phil 2:27), or when he was forced to leave Damascus (Acts 9:25) and Thessalonica (Acts 17:10).

Believing is a requisite in the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, the one who believes will *“not be ashamed”* (Rom 10:11) or *“confounded”* (1 Pet 2:6). However, along the way they may be *“troubled on every side,” “perplexed,” “persecuted,”* and *“cast down”* (2 Cor 4:9). Our persons, labors, and circumstances, are all subject to the will of God. In saying that certain *“signs”* will follow those who believe, Jesus is not guaranteeing this will always be the case. If the Son of God Himself *“could do no mighty work”* in certain environs (Mk 6:5), you may rest assured those whom He sends forth will not be exempt from such an experience. The point Jesus is making in this text is that the work His disciples will be doing will not be thwarted by the snares of the wicked one. The work and the workers are underwritten by heaven.

“ Mark 16:17b . . . In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.”

Here, Jesus is dispensing power – something that He can do, because He possesses *“all power in heaven and in earth.”* This is a delineation of the statement recorded by Luke: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me . . .”* (Acts 1:8). The power, as evidenced in the signs that are here mentioned, pertains to them in the role of Christ’s appointed and commissioned witnesses. As His witnesses, their role was not social reform, political stability, or domestic idealism. Their fundamental role was the proclamation and exposition of the Person, accomplishments, and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the process of that activity, and at the discretion of the Lord, these signs would accompany them, validating their persons and word, and encouraging their hearts.

IN MY NAME. Other versions read, *“using My name,”* NRSV *“use the power and authority of My name,”* GWN and *“making use of My name.”* WEYMOUTH I have long been discontent with the traditional explanation of *“in My name”* – i.e. speaking out the name of Jesus, and by so doing causing certain things to happen. The authority that is associated with *“in My name”* means more the utterance of Jesus’ name being empowered from heaven. **As used here, this expression postulates a Christ that is bodily absent from the world.** The words being said, and the authority accompanying them, are found in those who are joined to the Lord. They have His mind, His Spirit, and His life. They have been sent and empowered by Him. They are His authoritative representatives in the earth, and do what He would do if here bodily.

Nothing in the Kingdom of God is impersonal. That is, there is no work of God in which the Lord Himself is absent, or operates by proxy. Also, there is no valid worker who is not joined to the Lord, and in whom the Lord is not active, working to will and to do of His own good pleasure. In the sense of this text, those who do something in the name of the Lord are those in whom Jesus is both dwelling and working. Where these conditions are not found, it is not possible to effectively do anything in the name of Jesus.

CAST OUT DEVILS. Linguistically speaking, the proper word is *“demons.”* Lexically, the word means *“a god, goddess, an inferior deity . . . an evil spirit,”* THAYER *“a supernatural being or spirit.”* LOUW-NIDA The Greeks also applied the word to *“departed souls.”* LIDDELL-SCOTT Doctrinally, these are depraved spirits that operate under Satan, *“the prince of the power of the air”* (Eph 2:2). Early translators appeared to have used the word *“devils”* to distinguish this conglomerate of wicked spirits as operating under THE devil, and in strict accord with his agenda.

To “*cast out demons*” is to “*drive out,*” NIV “*throw out*” IE or “*force*” GWN demons to leave those whom they possess. It is to “*expel*” MONTGOMERY them from their habitat, thrusting them out against their will. Those who have given thought to this know the remarkable nature of such a work. They know that there is no mere procedure that can accomplish such a thing.

When He was yet among men, Jesus gave power to the twelve to cast out demons (Matt 10:8). Later He also gave this power to “*other seventy*” who were also sent out, to whom demons were subject (Lk 10:17). Now, Jesus declares the dark world of evil spirits would be subject to them. This also would be according to Divine discretion. We know that Philip also possessed this power, for during his ministry in Samaria “*unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them*” (Acts 8:7).

Paul taught that professing Christians could drink from “*the cup of demons,*” but could not do so while drinking “*the cup of the Lord*” (1 Cor 10:21). There are also teachings that are perpetrated by demons (1 Tim 4:1), and demons presently believe there is “*one God,*” and “*tremble*” at the thought of it (James 2:19). Who is equal to neutralizing their power?

SPEAK WITH NEW TONGUES. Other versions read, “*new languages,*” AMPLIFIED and “*foreign languages.*” WILLIAMS The word “*new*” means “*new*” to those who spoke these languages. That is, they would speak in a language that was not their native tongue, nor was it one that they had been taught or learned. These are existing languages that can be understood by those who are accustomed to speaking them. We have examples of this phenomenon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4,11). This is the only Scriptural account of the disciples speaking in other languages, and they were understood by those who spoke them. Those at the house of Cornelius spoke in other languages, and Peter and those with him heard them magnifying God (Acts 10:46). Certain Ephesian disciples, upon their baptism into Christ, spoke and prophesied in other languages (Act 19:6).

As with all spiritual gifts, speaking in other languages was functional, bringing profit to the hearers (1 Cor 12:7). As Jesus sent these messengers into “*all the world,*” they would not be hindered by the various languages spoken in different regions. While Greek was the universal language, it appears that it was not spoken in every region. Yet, the emissaries of the Lord would be able to speak in “*new tongues,*” declaring the Gospel in those regions. I gather that Paul referred to this ability when he wrote, “*I speak with tongues more than ye all*” (1 Cor 14:18).

“ Mark 16:18 *They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*”

Jesus continues to elaborate on the “*signs*” that would accompany those who were declaring the Gospel to every creature. The fact that these are not proclaimed in the epistles confirms that they were not intended to be the **ordinary** manner of Divine working in the church. Neither, indeed, was any time-limit placed on them. These were “*signs*” given at the discretion of the Lord – as He deemed them to be appropriate and helpful. It is wrong to attempt to formulate a static doctrine concerning these matters. Rather, it is on the part of wisdom to leave them in the Lord’s hands. No Kingdom laborer should assume such things will never be required, or that have been rendered obsolete, thus leaving believers subject to every whim and device of the wicked one.

THEY SHALL TAKE UP SERPENTS. Other versions read, “*pick up serpents,*” NASB “*pick up snakes,*” NIV “*handle snakes,*” CJB “*take away serpents,*” GENEVA “*be able to handle snakes,*” NLT “*shall drive away serpents,*” PNT and “*shall kill serpents.*” TNT The word translated “*take up*” means “*to lift up, raise . . . to raise from the ground.*” THAYER You may recall that this was one of the signs God gave to Moses, to be displayed before the Israelites. When the

Lord told Moses to throw his rod on the ground, it became a slithering snake, and Moses ran from it. God then told him to seize it by the tail, and upon doing so, it turned to a rod again (Ex 4:3-5). This does not, however, appear to be the sense of this word of Jesus.

An incident that seems to fit this description took place when Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Melita. There, while gathering wood for a fire that had been kindled by the occupants of that island, “*there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.*” The snake, noted for being “*venomous,*” was seen “*hanging from his hand.*” NKJV Only when the islanders had seen the snake hanging from his hand did Paul shake “*off the creature into the fire,*” suffering no harm. The people observed for “*a great while*” that when he should have swelled up and fallen dead, Paul remained unharmed. Having thought he was a murderer, they “*changed their minds and said he was a god*” (Acts 28:3-6). The Gospel was not impeded, and Paul was able to do the work of God on that island. The whole event was no doubt an effort of Satan to bring an end to Paul’s work. However, from a higher point of view, it was a sign that validated him as the messenger of the Lord. It appears to me that this is the kind of sign of which Jesus spoke. He could not have been speaking of a mere demonstration before the people, for there are a number of men who have mastered the art of picking up poisonous snakes and handling them without being harmed. Such an activity is not a sign. Jesus was not speaking of the intentional handling of snakes, something that is practiced by several southern cultic groups.

IF THEY DRINK ANY DEADLY THING. This is a similar sign – something that occurred incidentally, or without deliberation. Jesus alluded to a similar provision when He told the seventy, “*And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you*” (Luke 10:8). That is, do so with gratefulness, and without fear of inadvertently ingesting something that is harmful. It is interesting to observe that Mohammed, who referred to himself as a true apostle of God, died as the result of unknowingly ingesting poison. Had he really been what he claimed, this would not have happened.

In his writings, Papias, martyred in A.D. 161, wrote that Mathias, who replaced Judas, “*drank a poisonous draught, and by the grace of the Lord, received no hurt.*” Hist. Eccl. 50:3. c. 39 We have no Scriptural accounts of this taking place. And, indeed, it is not necessary for us to have any. The point Jesus is making is that they would have appropriate protection as they were engaged in the will of the Lord. They would not be thrust from the battle field by some accident or fortuitous action. They were not sloppy in their manners, but when they conducted themselves wisely, going about the will of the Lord, Satan would not catch them unawares – not even when they ate and drank.

THEY SHALL LAY HANDS ON THE SICK. Keep in mind, these are “*signs*” that follow those who believe, and are engaged in the work of the Lord. Paul did this when he was on the island of Melita. There he laid his hands on the father of Publius, a chief man of the island, and he was healed “*of a fever and of a bloody flux,*” or dysentery. NKJV When Ananias placed his hands on Saul of Tarsus, he was healed of the blindness caused on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:17-18). When Paul spent two years in Ephesus, “*God wrought special miracles*” by his “*hands*” (Acts 19:10). That this was also a discretionary work is confirmed by the near-death experience with sickness that Epaphroditus had while he was with Paul (Phil 2:27). That is, Paul could not heal people at will.

As with the Lord Jesus during His ministry, Divine power can only be used for Divine purposes, and in strict accord with the will of the Lord. Ananias could lay hands on Paul and heal him of his blindness. However, there was no man or woman of God, however much they believed, who could relieve him of that “*thorn in the flesh*” (2 Cor 12:7-10).

Word Of Truth Ministries, Associated Presents

The Study of

The Book of Mark

By: Given O. Blakely

Lesson 186

Mark 16:19 *“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”*

(Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-14).

INTRODUCTION

The Gospels focus on the last few days of Jesus ministry, the events relating to His death, burial and resurrection, and His ascension to and enthronement in heaven – a period covering approximately 50 days. Of the 24,755 words in Matthew, 3,566 are devoted to this period (14%, chapters 26-28). Of the 15,844 words in Mark, 3,096 cover this period (20%, chapters 14-16). Luke’s Gospel contains 27,090 words, of which 3,748 cover this period (14 %, chapters 22-24). John’s Gospel contains 19,973 words, of which 8,397 are devoted to this period (42%, chapters 12-21). Overall, of the 87,662 words contained in the Gospels, 18,807 are devoted to less than two months of Christ’s presence in the earth – 21% of the total content! The total period covered is from the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist until Jesus ascension – approximately four years, or 1,460 days. That means that 21% percent of the Gospels is devoted to about 3.5% of the time. This is a remarkable demonstration of Divine emphasis and focus. The birth, maturing years, and ministry of Jesus were all essential to the purpose for which He came into the world – but they were not the purpose itself. So far as Christ’s presence on the earth was concerned, His betrayal, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven were the focus. Everything else was preparatory. This means that the purpose of Jesus was not to show men how to live – although He surely did that. It was rather to lay down His life, and take it up again. This was the appointed means through which sin was expiated, Satan defeated, and the basis for salvation accomplished. With remarkable consistency, the apostles’ doctrine delineate the effects of Christ’s death and resurrection, and expound the present ministry of Jesus at the right hand of God, and His scheduled return to conclude the work. The ascension of Christ, covered in these final verses, mark the conclusion of His bodily presence among men in the flesh.

“ Matt 28:19 *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.”*

The ascension of Jesus into heaven confirmed that His immediate work upon the earth had been concluded. His bodily presence was now required in heaven, from which He would assume the reins of the Kingdom, mediate the covenant, intercede for those coming to God through Him, and feed and lead His people. This was all by Divine intent. While this may

appear very clear, there remains a considerable percentage of professed believers who are looking for Him to return to the earth to establish His kingdom and assume the rule of it within the framework of flesh and blood. Such a view requires that Jesus humble Himself again, concealing His all-consuming glory to dwell among sinners. However, this will not happen, for the humility of Christ was required to redeem men. It is not required to rule and reign over them. Thus Jesus left the earthly scene, bodily ascending into heaven.

HE WAS RECEIVED UP INTO HEAVEN. Mark does not describe the ascension itself, but views it from the standpoint of heaven: He was “*received up into heaven.*” This is the event that Daniel saw nearly five hundred years earlier. “*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him*” (Dan 7:13). It is the event of which David spoke prophetically. He saw the Lord returning to heaven with a heavenly escort, when, for the first time, a glorified Man entered the throne room of Almighty God. “*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah*” (Psa 24:7-10).

Luke depicts the ascension from the viewpoint of the disciples. He also reveals that Jesus ascended from the area of Bethany while He was in the process of blessing the disciples. “*And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven*” (Luke 24:50-51). According to the context of Luke’s account, the word “*them*” included significantly more than “*the eleven.*” In Luke 24:36-51, following the appearance of Jesus to the eleven and those with them, there are twelve references to “*them*” (36,38,40,41,43, 44,46,50,51). None of them remotely suggest a limitation to the eleven apostles.

In the book of Acts, Luke also reveals that Jesus ascended in a cloud, and that the disciples watched the ascension, gazing at the ascending Christ until He passed beyond their sight. “*And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight*” (Acts 1:9).

During His ministry, Jesus referred to His ascension as being “*received up*” (Lk 9:51). John referred to it as the time Jesus would “*depart out of this world unto the Father*” (John 13:1). Jesus Himself referred to His ascension when He said, “*I leave the world and go to the Father*” (John 16:28). Referring to His ascension, Hebrews 4:14 states that He is “*passed into the heavens.*” Hebrews 9:19-20 depicts the ascension as Jesus entering “*within the veil.*” Hebrews 9:24 says that He entered into “*heaven itself.*” Peter wrote that Jesus is “*gone into heaven*” (1 Pet 3:22). **The proclamation of the ascension of Jesus, then, is integral to sound doctrine.**

Paul taught that Jesus “*ascended up on high,*” affirming that He “*led captivity captive*” when He did so (Eph 4:8). The idea projected in the thought of leading captivity captive is that Jesus did not ascend until He had already subdued and conquered the enemy – destroying Satan in His death (Heb 2:14), and plundering principalities and powers in His cross (Col 2:15). The head of the serpent was bruised before Jesus returned to heaven. He did not return to conquer, but to reign; not to subdue, but to mediate the New Covenant and bring many sons to glory by sustaining and leading them. Christ also triumphed over death, Hades, and the grave, so that there is not a single foe existent that is not presently in thorough subjection to Jesus.

HE SAT ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. This is the place of ultimate exaltation. It

depicts total and unquestionable rule, as well as the thorough Divine approval of Jesus, and the unreserved acceptance of His work. Peter preached that Jesus is “*by the right hand of God*” (Acts 2:33). Stephen saw Jesus standing there (Acts 7:55-56), Paul declared He is there now (Rom 8:34), and that we are to seek the things that are dispensed from there (Col 3:1). Hebrews 1:3 states that He sat down there only after “*He Himself purged our sins.*” Hebrews 8:1 affirms that He is executing His High Priestly function from there. Peter declares that, in that position, “*angels and authorities and powers*” have been made “*subject to Him*” (1 Pet 3:22). **Jesus cannot possibly be exalted any higher than He is right now.** All power is His, all enemies are subject to Him, and all resources are dispensed by Him. This circumstance confirms that He did, in fact, take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

“ Acts 1:10-11 *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*”

Luke provides some additional details concerning the ascension of Jesus. It was truly a spiritual epoch that provides an appointed reference point between the atoning death and justifying resurrection of Christ, and His glorious return, when the tares will be gathered out and the wheat will be gathered in.

WHILE THEY LOOKED STEADFASTLY. This is the posture of the disciple – looking steadfastly, or “*gazing intently,*” NASB The disciples were not distracted to other things. While the Lord was blessing them, “*a cloud received Him out of their sight.*” It is as though a cloud descended from the high realms, enveloped the Lord, and commenced carrying Him upward. As long as the disciples could see Him, they “*strained to see Him rising into the heavens.*” NLT This same word is used when describing how those in His hometown *fastened* their eyes on Jesus when He read Isaiah’s prophecy in the Nazareth synagogue (Lk 4:20). The same concept is mentioned in Hebrews 12:2, where we are admonished to be “*looking unto Jesus.*” In this text, it was “*while they looked*” that a further revelation was given to them. This is still the mode of the Kingdom, and in view of it, distraction is lethal, for it closes the door of illumination.

TWO MEN STOOD BY THEM. These were not “*men,*” as ordinarily considered, but angels in the form of men, making their presence more conspicuous. The Scriptures frequently refer to angels appearing in the form of “*men*” (Gen 18:2; 19:10-16; Judges 13:11-13; Ezek 10:2-2-6; Dan 3:25; 9:21; 10:5-7,18; 12:6-7; Zech 1:10). Angels announced the conception of Christ (Lk 1:26-27), attended the birth of Christ (Lk 2:9-14), ministered to Him in His temptation (Matt 4:11), ministered to Him on the eve of His betrayal (Lk 22:43), and were ministers when He rose from the dead (Matt 28:2; Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4; John 20:12). It is no wonder they are also present when the Lord ascended unto heaven.

YE MEN OF GALILEE. The angels have a thorough knowledge of men – who they are and what they are doing. Any limitations in their knowledge has to do with matters relating to the purpose of God in redemption, particularly as made known in the Gospel (1 Pet 1:12). Keep in mind, that this occasion did not take place in Galilee, but in Judea. The angels address them, therefore, in a manner that accents their grasp of the situation.

WHY STAND YE GAZING INTO HEAVEN? At this point, Jesus had disappeared from their vision, and there was no further reason for peering into the heavens. It was time to do what Jesus had told them – tarry in Jerusalem (Lk 24:49). **There does come a time when men are to move forward lingering no longer where they are.** Thus, on the banks of the Red Sea, God told Moses

to tell the people to “*go forward*” (Ex 14:15). When they were at Sinai, God also told Moses to tell the people, “*Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward*” (Deut 2:3). When Moses died, it was time to possess the land. Therefore God said to Joshua, “*Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel*” (Josh 1:2). The time had now come for the disciples to leave this place, “*the mount called Olivet*” (Acts 1:12), and get to the work of waiting and preparing for the promise of the Father.

THIS SAME JESUS. These angels had a staggering scope of knowledge. At the very least, they were present when Jesus spoke, and comprehended what He had said about His return – even though His disciples did not (Matt 24:30-31; Lk 21:27; John 14:3). At the most, they had been privy to the purpose of God, even though they longed to peer into the reason for, and nature of it all, desiring to “*look into*” the implications of the Gospel (1 Pet 1:12).

By saying “*this same Jesus,*” they mean “*the Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 2:5). This is Jesus in “*bodily*” form (Col 2:9). Then, however, owing to the absence of flesh and the reality of the resurrection of the dead, He will be seen in His glorified form, or “*as He is*” (1 John 3:2). Yet, it will be “*this same Jesus*” – the same one that ministered, died, was buried, rose again, and ministered to them over a period of forty days.

The angels announce that Jesus will “*come*” in the same manner in which He ascended: i.e. visibly. However then, “*every eye shall see Him*” (Rev 1:7). The condition of the disciples will be different, for they shall have “*put on incorruption*” (1 Cor 15:53-54). And, Jesus will appear differently – “*as He is,*” or “*in His glory.*” Then, “*all the holy angels*” will be “*with Him*” (Matt 25:31). The second coming of the Lord Jesus is integral to “*sound doctrine.*” When it is not preached, a departure has taken place. Jesus spoke of it while He walked among men. The angels spoke of it when He ascended into heaven. And the apostles repeatedly and with great power declared and expounded it. This is the polestar of the church – the next consummate sight: the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Thus do we wait for God’s Son “*from heaven*” (1 Thess 1:10).

“Mark 16:20 *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*”

Mark makes a quantum leap from the ascension, past the next ten days, past Pentecost, and into the era of Gospel proclamation. Luke provides some of the details that preceded the extensive and effective ministry – one that was fully undergirded by Divine power and approval.

THEY WORSHIPED AND RETURNED. Luke records, “*And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy*” (Luke 24:52). That is, they “*worshiped Him*” after He had ascended into heaven, for the preceding verse says He was “*carried up into heaven.*” To my knowledge, this is the first record of them worshiping an **absent** Christ. It is a rich commentary on the strength of their faith at that time – a strength that far exceeded anything said of them before!

Further, they did precisely what Jesus told them to do, returning to Jerusalem, from which they were not to depart until they had received “*the promise of the Father*” (Acts 1:4). However, this time they would return in a different frame of mind – a frame that revealed the advancement of their faith. They returned “*with great joy!*”

Luke also identifies the place from which Jesus ascended – the mount called Olivet. “*Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath*

day's journey" (Acts 1:12). This was the place where He "oft resorted . . . with His disciples" (John 18:2). It is where He took His disciples on the eve of His betrayal, where He agonized in prayer, and was betrayed (Matt 26:30). The length of a "*sabbath day's journey*" is not certain, but it is generally considered to be from one-half to seven eighths of a mile. This does not mean that Jesus ascended on the Sabbath day, but refers only to the involved distance.

THEY CONTINUED IN THE TEMPLE. "*And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen*" (Luke 24:53). During the ten days that followed, preceding the day of Pentecost, the disciples were not sequestered in the upper room, as some suppose. The Temple had been where Jesus was frequently found teaching (Matt 26:56; Lk 21:37). He had referred to it as "*My Father's house*" (John 2:16), and "*the house of prayer*" (Matt 21:13). This was certainly a place conducive to the public expression of insightful praise and the blessing of God, as well as a focal gathering point for devout men and women.

THEY CONTINUED WITH ONE ACCORD IN PRAYER. "*And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren*" (Acts 1:13-14). As they waited for the promise of the Father, the early disciples continued steadfastly and with one accord in prayer. Jesus had not told them precisely how long they would have to wait – only that the endowment with power from on high would occur "*not many days hence*" (Acts 1:5). The manner in which they waited is worthy of note. They spent time in the Temple praising God, and together praying with one accord. They apparently refused to be distracted by the normalities of life.

THEY WENT FORTH AND PREACHED EVERYWHERE. "*And they went forth, and preached every where.*" Mark emphasizes that the disciples did what Jesus told them to do: preaching the Gospel to every creature (16:15), and making disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). He does not say that they neglected to do so, as some falsely allege, but that they were faithful to do so. Here, his word is intended to describe the ongoing activity of the disciples following Christ's enthronement at the right hand of God.

THE LORD WORKING WITH THEM. "*. . . the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*" This is a marvelous word: "*the Lord working with them!*" That is, worked with them in their preaching. Later, Paul confessed that God also worked through Him in such a manner – "*through mighty signs and wonders*" (Rom 15:19). The book of Hebrews also speaks of this type of confirmation, speaking of the announcement of "*so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him*" (Heb 2:3). The emphasis is not placed on "*the signs following,*" but on the work of preaching. It was the Gospel through which the Lord worked. It was the nature of the message and the validity of the messengers that were confirmed. The signs following doubtless included, though were not limited to, the "*signs*" Jesus said would "*follow them that believe.*"

The concept of the Lord working with a person is quite intriguing. This copartnership is referred to in other ways: "*workers together with Him*" (2 Cor 6:1), and "*laborers together with God*" (1 Cor 3:9). It is also seen in the statement of Paul: "*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*" (1 Cor 3:6). John alluded to this in his reference to "*fellowhelpers to the truth*" (3 John 1:8). There is a labor of preaching in which Divine activity and support are found. The nature of that activity is strictly determined by God, whether in strengthening the one preaching, working in those who hear and believe, or confirming the word with signs following.
