



**ADULT
QUARTERLY**

**THE PASSION OF
GOD'S SERVANT
MARK 9 – 16**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL
WINTER QUARTER, 2013-2014
DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY**



Adult Quarterly

SUNDAY SCHOOL

WINTER QUARTER, 2013-2014

The Passion of God's Servant

A Study in Mark 9—16

Written by David Robinson

EDITOR IN CHIEF:

Larry E. Clements
larryclements@bogardpress.org

BUSINESS MANAGER:

Wayne Sewell
wsewell@bogardpress.org

PRODUCTION EDITOR:

Sally McInvale

ADULT EDITOR:

Jim Jones

CHILDREN'S EDITOR:

Libby Gill

ILLUSTRATOR:

Connie Spears

GRAPHIC ARTISTS:

Shawn Blase
Jeff Allen
Greg Hilterbrand
Blake Tilton

LAYOUT DESIGNERS:

Kyle Elkins
Cindy Butler
Ashley Elkins

CONTENT EDITORS:

Terry McKellar
Deby Turrentine
Carolyn Burks
Joni Curtis

PRINT PRODUCTION:

Charles Easley

Cover Design:

Jeff Allen

Copyright © 2013
Vol. 101, No. 1

Bogard Press
4605 N. State Line Ave.
Texarkana, TX 75503-2928
www.bogardpress.org
1-800-264-2482

QUARTERLY AIM: The Bible student will examine the sacrifice of Christ as Savior of the world.

DECEMBER

- 1—The Prominence of God's Servant— 4
Shining in Glory
8—The Principles of God's Servant— 11
Encouraging Humility
15—The Precepts of God's Servant— 18
Marriage and Divorce
22—The Prediction of God's Servant— 25
Death and Resurrection
29—The Presentation of God's Servant— 32
Messiah and King

JANUARY

- 5—The Perception of God's Servant— 39
Answering His Enemies
12—The Plan of God's Servant— 46
The Course of This Age
19—The Promise of God's Servant— 53
He Will Return
26—The Passover of God's Servant— 60
Picturing His Sacrifice

FEBRUARY

- 2—The Prayers of God's Servant— 68
In the Garden
9—The Pain of God's Servant— 75
Betrayed, Abandoned and Denied
16—The Passion of God's Servant— 82
Paying the Price of Sin
23—The Preservation of God's Servant— 89
He Is Alive in Heaven

About the Writer



Dr. David Robinson was born in Greenville, Mississippi, and grew up in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He was saved in 1956 and was baptized by Cones Road Missionary Baptist Church. He graduated from Hot Springs High School, attended the University of Mississippi, and graduated from the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1966 earning the Master in Bible Languages and Doctor in Bible Languages Degrees. He surrendered to preach in 1960 and was ordained to the gospel ministry in December of 1962.

He has pastored churches in central and southern Arkansas. From 1967 to 1999 he served as an instructor in the Missionary Baptist Seminary. He served as Registrar at the school from 1978 to 1988, and as Chancellor and Editor of the Missionary Baptist Searchlight from 1988 to 1999. He served as Chaplain for the Pulaski County Sheriff's Office from 1992 until 2007. He served on the Sunday School Committee of the ABA from 1987 to 1998 and as President of the ABA in 1999 and 2000. He has served as Parliamentarian for the ABA since 2001. Presently he is pastor of Landmark Missionary Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he has served since 1971.

He has written Young People's Sunday School literature, the BTC Adult Quarterly, and he currently writes the Sunday School Adult Quarterly used in the churches of the American Baptist Association.

He may be contacted at dcrobinson@aristotle.net.

American Baptist Association

Through-the-Bible Series Sunday School Lessons

	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
2014	Mark 9—16	2 Samuel 5—24 1 Chronicles 11—29 1 Kings 1; 2	James 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians	Psalms 1—72
2015	Psalms 73—150	Galatians	1 Kings 3—22 2 Chronicles 1—24 2 Kings 1—13 Joel; Obadiah	1 Corinthians
2016	Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	Luke 1—13:21	Luke 13:22—24	Hosea; Amos; Micah; Jonah; 2 Kings 14—16 2 Chronicles 25—28
2017	2 Corinthians	Isaiah 1—39 2 Chronicles 29—32 2 Kings 17—20 Nahum	Isaiah 40—66 2 Kings 21—23 2 Chronicles 33—35 Zephaniah	Philemon Philippians Colossians
2018	Ephesians	1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus	Jeremiah Lamentations 2 Kings 24; 25 2 Chronicles 36	John 1—10
2019	John 11—21	Ezra; Nehemiah Habakkuk; Haggai Malachi; Esther	1 Peter 2 Peter	1, 2, 3 John Jude
2020	Daniel Ezekiel Zechariah	Revelation 1—11	Revelation 12—22	Genesis 1—11 Job
2021	Genesis 12—50	Matthew 1—13	Matthew 14—28	Exodus
2022	Romans	Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Hebrews	Joshua Judges Ruth
2014	Acts 1—14	Acts 15—28	1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1—4 1 Chronicles 1—10	Mark 1—8

1

The Prominence of God's Servant—Shining in Glory

Text: Mark 9:1-29

Focus: Mark 9:1-10, 17-20, 23-27

Key Verses:

“And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.”

Mark 9:7, 8

Sunday Devotional: Eyewitness of His Majesty, 2 Peter 1:16-19.

Application: Christ is exalted above all others, whether prophets, priests or preachers. Strive to see that He alone is in the place of prominence in life.

A FIRST LOOK

Today we continue our studies in Mark. This is the action gospel where Mark presents Jesus as the Servant of God who met every situation. Mark moves quickly from event to event and gives us vivid descriptions of the things Jesus taught and actions He took.

This study will focus on the passion of Christ as the Servant of God. Our studies begin with an often overlooked, but vitally important incident in the life and ministry of Christ. Often we focus on the birth of Jesus and on His death and resurrection, and rightly so, but the transfiguration should be as prominent in our studies. This was literally a foretaste of the glory that is to come for every saved person.

In the last verses of chapter 8, Jesus had given a challenge to stewardship and a look ahead at the coming judgment. Now, He demonstrates His power to Peter, James and John. These men were privileged to get a literal glimpse of glory, and

Daily Devotionals

- M. — He Tasted Death for Us, Hebrews 2:9.
- T. — God's King Will Come, Psalm 2:4-7.
- W. — The Necessity of Faith, Hebrews 11:6.
- T. — The Faith Way Pays, 2 Chronicles 20:20-25.
- F. — Focus on Jesus, Hebrews 12:1, 2.
- S. — Confident Prayer, 1 John 5:14, 15.

they never forgot it. Peter referred to this in 2 Peter 1:16-18, and although these words were written many years later, the event was still fresh in Peter's mind.

Jesus Christ is not one of many; He is unique in all Heaven and earth. There are many man-made religions, but only one Savior, who is the living Son of God. That divine power and preeminence is taught in these verses. Jesus had power over life in the past and life in future, and He showed that He had power over the troubles men face in this life as well.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Power of Christ over Death

Mark 9:1-10

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.
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.
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.
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.

Jesus began by giving the reason for this event. He had been teaching about the kingdom of God and some who heard Him

teach would see the power of that kingdom during their physical lifetimes. Jesus was not saying that some people would live through the entire age between His first and second comings. Rather, He was teaching there would be a visible, physical demonstration of the kingdom and of His power to men who were alive at that time. He gave this demonstration six days later.

Jesus took Peter, James and John to a mountain apart from the others who were following Him at this time. Jesus had just preached to them about the sacrifices of the cross and His coming death in Jerusalem. He gave them this revelation to strengthen their faith, to encourage them that their work was not going to end in darkness and disaster, and to show them it would end in triumph, victory and glory. This incident should encourage us when we must take up our cross. We can be assured that our service to God will not end in disaster; it will end in glory.

When they got to the mountain, Jesus was transfigured before them. He literally changed form and took on the glorified body that is the future of all the children of God. This was clearly a supernatural event; there is no natural explanation for it. Jesus slipped back into the glory that was His before He came to earth. He mentioned that glory in John 17:5.

One great lesson here is that our Lord did not have to die to be glorified. He laid His life down, and He took it up again. He had the power to do that or to avoid death altogether if He so chose. Jesus died to do the will of His Father and to save the souls of lost people everywhere. The glorified Jesus was shining so white and pure there was no earthly comparison.

The second thing we notice is eternity was opened and Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus and were talking with Him. Each of these men was recognizable. They were not physically identical. They were also conversing with each other, talking as we would with our friends and brethren. There was no need for introductions; this was a spiritual meeting and although James, Peter and John had never seen Moses or Elijah, they knew them. Perhaps, these men were there to represent the Law and the Prophets, which were until John. Of course, Jesus represents the new covenant, so the picture of glory is complete.

These two men also reveal the two ways people can pass from earth to Heaven. Moses died like most people, but Elijah was caught up to Heaven. A whole generation of believers will also be caught up to Heaven when Jesus comes again. Either way, we

will be in glory with the Lord. Luke tells us that these men spoke of the coming death of Christ on the cross (Luke 9:31).

At this point Peter made a proposal that they enter a building project. He wanted to erect three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. This shows how little he understood about what Jesus had been trying to tell him. In fact, Mark tells us Peter spoke out of fear. Someone has said that there are only two kinds of speakers—those who have something to say, and those who have to say something. Peter had to say something. He blurted out the first thing that came to his mind, without stopping to think whether it made sense or not. He did not know what to say, but he said it anyway. This is a good way to end up with your foot in your mouth.

At that point God spoke, and He once again declared Jesus was His Son and instead of offering suggestions, those present should listen to Him. As soon as it began, this incident was over, and Jesus cautioned these men to keep this to themselves until after the resurrection. They obeyed but went away wondering what He meant by the resurrection.

II. The Powerless Parent

Mark 9:17-20

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.

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.

When Jesus and the three returned, they found the other nine disciples with a dual problem. The scribes had come to question them, and, no doubt, the scribes had questions the disciples could not answer. The other problem was that a father had brought them his son, who had a dumb, or non-speaking spirit. Wisely, the disciples turned both cases over to Jesus. No doubt, they were glad to see Jesus and the others return.

Mark gives us an accurate and vivid description of the demonic presence in this helpless boy. These are not symptoms of a physical or mental illness although some of these may accompany such situations. The problem here was spiritual, not physical. The father realized this and so did the disciples. The cure would also have to be spiritual. Jesus taught in John 3:3-7 that spiritual matters must be dealt with in spiritual ways. The spirit and the flesh certainly affect each other, but they are also different in their nature.

The disciples had failed to help this man's son. We often think a lack of faith is a lack of expectation. If we could believe completely and define the result, we would be exercising faith. Here, we see the opposite. These disciples knew what they wanted to happen, and they were earnestly trying to make it happen. However, careful definition and dedicated effort are not the same as faith. We may know precisely what we need and want, but it is not the same as having faith in Jesus.

If we consider all the evidence, we can see what had happened. These disciples had faith, but it had somehow changed from faith in God to faith in the process they were following. They thought that if you said the right words and followed the right ritual, the evil spirit would have to leave this man's son. Maybe without even realizing it, they had shifted their faith from confidence in God who can act to a formula that would bring what they wanted. This is what we often do. We can easily imagine that it is the words we say, or the way we say them, or what is happening in our lives that is the real power that makes things happen in the lives of others. In truth, it is God who must act in our lives and equally in the lives of others, no matter what their problems may be. Jesus reproved them for this and said their faith must be in God if it is to be a fresh and vital faith.

III. The Power of Christ over Evil Spirits

Mark 9:23-27

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.

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.

The disciples may not have had faith, but the father did. He loved this child and wanted to see him made whole. After showing all present how much he cared for this child, this troubled father made the great confession of faith in verse 24. He stated that he did indeed believe but that he also needed help in believing even more. This statement was made from the honesty of his weakness. He cast himself on the Lord. He was saying that he did believe, but he also felt his limitations and did not know how to handle this conflict. He was casting his care on Jesus and Jesus cared for him and his son. That kind of faith is small; it is like a grain of mustard seed, but it is also able to move mountains. The moment this father said those words, the moment he cast himself in his weakness on the Lord, the problem was solved. Jesus took over and his son was delivered.

We can see how severe the condition of this child was. It was with reluctance, even at the command of Jesus, that this evil spirit came out of the boy. The evil spirit cried out, brought convulsions to the boy and left him as dead, but Jesus picked him up by the hand and restored him.

A FINAL WORD

The point of this lesson is that Jesus has power to handle any situation in life or even in death. Moses and Elijah had left the earth many years before, but they were still alive in Heaven. Jesus would die soon, but He would come from the grave victorious over death and hell. The young man was tortured by an evil spirit, but the disciples had no power to help him. Jesus did.

Jesus said, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27).

These disciples had witnessed this. They had seen the kingdom of God and its power to change the life of a father and his son. Jesus pointed out this happened because of the presence of the Son of God in our hearts and our faith in and reliance on Him. This kind of faith permits the kingdom of God to come with power in our daily lives. When we accept this truth, we can understand what Romans 8:31 is telling us, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What was the purpose of Christ's transfiguration?
2. Why did God indicate the construction of three tabernacles was a bad idea?
3. Are demons still active in our world today?
4. Read 1 John 4:1-4 and discuss how false teachers may be detected.

2

The Principles of God's Servant—Encouraging Humility

Text: Mark 9:30-50

Focus: Mark 9:30-48

Key Verse:

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."
Mark 9:35

Sunday Devotional: The Attitude of Christ, Philippians 2:3-8.

Application: Christ came to serve and sacrifice Himself for lost humanity. He calls believers to follow His example in living selflessly for Him.

A FIRST LOOK

The kingdom of God is built on principles, not platitudes. A clever slogan or catchword will get our attention. Although it may be on every lip, it will not build up anyone's life. Consider the slogans and platitudes of modern advertising that so easily claim our attention. They are clever, but we will not find a meaningful and happy life by applying them.

In contrast to this shallow view of life, Jesus gave real, heavenly principles that will change us for the better. At this time, Jesus was traveling through Galilee, back to Capernaum. He was leading His disciples to face the reality of the cross. Many today want to stress the love of God and the glory of the second coming while ignoring the pain and misery that bought our salvation. When Jesus first told His disciples He was going to Jerusalem to die, they apparently put what He said out of their minds. Peter went so far as to rebuke Jesus for teaching this (Matt. 16:22).

Jesus did not come so good people could be a little better; He came

Daily Devotionals

- M. — Follow Christ's Example, Matthew 20:25-28.
- T. — Humility—The Way to Greatness, Luke 14:10, 11.
- W. — Offenses—Inevitable but Costly, Luke 17:1, 2.
- T. — No Stumbling Block, Romans 14:13.
- F. — Give No Offense, 1 Corinthians 10:32, 33.
- S. — Live for God in this World, Titus 2:12.

so lost and hopeless sinners could be saved. This salvation, the remission of our sins, required the shedding of blood, not the blood of bulls and goats, but the blood of the spotless Son of God. Nothing but the blood could be an atonement for the sins of mankind. The principle of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is the foundation on which all other principles of the kingdom of God rest.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Principle of Salvation

Mark 9:30-32

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.

Jesus was avoiding the crowds following Him at this time. Jesus knew the timing of His life, and He wanted to spend time with the twelve to teach them the things they needed to know about the coming days and about their future ministry. Jesus was not shirking any responsibility to these crowds of needy people, but He did realize there were more important matters at stake than healing diseases and providing physical food. The lessons taught to these disciples would become the foundation of their lives and of the New Testament. These men would turn the world upside down in a few years by believing and acting on the instructions Jesus gave them, so it was vital they understand these principles completely.

Jesus began with a simple and easy to understand statement about His intercessory sacrifice. This was prophesied in the Old Testament and was clearly announced by John the Baptist. Jesus is the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. He did not do this by preaching to the world, teaching or giving the world a good example. He takes away the sins of those who believe in Him by dying for all on the cross.

Jesus plainly told His disciples that He would be delivered to men, and these men would kill Him. He would rise from the grave on the third day. This seems plain enough, but the disciples did not understand, and, sadly, they were afraid to ask Jesus for a further explanation. We can only wonder about their fear. They may have been afraid they would be killed as well, or they may have been afraid of being left alone. The really sad part is, they seemed to have focused only on the message that Jesus was going to die while not hearing the part about the resurrection.

Any message about the death of Jesus which does not include the resurrection is incomplete. The really good news of the gospel is not that men are sinners, or that Jesus has died. The really good news is that we can be saved, and Jesus has risen from the grave and conquered death and hell once and for all.

This is the foundation principle of the kingdom of God. Unless we understand and accept the gospel of Christ, we will not be able to successfully apply other spiritual principles to our lives.

II. Principles of Reward

Mark 9:33-37

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.

When these men came to Capernaum, they entered a house and Jesus asked them what they were arguing about while they were traveling together. It is revealing that they were not discussing the coming death and resurrection of Jesus. They were talking about which one of them would be the greatest in

the coming kingdom. Evidently, this was a heated argument, but when Jesus asked them, they did not answer His question.

We should remember that, at this time, these men had only been together for a short while. Some of them, like the brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John, knew each other. Others were relative strangers. They really had only one thing in common and that was their relationship with Jesus. Some, like Levi, or Matthew, had been prominent, rich men, but others were of more humble means.

As these men considered the coming physical kingdom, they argued about which one of them would be greatest. Knowing human nature, each was probably lobbying for himself, reminding the others of his dedication and sacrifice. The experience of Peter, James and John, on the mount of transfiguration may have triggered this discussion. Jesus had clearly chosen these three for this special situation.

Jesus did not rebuke these men for desiring to have a reward. Instead, He taught them the principle that is the basis for reward in the kingdom of Heaven. He gave them both the principle and a lasting illustration of that principle.

The principle of reward is that those who are first in the kingdom are those who are servants now. What a different kind of discussion it would be if we were talking about who could do the most service, instead of who would get the greatest reward. There are always opportunities for service, but most people want to be supervisors, not servants.

To illustrate this message, Jesus took a little child in His arms, sat down in the middle of these twelve men and delivered the rest of His message. The principle was that we are to serve the Lord in exactly the same way we receive little children.

A child has no influence; a child cannot advance our career. A child cannot give us things. It is the other way around; a child needs things. Jesus was saying that if a man welcomes the poor, ordinary people, the people who have no influence, no wealth, no power, the people who need things done for them, he is welcoming me.

The path to spiritual reward is that we learn to have no respect of persons, to welcome people simply because they are people. We should take no thought about whether they can do something for us or not but, simply, be interested in people because they are people and because, potentially, they are the

sons and daughters of God. This is the first step to a reward in the kingdom of God.

III. Principles of Service

Mark 9:38-41

38. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad 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.

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.

Here is a wonderful example of how our minds' work. Jesus was still sitting with a child in His arms, but John was moved by something Jesus said, most likely the phrase "in my name" in verse 37.

John remembered an incident when these men had witnessed a stranger casting out a devil and using the name of Jesus to do it. John and the others knew this man was not a follower of Jesus, and they forbad him to continue. John did not argue with the man's ability; his complaint was that the man was a stranger. John was troubled that a stranger could do what Jesus had given the apostles power to do. He quite properly brought his concern to Jesus, and Jesus patiently answered John's question.

Jesus told John not to forbid anyone who was doing right, no matter who they were. It is never wrong to do right, and it is never right to do wrong. This man may not have had all the revelation and teaching Jesus gave to the disciples, but he had a spark of truth and that spark was working. This stranger had faith in God and in the name of Jesus. His actions showed that, and Jesus was teaching John and the others to respect such faith wherever they found it.

When we receive children, they may surprise us with what they know, and we should not reject others because they do not know everything we know. Do not forbid them to act when they are doing good and acting in truth. We should encourage faith

wherever we find it and offer further leadership and training to those who sincerely want to follow the Lord.

IV. Principles of Offense

Mark 9:42-48

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.

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.

The better principle is that we should be careful not to offend those who are like children to us, whether they are physical or spiritual children.

As He sat there with the child in His arms, Jesus gave the vivid illustration that this kind of hypocrisy is a dangerous and deadly attitude which must be removed using whatever force is necessary. It would be sad and difficult to decide to cut off your hand or have your eye removed, but if your hand or your eye were threatening your life, it would have to go.

Jesus is being real here. Often our choices are not between the best and the worst; they are between something really bad and something not so bad. If your hand has gangrene and it cannot be cured; it must be amputated. This is not pleasant nor desirable, but it is better to lose a hand than to lose your life.

Spiritual principles which violate the will of God must go. It may be painful for us to change our minds, and it may hurt to learn to live without the comforting attitudes of self-righteousness, but these are deadly sins that will keep us from

serving our Father here on earth and earning rewards in eternity to come.

A FINAL WORD

The word used here for hell is *gehenna*. Gehenna was the name given to a valley outside Jerusalem. It was a defiled place, and it became the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Fires smoldered there continuously, and worms ate the garbage dumped there. This became the symbol for an eternal waste of life. Jesus spoke more about hell than any other person in the New Testament. When we read these words about hell, we must understand when they are applied to an unbeliever, one who resists and rejects the gospel and dies an unbeliever, it means his whole life is wasted. This person may have won the approval of men and may have lived comfortably but at the end, his life was a total loss, thrown on the garbage heap for eternity.

When we apply this message to believers, Jesus was speaking of partial loss. The parts of our lives we do not give to Jesus are eternally wasted and misused.

The way we avoid that loss is to judge ourselves. Jesus tells us to deal drastically with ourselves. We must eliminate our actions which are wrong. If you are engaged in immoral conduct, stop it now. If your attitude toward others is bitter and resentful, stop thinking that way. Spiritually correct your behavior or you will ultimately waste your life.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did the disciples refuse to understand Christ's revelations of His coming sacrificial death?
2. What makes pride in a Christian's life so deadly?
3. What specific things can you do to improve your humility before God and others?
4. Why is it so serious to offend other believers? What can you do to be less offensive toward others?

3

The Precepts of God's Servant—Marriage and Divorce

Text: Mark 10:1-16

Focus: Mark 10:1-16

Key Verses:

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”
Mark 10:7-9

Sunday Devotional: God's View of Divorce, Malachi 2:14-16.

Application: Christ's precepts on marriage, wrongful divorce and children are clear. Obey Him by honoring your marriage and loving your children.

A FIRST LOOK

At this time, Jesus was ending His extensive ministry in Galilee. He and His disciples would soon be traveling to Judea for the last time. Jesus had already told His followers that He was going to Jerusalem to die and would be resurrected. In the last days of His ministry in the north, Jesus focused on Samaria and northern Judea, finally coming to Perea, on the eastern side of Jordan.

As usually happened, crowds followed Jesus, and they found Him in Perea. Jesus responded to these crowds by teaching them. By now, Jesus had shifted the focus of His ministry almost completely away from healing or providing physical things. He was teaching those who came to Him about the kingdom of God.

It was in these circumstances, the Pharisees once again came to Jesus with yet another question. Their question dealt with divorce, an issue that has divided and

Daily Devotionals

- M. — The Origin of Marriage, Genesis 2:20-23.
- T. — Christ's Teaching on Divorce, Matthew 5:31, 32.
- W. — Marriage for Believers, I Corinthians 7:10, 11.
- T. — God's Pattern for Marriage, Ephesians 5:22-33.
- F. — Marriage Is Honorable, Hebrews 13:4.
- S. — Duty of Parents, Psalm 78:4-7.

puzzled many people in every society. The answer Jesus gave should settle this matter, especially for Christians.

The trouble here is not that we lack understanding about what the Bible teaches; the trouble is that we do not like what we understand. Jesus was plain in His response, but those who do not like what He said still try to find ways to avoid the plain truth that our decisions have consequences.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Pharisees' Question

Mark 10:1-4

- 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.**

We know exactly why the Pharisees came to Jesus and raised this particular issue. They were trying to tempt or test Jesus. The idea was to verbally jab at Jesus to try to get Him to say something they could use against Him. The Pharisees were presenting a controversial and divisive issue that is the subject of argument even today. Note they did not ask Jesus about marriage or about the ideal marital condition. They could have asked how to build a happy home or how to find the husband or wife God would have one take as one's life partner. They could have asked about love, faithfulness or any number of very positive issues that come from the union of men and women in marriage. Instead, they asked about divorce or how to dissolve a marriage.

There were two schools of thought about divorce in Israel that came from two opposing rabbis. One was Rabbi Hillel. This teacher interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1 to mean that a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all, no matter how trivial it might be. This was the idea of easy divorce. The other school of thought belonged to Rabbi Shammai. This rabbi taught a much

more strict interpretation, that divorce should be strictly limited and only granted in severe situations, if at all. Israel was divided between these two opinions. The Pharisees were not looking for information; rather they were trying to force Jesus to take one side or the other so they could accuse Him.

Jesus ignored both the rabbinic teachings and went back to the Scriptures. We should always remember the plain truth of the Bible is superior to any interpretation that anyone might give. The Bible means what it says, and when we clearly understand it, we should not argue with it.

It is interesting to note that these same arguments are still with us today. Should divorce be easy and granted for any reason, or should divorce be severely limited and seldom, if ever, granted? It seems this subject drives us to extremes. We either want divorce to be granted on the whim of a husband or wife, or we do not want it to be granted at all.

Jesus referred these men, and us, to the Law given by Moses and then all the way back to creation. Understanding these Scriptures will help us greatly in this matter.

II. Jesus' Plain Teaching

Mark 10:5-9

5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

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.

The Pharisees did not answer the question of Jesus. They would not quote what Moses said although they probably knew it by heart. They were silent, so Jesus answered the question for them. Moses had indeed prescribed, or given, a means for marriages to end. The reason behind the precept was the hardness of human hearts, even toward those we should love. Sadly, many people will treat total strangers with more respect and deference than they do the members of their own family.

The specifics of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 deal with situations that were, no doubt, very familiar to people in Israel when these laws were given. Those who first heard these words knew exactly what they meant, but it is vital to remember these laws were never completely enforced in Israel. For instance, adultery and murder were punishable by death, but King David committed both adultery and murder and was not so punished. As far as we know, Israel never kept the sabbatical year or observed the Year of Jubilee. Jesus was exposing the folly of the Pharisees of picking out this one rule while they ignored others.

Jesus did not ignore this issue. As He always did, He met it squarely by going back to the beginning. When God created man and woman, He also designed the conditions in which they should live together as families. Men and women are not meant to live alone; rather, they are designed for one to be a part of the other. A husband and wife become one flesh. As Jesus beautifully said, “They are no more twain, but one flesh” (Mark 10:8). After marriage, there is not a man with his rights, desires and needs, nor a woman with her rights, desires and needs. After marriage, there is one family made up of two parts. Understanding this will give us the foundation for understanding how drastic a matter it is to end such a relationship.

If God has joined two people together, it follows that no man should split these two people asunder. Jesus is teaching us that marriage is a one-way street. You do not have to get married, but if you do, your life will be forever changed. You cannot simply say a few words, or apply to a court, and have things back as they were before you were married.

Jesus is not telling us how marriages can be ended; rather, He is telling us how they can be saved. If hearts are not hardened and if two people truly love God and each other and see each other as a part of themselves, there would be no occasion for divorce. See Ephesians 5:22-33 for a description of the condition of the hearts of Christian husbands and wives toward each other.

III. The Consequences of Divorce

Mark 10:10-12

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.

Jesus' answer quieted the Pharisees, but later His disciples asked Him again about divorce. The answers here give us some important principles. Jesus lifted this whole matter to a new plane, far above the accepted Jewish practices of His day. To the Jews, divorce was a decision made by a husband. A husband could divorce his wife, not the other way around. Jesus taught that both were on an equal basis before God. A husband could put away his wife, and a wife could put away her husband. Both were capable of divorce, and both were capable of sinning.

The simple principle is that adultery destroys the work of God. It was God who did the work of joining the two together and when either husband or wife chose to end their marriage so they could marry someone else, they were ending what God had begun in their lives. God is building something wonderful when two people begin their lives as husband and wife. It is a living illustration of the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:32). Divorce distorts that picture.

Divorce is common in our day, and, perhaps, many who read this have gone through divorce, perhaps, with adultery involved. Jesus was not condemning anyone here, but He was making it clear that divorce is failure. Divorce is a violation of God's intention for marriage. It always involves some form of sin. Thank God, that although the Law reveals our sin, grace shows us our sins can be forgiven. With God there is the possibility of spiritual healing, of allowing God to begin His work again in our hearts and create unity, either within the same marriage or as each one goes to a different union. Perhaps, they will have learned lessons that will help develop the beauty and harmony God has designed for a home.

There is forgiveness and restoration, but we must understand that biblical restoration involves repentance. We cannot take lightly what God takes seriously. Merely casually asking God for forgiveness when we are not genuinely heartbroken over our sins is not real repentance. Repentance means understanding the injury you have caused others and yourself, a sense of shame for it, an honest desire to end these actions and attitudes and

accept God's forgiveness and restoration to a new life which leads in a new direction.

Jesus spoke both plainly and graciously in this matter. Adultery can end a marriage; but it does not mean that forgiveness cannot come and bring a new beginning from a disaster. God can renew the work of creating the oneness He intends for a man and woman to have. Marriage is God's way of putting two lives together to produce a unity that will be a testimony to the whole world of the grace and power of God to change human lives. God can soften hearts, remove hardness and change people into what they ought to be.

IV. The Blessings of a Godly Marriage

Mark 10:13-16

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.

While Jesus was giving the principles concerning divorce, some people brought young children to Jesus. They wanted Jesus to touch them. It was customary in that day for parents to bring their children to rabbis for a blessing. These actions were natural in that situation.

The disciples rebuked those who brought the children. This shows us how little these men had learned about Jesus. They may have thought they were protecting Jesus by keeping the children away, but Jesus was literally indignant when He saw what they were trying to do. The presence of children here makes another great and vital point about divorce. It is never about only two people, a husband and a wife. The entire family is involved, whether it is children or parents. Divorce spreads a wide net that changes many lives. Often the helpless victims of divorce are the innocent children who must suffer the consequences of a broken home through absolutely no fault of their own.

Children, no matter what their situation, are always welcome in the arms of Jesus. The kingdom of God is made up of those who will come to Jesus as children, without any demands or any agenda, and simply seek to be blessed by His presence. What a contrast between these little children and the fault-finding Pharisees who came to Jesus to tempt Him. The disciples did not turn away the Pharisees, but they rebuked those who brought children to Jesus.

A FINAL WORD

Jesus' words about divorce were strong and to the point, but so were His words about children. He said plainly that, if we will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, we simply will not enter into it.

This means that we should be childlike, not childish. There is a great difference. To be childlike means "to be simple, maybe even a little naïve." It means "to be trusting and willing to allow others to take care of you." Children trust their parents for everything, and we should trust our Heavenly Father in the same way. In contrast, to be childish means "to be petty and petulant, to be selfish and even cruel."

These verses teach us spiritual and moral decisions are serious matters that change our lives forever. Marriage permanently changes those who enter this divine contract. The presence of children in a home changes the people in that home. In all things we should give careful and prayerful thought to the decisions we make.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why does God desire a marriage to last a lifetime? What are the benefits?
2. What are the consequences of a wrongful divorce?
3. Is divorce ever right? Is divorce an unpardonable sin? Why do Christians sometimes treat divorce as unforgivable?
4. What do the actions of Jesus, blessing the children (Mark 10:16), reveal about Him and how He valued children? How should that affect a church's view of children?

4

The Prediction of God's Servant— Death and Resurrection

Text: Mark 10:17-52

Focus: Mark 10:23-37, 40, 42-45

Key Verses:

“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: 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 10:33, 34

Sunday Devotional: Christ's Sacrifice Prophesied, Isaiah 53:3-12.

Application: Christ predicted His sacrificial death and resurrection. He calls believers to follow His example of humility and sacrifice.

A FIRST LOOK

The teaching about earthly riches and heavenly rewards was prompted by a rich young man coming to Jesus seeking eternal life. This was not an unusual situation. As Jesus preached, many people were convicted of their sins and, no doubt, many of them came to Jesus and asked questions about how to obtain eternal life. Jesus answered these questions for many, but here He initiated an interesting interchange with this wealthy young man ending with a challenge for the young man to sell whatever he had, give it away and follow Jesus.

Christ was asking this young man to do precisely what every one of His apostles had already done. Peter left his fishing business. Matthew left his money table. James and John left their family business. Peter said as much in Mark 10:28. This young man went away sorrowful, not because he did not understand Jesus, but

Daily Devotionals

- M. — He Paid the Price, 1 Peter 3:18.
- T. — Christ's Work of Redemption, Hebrews 2:14, 15.
- W. — A Ransom for All, 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.
- T. — He Took Our Place, 2 Corinthians 5:21.
- F. — Example of Service, John 13:14, 15.
- S. — He Takes Away Sin, John 1:29.

because he had a great many possessions. His sorrow was that when faced with a choice between Jesus and his wealth, he could not choose wisely. He did not sell his possessions, and he did not follow Jesus; he went away.

This unresolved situation gave rise to the lessons Jesus then taught His disciples. These lessons touch on key issues in our lives. They are about earthly riches and heavenly rewards.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Danger and Deceit of Riches

Mark 10:23-27

23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

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!

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.

26. 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.

After the rich young ruler left, Jesus looked around at His disciples and understood that they were impressed with this situation. They may have been sad when this man left and took his money with him. They may have even been confused about the instructions Jesus gave the young man. Jesus used the occasion to give us this wonderful lesson about the deceit and harm that riches can cause.

Jesus taught that it was difficult for wealthy people to enter the kingdom of God. That sounds strange to us because most people worship wealth in one way or another. Even Jesus' disciples were astonished at this teaching. Jesus repeated the teaching again, this time calling these men children. They were being childish in their thinking. When we think that those who have the most physical things are somehow superior to others, we are being childish.

Jesus then taught about the deceit and danger of wealth. He began with an illustration that it was easier to put a camel through the eye of a needle than it was for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. This illustration astonished the disciples out of measure. They were flabbergasted. No one could put a camel through a needle's eye, and they asked, "Who then can be saved?" (verse 26). This teaching about the dangers of wealth upset long held prejudices. Jesus was teaching these men a radical and new way to think about material wealth.

There are many dangers in loving money and the things that money can buy. First, affluence creates a concern for secondary things. Rich people do not worry about having enough food; they worry about what they will eat. They do not worry about having warm clothes; they worry about having the latest fashion. They are not concerned about worshiping in spirit and truth; they are concerned with having an elaborate and beautiful building which impresses the world.

Second, wealth can destroy our ability to learn. Wealthy people regard themselves as superior, and sadly so do most other people. Wealthy people are no smarter or wiser than others, but the world wants to believe that having money also bestows wisdom. Men will seldom listen to advice from poor people, no matter how wise and accurate that advice may be.

Finally, wealth literally enslaves those who are wealthy. The money controls the people; the people do not control the money. Wealth builds an increasing dependence upon comfort until people reach the point where they cannot give it up. Anyone can literally become addicted to comfort and ease. Wealth destroys the spirit that is ready and willing to follow truth whenever it is revealed. That is what happened to the rich young man. He was already captured by the deceitfulness of riches which creates illusions that are not real. It makes people think they are something they are not, so that when the truth is told to them, they are so bound and tied to what they own, they cannot get free.

Is it hopeless? Can wealthy people be saved? Of course, they can. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God. God can lead anyone to repent and believe in Jesus no matter what his circumstances. We may respect the wealthy, but God does not. He is not a respecter of persons, and the Holy Spirit works in all human hearts, no matter what.

II. The Promise of Reward

Mark 10:28-31

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.

This rebuke of wealth left Peter, and, perhaps, the others a bit shaken at the decisions they had made. Jesus had just told them, in so many words, that they could not expect to become wealthy as they followed Him. Peter made a statement, but implied a question. He and the others had left all and had followed Jesus. It was obvious that Peter was having second thoughts about his decision.

The truth here is expressed in the last statement. Many that appear to be first are actually last, and many that appear to be last are really first. The important thing is not the amount of things you have in your life; it is the attitude you have toward the things in your life. Jesus is saying that many who are apparently first in giving up things actually turn out to be last.

There is a common attitude that assumes the things you have were given to you for your benefit alone. This is a false view of wealth and reward. We are stewards of God's wealth, of the things entrusted to us. One day every one of us must give an account of how we used it all. It is not wrong to seek our own enjoyment. Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:17, God has given us richly everything to enjoy (paraphrased). However, the real purpose of our wealth is to advance God's work.

If you understand the things God has given you belong to Him and not to you, you will not feel upset if He takes them away because they were not yours to begin with. If we truly adopt this attitude toward material things, we will discover we will never give up anything that God does not richly restore to us a hundredfold. This means that for every one thing you give up, He will give you a hundred in return. This is a literal promise, and if we are willing to have the right attitude toward physical things, we will see that God keeps this promise. Through our

friendship, love and relationships with other Christians, we can have everything we need and even more.

Jesus promised persecution as well, and He put it in the middle of the passage which lists our blessings. Jesus is saying God can take the difficult times of our lives and make them a blessing that will be to our benefit.

What a difference this attitude will make in our lives if we understand it. When we learn God has not given us material wealth so that we can please ourselves but so that we can support and advance His work, all excuses are gone. Many who are last, those who apparently have not given up much at all but who had the right attitude about their possessions, will be first. Many who appeared to have given up many things will be last because they really did not give up much at all.

III. The Prediction of Sacrifice and Victory

Mark 10:32-34

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.

This was not the first time Jesus made an announcement to His disciples. Each time He predicted these things, He ended with the promise of the resurrection, but the disciples never seemed to hear. Mark tells us that Jesus went first. Behind Him came the twelve disciples, who were astonished and amazed at what they had learned.

They were also amazed at the attitude of Jesus. We read in Luke 9:51 how Jesus “set his face” to go up to Jerusalem. Jesus was adamant about this journey in spite of knowing exactly what would happen. He knew He was going into danger, and He told the disciples as much, but there was a resolve on Jesus’ part to go forward.

This announcement is detailed. Jesus knew what was before Him. He knew He was going to be delivered into the hands of

the priests and the scribes, turned over to the Romans and condemned to death. He added three details which had not been included in His prior announcements: they would mock Him, spit upon Him and scourge Him. Jesus knew this because it was predicted in the Old Testament. Again, Luke tells us Jesus said everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets would be accomplished (Luke 18:31). Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and other Old Testament Scriptures clearly predict these events.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and to the cross, but the disciples thought that something different was ahead of them. They were looking for an immediate pathway to glory.

IV. The Great Example of Service

Mark 10:35-37, 40, 42-45

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.

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.

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.

Jesus was going to die, but His disciples were still looking for positions of reward. The brothers, James and John, asked to be seated on either side of Jesus when He came in His glory. Jesus told them this was for the Father to determine, and they would have to earn their rewards, not play politics for them.

Jesus gave them the principle of reward in His kingdom. Things are different in the kingdom of God. In the world men desire to be lords of other men, ruling over them and imposing their will on them.

In the kingdom of God, those who are the servants are the greatest. Positions of service are always available. Jesus taught the more we serve, the greater our position. If we ever have a desire to get ahead in the Lord's work, we should simply look for another opportunity to serve the Lord by serving each other.

Jesus stated His express purpose in coming to the world was not to be the object of the service of others, but to be a servant or minister and ultimately give His life as a ransom for many.

A FINAL WORD

These verses are about being different. Most of the world values wealth and admires young, wealthy people; Jesus did not. Most of the world attaches virtue to wealth; Jesus did not. In fact, He declared wealth is a hindrance in spiritual matters, not a help.

Most of the world believes we are rewarded for our effort, and those who promote themselves and position themselves properly reap the greatest rewards. Jesus taught the opposite. Those who are last will be first.

Most of the world believes life should be preserved at all costs, and the grandest thing we can do is prolong our time on earth. Jesus taught that everyone will die, and that through love we can lay down our lives for others.

Most of the world believes those few who are supervisors and chiefs are great human beings. Jesus taught that it is the servants who are greatest in the kingdom of God.

Most of the world is wrong, and Jesus is eternally right. As God's voice spoke from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5).

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why is it so difficult for wealthy people to be saved?
2. Read Mark 10:28-30 and discuss sacrifices and the Lord's promised rewards for service.
3. Who do you know that has sacrificed much for the gospel's sake? What have they given up?
4. Why must Christ's leaders be servants of all? Who do you know that could be considered great in humble service?

5

The Presentation of God's Servant—Messiah and King

Text: Mark 11:1-33

Focus: Mark 11:1-3, 7-11, 15-19, 22-26

Key Verses:

“And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, 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.”

Mark 11:9, 10

Sunday Devotional: Rejected by His Own, John 1:10-13.

Application: Christ was presented to Israel as their Messiah and King but was ignored. Choose to receive Him as Savior and serve Him as King of your life.

A FIRST LOOK

At this point in the ministry of Jesus, a great change had taken place. Jesus had ended His ministry in Galilee. As we saw in chapter 10, He was moving steadily toward Jerusalem. It was the spring of the year, and the season for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover was rapidly approaching.

To many Jews, this would be another year with another celebration muted by the fact of the occupation of their homeland by the Romans. To Jesus, this was the pinnacle of His ministry on earth. Jesus came to earth to die for the sins of mankind, to be buried and to rise again in complete victory over sin and the grave. The events of this lesson are the beginning of this reality.

As we look at the entire picture of the last week of our Lord's life, we can see how God literally moved the events of the earth to bring about His will in the life of His Son. Every one of these events was absolutely necessary.

The great lesson here is that things are never out of God's control. We may or

Daily Devotionals

- M. — Heaven Authorized Baptism, Mark 11:27-33.
- T. — Made To Redeem, Galatians 4:4-7.
- W. — Thy Salvation, Luke 2:25-33.
- T. — God's Kingdom Promise, 2 Samuel 7:16, 17.
- F. — Prophecy of the King, Zechariah 9:9.
- S. — Kingdom Restoration, Amos 9:11-15.

may not understand what is happening around us. We may or may not be able to control our lives, but God is always in control, and He is working in the lives of His children to bring about His will.

Nearly five hundred years before, Daniel prophesied about dramatic and definite events in the life of Israel that would lead to the coming of the Messiah. Zechariah had prophesied about the exact manner the King of Israel would come (Zech. 9:9). Jesus knew the time, and He knew these events of prophecy were coming to pass.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Presentation of the Messiah

Mark 11:1-3, 7-11

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.

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 strawed 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.

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.

To get a complete picture of the events of this week, we must study the accounts given in the other Gospels and fit them together. Mark gives us some of the details, but the other accounts complement each other, and we should view them this way.

Jesus entered Jerusalem from the east. He had traveled from the Jordan River through the villages of Bethany and Bethphage to the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives overlooked the Kidron Valley and was across this valley from the eastern wall of the Temple.

When Jesus and His disciples came to the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples into the city to get a young donkey. This colt had never been ridden. A year old donkey is quite capable of upsetting anyone who attempts to ride it, but Jesus had no trouble with this animal. In our day, we think of a donkey as a humble beast of burden, but in Jesus' day it was the conveyance of kings. A king rode on a donkey when he was coming in peace, but he rode on a horse when he was waging war. Donkeys were common and useful animals in Israel at this time.

These two disciples were told to go to a certain place and there they would discover this unbroken colt. They were to merely declare that the Lord had need of the animal and the animal would be turned over to them. God had used a donkey to preach to a stubborn prophet years ago, and God prepared a donkey to be the conveyance for the King of Israel.

This young donkey did not have a proper saddle, so the disciples improvised one using their garments and Jesus sat on the donkey. The animal was calm and cooperative at the hand of Jesus. Others spread their garments and branches before the animal as Jesus proceeded into Jerusalem.

No doubt, many men rode into Jerusalem on donkeys. This was not an uncommon sight, but this time the people recognized what was happening as special. They began to cry out, "Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (verse 9). No one had to tell them to say this. God put this message in their hearts, and they gladly hailed Jesus as their Messiah and King.

Jesus was declaring Himself to be Israel's King. He was behaving like a king, and He was being praised as a king. He was also challenging the authority of the leaders of the Temple who were acting as political allies with the Romans. Jesus was deliberately laying the groundwork that would end in His crucifixion.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem, looked around the Temple area, and as dusk approached, He and the twelve went back outside Jerusalem to Bethany. This was about two miles to the east.

II. The Purification of the Temple

Mark 11:15-19

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.

19. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

Jesus cleansed the Temple on two separate occasions. The first was at the beginning of His ministry and the last was near His crucifixion. Over the years worship at the Temple had been changed so that it bore little resemblance to what was supposed to take place there. Jesus took two important actions that were, in effect, the fulfillment of the message of the cursed fig tree.

First, Jesus eliminated the commerce that had crept into Temple worship. There were men there who bought and sold animals to be used for the sacrifices. We can easily see the difference in offering an animal you had seen born and had raised, and merely going to the Temple and paying money for an animal that was supposed to be offered.

In addition to this, the Temple had coined its own money, and there were men there who changed the money of those who came to Jerusalem into Temple money. This was a profitable business that made the Temple and its officers rich men. The commerce had become so petty there were even those there who were selling doves. The Temple had become a literal den of thieves who were only intent on getting all the money they could.

The second thing Jesus did, and this detail is only recorded in Mark, was to stop all traffic through the Temple. No man could carry any vessel through the Temple. The effect of this was to stop the sacrifices that were taking place. This was the Passover season, and Jews were gathered from all over the world, and, no

doubt, it was a busy time at the Temple. Jesus brought all that to a sudden stop. He rightly declared this was supposed to be a house of prayer for all nations, not a place of commerce where men stole from each other, even though the thievery was not a violation of Roman law. The Romans left the Temple to the Jews, but the Jews had perverted what went on there.

The scribes and the chief priests heard about this, and they sought ways to destroy Jesus. They would have killed him outright, but they were afraid of Jesus and His popularity with the ordinary people. What Jesus did was right, and everyone who thought about His actions or read the Old Testament knew this. The ordinary people were astonished at the doctrine Jesus taught. This was, in part, because the scribes and Pharisees had not taught them the truth of the Old Testament.

III. The Power of Believing Prayer

Mark 11:22-26

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.

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.

The next day, Jesus taught some of the abiding lessons implied in His recent actions. As Jesus and His disciples came into Jerusalem, they saw the fig tree Jesus cursed had died overnight. We must understand these verses in their context. Jesus was not giving us a magic formula for killing trees or for moving mountains.

Jesus was teaching us we must have faith in God when it is difficult to do so. In fact, the more unreasonable our requests seem to us, the more faith we must have in God's power. There are mountains of opposition to our faith, and they make it difficult

for us to believe and act in the name of Jesus. Israel experienced those obstacles in Jesus' day, and they were formidable. One mountain was their slavery under the Romans. Another was that God had not yet delivered Israel. The many and various circumstances that bring doubt and fear in our lives are like mountains that stand in contradiction to our faith in God.

We are to simply pray in faith, and God will remove the mountains. Now, Jesus gives us the main obstacle to successful prayer. It is an unforgiving attitude. Not many Christians seem to realize this, but the Bible is plain. If you are not willing to forgive others, you will not be forgiven. If you are not forgiven, the mountains are still there, and you will have to live in the valleys of life.

When children of God sin, we can forgive others and ask God for forgiveness. If we do, our sins are forgiven; if we do not, we will have to bear the consequences of our sins. An unforgiving attitude will block the blessings of God and, eventually, give us a bitter, sour spirit. We want others to understand and forgive us, but we must be willing to extend the same forgiveness toward others if we want the mountains of doubt in our lives removed.

A FINAL WORD

These are practical and applicable teachings. Has Jesus been admitted to your life as He was admitted into Jerusalem? Do you allow Him to come in peace, and do you welcome Him for who He really is? Anyone can have Jesus in his heart, but only on God's terms. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords and we must receive Him that way.

Will you allow Jesus to cleanse your life of the things that do not need to be there, as He cleansed the Temple? Over the years we can become so burdened with the baggage of sin, we can no longer understand our purpose on earth. We need to lay aside the weights that so easily beset us and get a good look at Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Are there mountains in your life that need to be moved, mountains of doubt and unforgiven sin? They will not move themselves, but through prayer they can be cast into the sea. We can stand on the level ground at the foot of the cross. No one is too good to be saved, and no one is too bad to be saved. If God has

forgiven you of your sins, He can forgive those who sin against you. If God has forgiven us, we can forgive others.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What does it reveal about human nature that the same crowd that cried, “Hosanna,” when Christ entered Jerusalem, cried “Crucify him,” a few days later?
2. What was the purpose of the Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem?
3. Why did Jesus take such drastic action against the sellers and moneychangers in the Temple?
4. According to Mark 11:25 and 26, why is it so important for Christians to be forgiving toward others?

**Have you placed
your literature order?**



For more information, visit us on the web at:
www.bogardpress.org

6

The Perception of God's Servant— Answering His Enemies

Text: Mark 12:1-44

Focus: Mark 12:13-20, 22-34

Key Verse:

“And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?”

Mark 12:24

Sunday Devotional: Seek To Please God, Galatians 1:8-12.

Application: Christ answered His enemies' accusations with Scripture. The Word of God provides the perfect answer to every skeptic, doubt and fear.

A FIRST LOOK

The actions of Jesus caused quite a stir among the religious leaders of Jerusalem. He had ridden into Jerusalem as a king, and He had acted like a king by going to the Temple and clearing out the money changers. A delegation of the chief priests, the scribes and the elders approached Jesus and asked Him by what authority He had done these things.

None of this delegation could question the nature of what Jesus had done. They did not question His actions or motives; they questioned His authority. No doubt, they were expecting Him to declare that He was a king with more power than the Romans. On the other hand, Jesus might have stated that He was acting on His own without authority, in which case they would have arrested Him.

Jesus deflected this attack and avoided this trap by asking these men about the baptism of John. They refused to answer His question, and He refused to tell them about His authority.

Daily Devotionals

- M. — The Greatest Giver, Mark 12:41-44.
- T. — Jesus and Taxes, Matthew 17:24-27.
- W. — Make Your Days Count! Psalm 90:10-12.
- T. — Render to All Their Dues, Romans 13:1-7.
- F. — Obey God First, Acts 5:27-29.
- S. — Assurance of Resurrection, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8.

Jesus gave the parable about the vineyard and the ungrateful tenants. The Jewish leaders knew the parable was about them, and they sought to literally take hold of Jesus, but they feared the people. In an attempt to discredit Jesus with the people of Jerusalem, they brought these arguments to Him. Understand that these men were not honestly seeking information; rather, they were attempting to catch Jesus in His words and force Him to take an unpopular position.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Pharisees and the Herodians

Mark 12:13-17

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 marvelled at him.

Clearly these were not honest men asking an honest question. These were pious sounding words, but we must realize that they came from two groups who hated each other. The Pharisees and the Herodians were enemies who united only because Jesus threatened their interests. They came to Jesus with a question they had carefully worked out, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" (verse 14). Shall we give, or shall we not give? Men are still asking this question, especially when government is unpopular. Should we pay taxes to a government that wastes our money or uses it for a purpose that we morally oppose? That

is a great moral question, and no matter which answer Jesus gave, some would disagree with it.

Some would say we should only pay taxes if we agree with the government, but others would declare that it is our duty to pay taxes no matter what the government does or does not do. Jesus did not answer this question as the Pharisees expected. In His wise and wonderful way, He asked to be handed a coin. He had to borrow the coin. He held it up and asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" (verse 16). The answer was, it was a picture of Caesar. Jesus declared that if this money belonged to Caesar it should be given to him. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (verse 17). He added that God also has His stamp upon us, and we have a duty to give to God the things that are God's.

Jesus is teaching us that human authority is limited in its scope. Human government can only deal with part of a man. Secular governments are ordained of God. Paul tells us that plainly, and Peter said the same thing. The king Peter referred to in 1 Peter 2:13, 17 was Nero, a moral reprobate, but Peter said to honor the king. Jesus was teaching that human government has certain powers. It can regulate our conduct to a degree and influence our lives in certain areas. However, there is an area in human life no secular power can control, and that is the human spirit. Secular powers cannot legislate the worship we give from our hearts; they cannot govern our consciences, or determine the ultimate authority in our lives. Some things properly belong to governments, and we should give those to them. Other things belong only to God and we must give those to God.

Jesus was teaching that the payment of taxes is a relatively minor matter and the ultimate issues of life belong to God, not to man. No matter how good or how oppressive it may be, human government is limited in its scope.

The Pharisees and Herodians marveled at this answer and were silent.

II. The Sadducees

Mark 12:18-20, 22-27

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.

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.

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.

This was another deceptive question. We learned in the beginning the Sadducees did not believe in angels or spirits. They did not believe in a life after death or in a resurrection, so why ask about what will happen in the resurrection?

This was a story told to trap Jesus. Jesus was blunt with these men. He simply told them they were wrong because they failed to recognize two great facts.

First, these men did not know the Scriptures, and that is where God's knowledge is made known to us. The things only God knows are revealed in one place, the Bible. The folly of those who reject the Bible is that they lock themselves into a slice of life bordered by things that can be seen and felt, weighed and measured and verified by our human senses.

Second, these men did not know the power of God. They did not believe what they did know of the Scriptures because they did not believe God had power to do what men could not do. These men thought they knew everything that could be known and nothing was beyond human understanding.

It is interesting that no matter what area of life we might examine, every error in life can be attributed to one of these two

things. Men either do not know the Scriptures, or they do not know the power of God. This is where human reasoning goes wrong.

These men were excluding the supernatural from their thinking. They were wrong because they did not face reality. What rationalism does not see is that we are more than biological machines. We must someday confront the reality of our own death. If we shove it into the background and never examine it, we will be haunted by fears and troubled with guilt. Because of this fear and guilt, our thinking and attitudes become distorted, and we make wrong decisions. That is what is wrong with using human knowledge as the ultimate authority. Jesus was clearly telling us that human authority deals only with time, not with eternity.

In contrast to this, God's authority encompasses all. It never changes. It is never one thing during one age, and something else in another. It is exactly today what it was in Abraham's, Isaac's and Moses' day. God's authority and power govern everything. God's authority reaches beyond time through all eternity. It touches the great realities that constantly bear on our lives and cannot be seen or weighed.

Human authority must always be subject to the authority of God. When we recognize that reality, everything else will fall into place in our lives. Jesus' answer revealed the moral bankruptcy of the Sadducees to the people and showed them the sovereignty of God.

III. The Scribes

Mark 12:28-34

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 neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

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 neighbour 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.

While the first two questions were designed to deceive, this one was honest. This unnamed scribe thought about how well Jesus had answered the other groups and in honesty asked Jesus which was the first commandment of all. The scribe knew the Scriptures, and he was asking where to begin in an honest search to do the will of God. Jesus answered him directly.

The first commandment is to realize that there is one God, and you are not he. Neither are the dreams and imaginations of men. Men may name many things as their gods, but, in truth, there is only one God, and we must recognize this if we are to find the truth and a right relationship with the one God who is really there.

We must love God. We do this, not as a direct action, but in response to the fact that God has already loved us and given His Son for our sins. Our love to God is never original; it is secondary to the great love He has already shown to every human being.

Then and only then, can we have a right relationship toward others. We cannot love our neighbor as we should unless we first realize there is only one God, and we know that He has loved us and we love Him in return.

Our error is that we usually want to begin at the end, not the beginning. We seek ways to live at peace with our neighbors based on human reasoning and not on the acceptance of truth and love. When we act this way, we should not be surprised when our efforts fail.

The truth that touches and changes our hearts is more meaningful than any outward actions we might take. No offering of any kind can make the changes in us that these simple truths can.

This scribe realized Jesus was right, and Jesus acknowledged that this scribe was close to understanding and accepting the kingdom of God in his own heart.

A FINAL WORD

These questions and the answers Jesus gave reveal a great deal about human nature. We see that attempts to trick and trap Jesus are worthless. In the end it will only matter that we believe and act on the truth. It will not matter if we are able to ask intriguing, trick questions. The Herodians, Pharisees and Sadducees were not moved by the truth Jesus taught. They left lost and unconvinced that Jesus was Lord.

In contrast, the scribe, who honestly sought the truth, found it. He was moved by the truth Jesus taught, and he left nearer to the kingdom of God. We can only hope he believed what he was taught and found Jesus as His Lord and Savior.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Does government have a God-given right to tax its people? Why or why not?
2. Are Christians obligated to pay taxes? (Read Romans 13:1-7).
3. How were the Sadducees in error regarding the resurrection? What caused them to err? (Read Mark 12:24).
4. Why did Jesus say the scribe in Mark 12:28-34, was not far from the kingdom of God? What do you think that means?

7

The Plan of God's Servant— The Course of This Age

Text: Mark 13:1-23

Focus: Mark 13:1-14, 19-23

Key Verse:

“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

Sunday Devotional: God's Plan for His Churches, Acts 1:6-11.

Application: Christ revealed future events in the course of this age. As prophesied events were literally fulfilled in His first coming, so they will be for His return.

A FIRST LOOK

Many of the activities of our Lord during the last week of His life were centered on the Temple in Jerusalem. As we have learned, Jesus cleansed the Temple and taught in the Temple. The leaders of the Temple came to Him with questions. He answered all their objections.

No doubt, Jesus' actions puzzled His disciples. They had either forgotten or ignored that Jesus had plainly stated His purpose in coming to Jerusalem was to die on the cross and be resurrected.

The men who followed Jesus heard Him speak about the kingdom of God coming to the earth, and they took this to be a literal, physical kingdom. Even after the resurrection, the disciples were expecting a physical kingdom to be restored to Israel (Acts 1:6).

Jesus did establish a kingdom, but it was a spiritual kingdom that will eventually become a physical kingdom.

Daily Devotionals

- M. — Focus on the Eternal, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.
- T. — Detecting False Prophets, 1 John 4:1-6.
- W. — Abomination of Desolation, Daniel 9:24-27.
- T. — The Man of Sin, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.
- F. — Think It Not Strange, 1 Peter 4:12-16.
- S. — Future Satanic Deception, Revelation 13:13-18.

This is beautifully illustrated in our salvation. We are saved spiritually; our souls are born again, and later, we will receive a glorified, sinless body. The spiritual kingdom came to the world first, but, eventually, the kingdoms of this earth will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

In these verses, Jesus was giving His disciples a long look ahead at the course of the age before them. This is valuable information that will assure us God is acting according to a plan and His plan is precisely on schedule.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Question About End-time Events

Mark 13:1-4

- 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?**

As they left the Temple, Jesus and His disciples came to the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. Looking back they could see the magnificent Temple and noted the stones used in its construction. One of the disciples remarked on the beauty and magnificence of this building. Historians tell us that some of these stones were truly massive, as much as forty feet long and eighteen feet high. Herod the Great had ordered this third Temple to be built, and it had taken forty years to complete it.

Jesus gave a remarkable prophecy. He stated that the Temple building would be destroyed so that there would not be one of these stones setting on another. This was an alarming statement. The Jews and the Romans prized the Temple. This building gave some stability to both governments. The Romans

normally did not destroy places of worship when they conquered them, and the Jews used the Temple as a sign of their national identity even though they were in political servitude to Rome.

Of course, since it had taken forty years to build the Temple and it was a magnificent structure, it must have seemed unlikely it would be totally destroyed.

As this group sat on the mountain looking over the city of Jerusalem, Peter, James, John and Andrew came to Jesus privately and asked Him a question. They did not question or doubt what Jesus had said. They did not argue about the destruction of the Temple, but they asked about the timing of the event and the signs that would let them know this destruction was near.

Jesus proceeded to deliver what we call the Olivet Discourse, or the sermon preached on the Mount of Olives. It is noteworthy that Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of His ministry and preached this sermon near the end of His earthly ministry. This great message, also recorded in Matthew, gives us an outline and overview of the time between the first and second physical appearances of Jesus. These teachings have always been interesting to God's people, but more so as we approach the end of this age.

The question on most minds is, When? Jesus did not ignore the question, and He did answer it last. It is far more enlightening to focus on what Jesus plainly said instead of trying to look for hidden clues to discover what He did not say. It is difficult to accept a correct answer if we focus on the wrong question.

II. The Answer About the Course of This Age

Mark 13:5-14

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 rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

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.

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.

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.

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.

The key thought in this passage is verse 5. There, Jesus told us to take heed and not be deceived. To take heed literally means “to stay awake.” Jesus ended this passage with the admonition to watch (Mark 13:37). Jesus’ main point was that we are to stay awake and not fall asleep as this age unfolds. In thinking about the second coming, we always want to know when it will happen. In verse 32, Jesus said, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” In these verses Jesus gave some signs that would not mark the end of the age, but these mark the course of the age. These things would take place all through the interval between His first and second coming. History proves these predictions were accurate.

First, Jesus mentioned the coming of false christs and warfare. He specifically stated these things would happen, but they would not be signs of the end of the world. These were the beginning, not the end.

Jesus also mentioned there would be earthquakes, famines and troubles. These are also the beginning, not the end, of the sorrows associated with this age. As this age has unfolded, these things have consistently happened and they are still happening today. We live in an unsettled world, both physically

and politically. All this is surely moving us toward the return of Jesus, but no individual incident should be taken as the one sure sign.

Jesus mentioned the persecution of the saints and the appearance of His servants before kings and rulers. This is a part of the worldwide witness that must take place before the Lord returns. Over the centuries, many of the servants of God have been brought before human tribunals of one kind or another, usually with a bad outcome for the Christians. Through the centuries since Jesus was physically present on earth, literally millions of Christians have been persecuted and killed. This is still happening in our modern world. In many nations it is against the law to own or read a Bible. The punishment for this crime can be death.

We do not have to worry about this situation because, if we are ever called on to make such an appearance, we have the promise that the Holy Spirit will help us say the right things to witness to a lost world.

Also, the course of this age would be marked by the breakup of normal family relationships and unreasonable hatred toward those who stand for the truth. Why does this world hate Christianity? What would happen if everyone believed in Jesus and followed the things He taught? Would the world be a better place? Of course, it would. Whatever else Jesus did, He never hurt anyone. No one was worse off for coming into His presence or hearing His words. Men may not believe the truth, but when they are exposed to it, they at least can make an informed choice.

Jesus promised those who endure to the end will be saved. This refers to the end of our physical lives because none of these men lived through the entire church age. Every child of God is called to be faithful until death. This statement is not saying that our endurance determines our salvation; it is teaching that death stops all persecution and misunderstanding. As we approach the end of our lives, our salvation gets nearer (Rom. 13:11).

III. Teaching About the Tribulation

Mark 13:19-23

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 shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

23. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The last days of this world will be marked by an extraordinary time of affliction. This is the climax of human history resulting in the appearing of Jesus in glory. This is not the rapture of the saints, that subject is dealt with in other places. This is the coming of Jesus in glory which takes place after the Great Tribulation.

This will be a time of unprecedented trouble on this earth. The trouble will be so extraordinary that it will not pass of its own accord. Unless God specifically intervenes, all of humanity will perish, but God will shorten this time. The trouble will not destroy all flesh. This shortening is done for the sake of God's elect, those whom He has chosen and who have chosen Him. God does not want any to perish (2 Peter 3:9), and all men can elect to belong to Him through their repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus warned about the false religion that would characterize this time period. There would be false christs and false prophets. This is also taught in other places, especially in Revelation, where we read of an entire system of false worship headed by the man of sin.

This system of false religion will be compelling and will deceive many. It will be accompanied by signs and wonders and will be very seductive, even to those who are believers. When Satan comes in the form of a man, he will be beautiful and will offer answers to all human problems. It will seem as if he is at last bringing peace to the earth, but in truth it is only preparation for disaster.

Jesus told us these things so that we could take heed, or pay attention, to our world and especially take heed to the spiritual realities of life. The seductive lie being told around our world today is that man is his own god, and we have the solutions to our problems within ourselves. All we have to do is apply ourselves

and try harder and we can overcome anything. This seductive lie has become the humanistic answer to every human trouble.

A FINAL WORD

Jesus was saying those who follow Him should be alert and not go to sleep. There are temptations and pressures that try to make us think the Bible is all a lie, that we should give up and stop living a Christian life, stop walking in the faith and stop believing the truth of God. Watch out for them and do not let anything turn you aside. Do not let anything keep you from being what God wants you to be all through this age. This is the way we watch. We are not to be constantly looking into the sky. Jesus will come when God is ready. Our job is to see that we are not deceived.

It is disturbing to see how many people are falling into immorality and iniquity, turning away from their faith and saying that they no longer believe Jesus or the Bible. This is what Jesus was warning about.

Do not believe the secular voices that tell us the world will go on forever. Do not believe the voices that tell us there is no God and we can live as we please. Do not believe the voices that try to turn us away from our faith.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Which of the signs of His coming (Mark 13:5-8) are occurring in our day? What signs Jesus gave have yet to occur?
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “these are the beginnings of sorrows” (verse 8)?
3. Discuss the political and religious alignment of Middle East nations and their places in the prophetic future.
4. Have false Christ’s already appeared in this world? What about false prophets?

**It's later than you
think. Order now!**



For more information, visit us on the web at:
www.bogardpress.org

8

The Promise of God's Servant— He Will Return

Text: Mark 13:24-37

Focus: Mark 13:24-37

Key Verse:

“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.”

Mark 13:26

Sunday Devotional: The Promise of His Coming, John 14:1-3.

Application: Christ promised to come again. Prophecies have been fulfilled and signs of His return are visible, so live as if He could come today—because He may.

A FIRST LOOK

We must keep in mind that Jesus is continuing to answer two questions asked by Peter as the disciples looked out over the Temple from the Mount of Olives. The questions were: when shall these things be and what will be the sign of thy coming? These questions were prompted by Jesus' statement that the Temple would be destroyed and not one stone would be left setting on another.

Many prophecies have two fulfillments. They have a primary fulfillment that will take place in a relatively short time and a fulfillment which will take place much later. In this case, the Temple was destroyed in AD 70 about forty years after Jesus gave this prophecy. To this day another Temple has not been built on this site.

The much broader question concerns the end of this age, not the end of Israel's occupation of this land. We know that God changes things. Sometimes the changes come slowly and incrementally, and at other times, the changes come dramatically. For instance, we are saved all at once. In a moment in

Daily Devotionals

- M. — The Day of the Lord, Isaiah 34:1-8.
- T. — The Glorious Coming, Daniel 7:13, 14.
- W. — King Over All the Earth, Zechariah 14:1-9.
- T. — Glorified in His Saints, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.
- F. — The Coming Kingdom, Micah 4:1-5.
- S. — The Everlasting Word, Isaiah 55:8-11.

time we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus. We are then born again. However, growth in grace and knowledge of Jesus comes incrementally, over a period of years, as we give ourselves to prayer and the study of God's Word.

These verses refer to the coming of Jesus in clouds of glory to institute the Millennium. Other places in the Bible describe the resurrection and Jesus' coming in the air to receive those who are His. We must understand that these are two different events separated by a definite time period.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Glory of His Coming

Mark 13:24-27

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.

Jesus specifically stated that these signs will take place after the tribulation, or trouble, mentioned in verse 19. This places these events at the last of what we call the Great Tribulation. These events are also recorded in Revelation.

The Tribulation Period will be trouble for the religious and political world, but it will also be trouble for the physical world. As Paul said in Romans 8:21-24, the whole creation is groaning in expectation of the return of Jesus. God made the world. Men may or may not recognize this, but the world God made does. The physical creation is inexorably moving toward some climactic event in the future. This event is the coming of Jesus in glory. As we draw ever closer to this great event, certain physical changes will begin to take place, at first gradually and then cataclysmically.

Carefully note the specific order of these events. The sun will be darkened first, then the moon will cease to give light. Jesus knew what scientists would take years to learn. The moon reflects the light of the sun; it has no source of light in itself. If the sun were darkened, the moon could not reflect light. This is an obvious sign that cannot be ignored.

Another sign is the falling of stars from Heaven. This term is used both literally and metaphorically in the Bible, but here it obviously refers to physical heavenly bodies. In context, Jesus was talking about stars in the same way He was talking about the sun and the moon. One day the stars will literally fall to the earth.

The next thing Jesus said about this period was that the powers in Heaven will be shaken. There is a power which holds all things together, but there is another power that keeps all things apart. Truly, we know very little about these powers. We feel their effects, but we do not know what causes them. We can see a small illustration of this in magnets. On a larger scale, there are powers we do not understand that allow life to go on and all the heavenly bodies to be regulated. Near the end of the Tribulation, these powers will be shaken.

At this time, Jesus will come in glory. He first came in humility as a baby born in a manger, but the next time He will come as the Lord of lords and King of kings. The power and majesty of the Lord will be great, and no one will be able to doubt that Jesus is who He claims to be.

Then, Jesus will send angels, or messengers, to gather those God has chosen from all parts of the earth and from Heaven, to inhabit and administer the great and last kingdom of this earth. This will begin the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. This wonderful period will last for nearly a thousand years, and it will be the greatest time of peace and harmony this earth has ever known.

II. The Signs of His Coming

Mark 13: 28-33

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.

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.

Jesus was revealing this in as simple and direct language as He could. Yet, these things are so fantastic to the minds of those who hear them that He needed to put these great signs in perspective so that we can understand and properly apply them. To do this Jesus gave the parable of the fig tree.

Jesus used parables constantly in His teaching. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. This parable is an answer to the question about when these things would take place.

The parable concerns a fig tree. This was a common tree in Israel and in that farming society, the fig tree was used as a means to tell when winter was about to end. The sure sign that summer was near was when the fig trees put on new growth and began to bear leaves. This did not mean the fig tree would give a precise time and date for summer, but it was a signal of coming change.

The application is this. As we know that summer is close when we see fig trees begin to grow and put out leaves, we can observe the signs Jesus gave and know the time of His second coming is getting closer. Jesus used another kind of mini parable, or illustration, in verse 29. He talked about His coming being at the door. This is like someone who has come a long way to see you and is at last outside the door and ready to come in.

Jesus gave a remarkable promise. He promised that this generation would not pass away until all these things were done. Of course, He did not mean those individual people would live all through the thousands of years ahead. Two interpretations are possible. One is that these men would live to see the destruction of the Temple. This is the question they asked, and this would be the direct answer. Jesus was saying that those who were alive then would live to see the Temple and Jerusalem destroyed.

Another interpretation is that Jesus was using the term *generation* to refer to the nation of Israel and was promising that Israel would not be destroyed through all the church age and tribulation ahead, even though Israel would be displaced from her homeland.

Jesus added the life-changing teaching of verse 31. Remember that this is preceded by *verily*, meaning Jesus wanted to focus attention on this truth. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Word of God abides forever. The things that are true today will still be true tomorrow and throughout eternity. The wonderful thing about truth is that it never changes. Truth is eternal. This is why we should listen carefully to everything Jesus taught and readily accept His teachings.

Jesus specifically addressed their question about the time of His coming. He stated that no man, angel nor Jesus Himself knows the day and hour of these events. Only the Father in Heaven knows these things. Simply understood, this means any attempt to discover a secret code that reveals the time of these events is futile and should not be pursued. We do not know the time, but we should be ready all the time. There is never a day or hour when we should be complacent, thinking the Lord cannot possibly return.

III. The Imminence of His Coming

Mark 13: 34-37

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.

Jesus closed this discourse with another parable. This is about a man who took a journey and left his servants in charge of his business. He assigned each servant different responsibilities and commanded his porter which means “doorkeeper, or guardian” to watch for him to return.

Note three things here: authority, work and a command to watch. In this age Jesus has given His churches authority. What is bound on earth is bound in Heaven. A New Testament church has the authority to baptize, spread the gospel and do all the other things the New Testament teaches. We are not left on our own to carry out the Lord's work in the best way we see fit; we have been given authority and examples.

Note that Jesus gives every man his work to do. We are not to sit around leisurely trying to look busy while we anticipate the Lord's return. No matter when the Lord comes back to earth, we should be busy about the Master's business. There is no substitute for work. We may have many good excuses, but an excuse never gets the work done. The idea is that we should not get so lost in future promises that we fail to take care of today's responsibilities.

While we are working, we should be watching. A wonderful illustration of this is the Old Testament account of the men who rebuilt Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. They worked with a sword by their sides. They were building the city, and they were ready for battle.

The command to watch was given simply because the time of the master's return could not be determined. This is in harmony with what Jesus had told them, that even angels did not know the time of these events. The master in the parable could return even after dark. This was unusual in that day, but it certainly could happen. The porter had to be constantly ready for the return of the master.

The danger was that the master could come and find idle servants who had slept away their opportunities for service and neglected the business given to them. No matter what else we may or may not do in life, the most important things we can ever do are the things Jesus has given us to do. Put the Lord's work at the top of every list and everything below it. This is how we have a watchful attitude.

The final word here is *watch*. Jesus carefully applied this warning to everyone, not only to the men who were listening to Him on the mountain. Every child of God has an obligation to be spiritually awake, alert and constantly ready for the coming of the Lord.

A FINAL WORD

What would you do if you knew for certain Jesus was coming again at a definite time? Many, perhaps most, of us would make some changes in our behavior. For instance, we might not take our finances so seriously or worry so much about our physical appearance. We might want to spend more time with our loved ones or our brethren in Christ.

We do not know the time Jesus will come, but we do know His coming is certain. We also know we are mortal. A wise man will number his days. This means we should know where we are in the spectrum of life and should adjust our behavior accordingly.

The Lord will come in God's good time, but the end of our physical lives grows nearer each day. As we turn our calendars and set our clocks, we should be reminded to be constantly ready to meet the Lord in eternity. Some will indeed be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; others will leave the world through death, but either way a meeting with Jesus is in the future for every human being.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between the rapture of the saints and the return of Christ in glory?
2. Read Mark 13:29 and 30. What are the signs of His coming? How many of these signs have you seen fulfilled?
3. Read Mark 13:34. What two things did the master of the house expect his servants to do? What two things should you be doing?
4. What else can you do to prepare for the rapture and return of Jesus Christ?

9

The Passover of God's Servant— Picturing His Sacrifice

Text: Mark 14:1-25

Focus: Mark 14:1-11, 18-25

Key Verse:

“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.”

Mark 14:1

Sunday Devotional: Our Perfect Passover, Hebrews 10:4-14.

Application: Christ offered Himself as the perfect Passover Lamb pictured in the Old Testament. He is God's only remedy for man's sin.

A FIRST LOOK

Each Gospel account of the last week in the life of Christ offers us unique insights into this brief time period which changed the world. Mark gives us these events in a kind of contrast one to the other. In this lesson, we see the love that some had for Jesus and the love Jesus had for everyone contrasted with the hatred which infested the hearts of evil men.

We can only wonder at the unreasoning hatred men had for Jesus while He was here on earth. Jesus told everyone the truth, and men knew He spoke the truth. He did what was best for everyone He met. The life and ministry of Jesus were direct and obvious fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies, from the place and manner of His birth to His entrance into Jerusalem. Yet, none of these things penetrated the prejudice of those who had made up their minds to hate Him.

In contrast to this was the great heart of love that Jesus had for all humanity which was reflected in the

Daily Devotionals

- M. — The Passover Lamb, Exodus 12:1-14.
- T. — Feast of Unleavened Bread, Exodus 12:15-20.
- W. — Communion—His Body and Blood, 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.
- T. — Order at the Lord's Table, 1 Corinthians 11:23-30.
- F. — Reconciled by His Body, Colossians 1:20-22.
- S. — Redeemed by His Blood, 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

attitude of some of His followers toward Him. Love begins with God. In fact, all good and perfect things begin in Heaven and are available to us through the grace of God (James 1:17). These good and perfect things were present in the life and ministry of Jesus. Some people did accept Him and were forever changed by His presence in their lives.

As it should be, their love was reciprocal and as wise men saw the inevitable death of Jesus approaching, they sought ways to express their love for Him.

Down through the ages, these two attitudes have always prevailed toward Jesus. Men either love Him sincerely or hate Him.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Plot To Kill Jesus

Mark 14:1, 2

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.

It was only two days until time for the Passover in Israel. The chief priests and scribes were aware time was growing short, and if they were going to act, they must do so quickly. They had already made up their minds about what they should do. They wanted to somehow get physical control of Jesus by craft, or deception, and kill Him. This was premeditated murder. They were not seeking to reason with Jesus or let Him make a defense. They had decided Jesus must die and were seeking an opportunity to murder Him.

The days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover were at hand. This is important because as historians tell us, there were sometimes as many as three million people in Jerusalem and the surrounding villages for the Passover Feast. Jewish pilgrims came from all countries to keep the Passover in

Jerusalem, and the city was filled with people from all over the world.

The chief priests and scribes knew Jesus was popular with the people, and if they seized Jesus at the height of the feast, they could start a riot, and they wanted to act before the feast got underway. There was a sense of urgency about their hatred which is always characteristic of hatred. Hate-filled hearts can never wait. Love is patient; in contrast, hatred must act as soon as an opportunity arises.

These men were motivated by the thought that Jesus was a threat to their own positions. We discover why they wanted to kill Jesus. His doctrine, His way of teaching, and, indeed, His lifestyle were a threat to them. The chief priests and scribes were pretending to be men of God who knew and practiced the Word of God. They pretended to be interested and concerned about the distress and suffering of others. However, the things Jesus taught exposed their hypocrisy and showed everyone that their lives were a lie. This threatened them, so they sought to remove the threat by killing Jesus.

Their urgency demanded secrecy. They had to be careful and arrest Jesus secretly. Once again, we see another characteristic of hatred. Hatred operates in the dark; it never comes out in the open if it can be avoided.

How sad it was that the men who were entrusted with the spiritual welfare of all Israel were plotting to kill a completely innocent man because He exposed their sins. This reveals human depravity. All men are sinners, and unless we deal with our sin, it will grow in our hearts and find expression in vile and horrible ways, as the sin of these deluded men of old.

II. The Anointing of Jesus

Mark 14:3-9

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.
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 sets in contrast the love of Mary for Jesus. Mark does not give us her name, but we read it in John. We also learn in John that this event actually took place six days before the Passover. Jesus was in the house of Simon, a leper, and as He was eating, this beautiful picture was presented. There are three stages to this event.

First is the event itself. Mary, in an act of loving sacrifice, came in after dinner and, as Jesus and the others were resting, took an alabaster box containing precious spikenard ointment and poured this expensive perfume on Jesus. This beautiful act could not help but catch the attention of all present. They could see what Mary did, they could hear the box breaking, and they could certainly smell the ointment. This act of love brought forth a second act of resentment.

When anyone does something good, there will always be someone who will object. Judas objected. He was indignant inside, and he expressed it outside. He asked why this precious ointment had been wasted. He stated that this could have been sold for three hundred pence, or nearly a year's wages, and the money could have been given to the poor. Sadly, this objection struck a chord in the hearts of others present. They began to murmur, or complain, against Mary for this act of dedication and love. Did anyone there remember that only a few days ago Jesus had brought Lazarus, Mary's dear brother, back to life? How could any amount of money be too much to show your love in such a case? We can also wonder whether any of these men

would have complained if the act of love were shown to them instead of Jesus. John tells us that Judas did not care for the poor, but he was a thief and wanted to get the money for himself. Many objections are born of selfishness.

There was the response of Jesus. He demonstrated clearly that this was an act of worship, not a waste. First, Jesus declared this was a good thing. Mary had shown that she understood things the others did not. Second, Jesus reminded these men there was no shortage of opportunity to do good for the poor. The poor would always be present, but Jesus was going away soon. There are opportunities which come once in our lives that will never be repeated, and we must seize them when they appear. Mary had done that.

Jesus said Mary had done what she could. We are all limited in many ways; we cannot do everything, but we can do something. We ought to do what we can. Mary had shown that she understood Jesus was about to die, and she had anointed His body for burial. It is interesting to look through the Gospels and note the times Jesus told these disciples He was going to die. Over and over He told them He was heading for death. Mary understood this, and she understood what Jesus was about to do.

Finally, Jesus declared this act of faith would be remembered. Well, here we are, reading and learning about this action taken two thousand years ago. Jesus' prophecy has surely come to pass.

What else could Mary have done with a year's wages that would be a memorial for twenty centuries? What we do for the Lord will last through time and eternity.

III. The Betrayer of Jesus

Mark 14:10, 11, 18-21

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.

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.

Once again we see a contrast, this time in the actions of Judas. Here is hatred, contrasted with the love Mary had shown. Judas was one of the twelve, a part of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. Judas went to the chief priests; they did not approach him. Judas did not have to do what he did. He made choices, and he suffered the consequences of his choices. Judas chose to refuse to accept Jesus as His personal Savior. Judas heard the gospel and was, no doubt, convicted by it, but he never yielded to it. It is true that someone would betray Jesus. This had been prophesied, but it did not have to be Judas.

The officials were glad to hear that Judas had decided to deliver Jesus to them. They promised him money and plotted with him about the details of the betrayal. Judas and the officials thought they were acting in deep secrecy, but God knew exactly who they were and what they were doing.

Later, as Jesus and the twelve observed the Passover Supper, Jesus declared that one of those present would betray Him. The others were sorrowful at this news, and each one honestly asked the Lord whether he would be the betrayer. Jesus answered that it was, indeed, one of those present at the meal.

Jesus pronounced a great woe upon the one who did betray Him. Remember that Judas made his choices. He chose to travel with Jesus but was never changed by Jesus. He chose to love money and to think that money would solve every problem. He chose to follow without real dedication and love. He made his choices, and he suffered the consequences of the choices.

No one has to choose evil, but when one does, the choices coalesce into a lifestyle and pattern that exert an iron grip on human hearts. Eventually, like the chief priests and Judas, we can abandon all our morality for the sake of what we think is personal gain. This is the sad work of evil in human hearts.

IV. The Lord's Supper

Mark 14:22-25

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.

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.

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.

We come to the final contrast of love. After the Passover, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. In this He showed vividly that He was giving His body and shedding His blood for the redemption of mankind.

Jesus used the unleavened bread to represent His body and the cup to represent His blood. This blood was the basis for the establishment of the New Testament or New Covenant. This was not only the Lord's Supper; it was also the last supper. Jesus plainly stated that He would not observe this again until He did it again in the kingdom of God.

Jesus was teaching us with symbols, painting living pictures in the actions of those present with Him. Down through the ages the Lord's churches still show this picture every time a local church observes the Lord's Supper. Sadly, many of God's children have never observed this ordinance.

A FINAL WORD

There is a wonderful parallel in the breaking of the box of ointment and the broken bread. The bread represents the broken body of Jesus, and the broken box shows a precious thing was broken so that a more precious thing could be poured out.

The cup represents the shed blood of Jesus. The ointment was precious, but the blood of Christ was more precious. There could never be a price fixed on a human soul or on the blood of the Son of God, but that unimaginable price was paid so that we could live.

This is the extravagance of true love. God loved the world and He gave His Son so that those who believe in Him will never perish. We should be reminded of this every time we meet with our local church to observe the Lord's Supper.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. If you had been in the house of Simon and witnessed the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany (Mark 14:3-7), would you have agreed with the disciples that the costly ointment was wasted?

2. Why did her action make such an impression on Jesus (Mark 14:8, 9)? Mary did for Jesus what she could with what she had. Are you doing what you can with what you have?

3. It is obvious the disciples had no idea that Judas was the betrayer (Mark 14:19). He misled everyone but Jesus. Do you think there are similarly deceptive people in churches today?

4. Discuss the similarities and differences between the Passover and the Lord's Supper. Why did Jesus declare the Lord's Supper to be a permanent ordinance, to be continually repeated in His churches?

10

The Prayers of God's Servant— In the Garden

Text: Mark 14:26-46
Focus: Mark 14:26-46
Key Verses:

“And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 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 14:35, 36

Sunday Devotional: Prayer that Perfects, Hebrews 5:7-10.

Application: Christ agonized in the garden, preparing to become sin for us, but won the victory by surrendering to God's perfect will. Seeking God's will always brings His best.

A FIRST LOOK

The events of this lesson took place on a spring night in Jerusalem after the observance of the Passover Supper. Jesus and His disciples left the upper room and traveled from Jerusalem toward the Mount of Olives. They arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the mountain.

These events were literal, but they also offer us some great spiritual lessons. In addition to being history, they are examples for us. When Jesus spoke of His death, He always set this tragedy in the context of the resurrection. Jesus was direct with His followers about His impending death and resurrection. He wanted them to know what was happening, but they did not recognize the significance of these events until after the resurrection.

We can see humanity in these verses. We see Peter directly and vehemently denying what Jesus plainly told Him. We see Jesus in prayer and the need all of us have for prayer in every part of our

Daily Devotionals

- M. — His Death—His Glory, John 12:23, 24.
- T. — What To Say? John 12:27, 28.
- W. — Jesus' Place of Prayer, John 18:1, 2.
- T. — Peter's Love for Jesus, John 21:15-17.
- F. — Watch and Pray, Ephesians 6:18.
- S. — The Doom of Judas, Acts 1:15-20.

lives. We see the treachery of Judas as he betrayed Jesus in the garden. We see the hatred of the officials for Jesus in arresting Him that night. These events offer us great insight into our own hearts and into the actions of others.

Jesus taught that the servant was not greater than his lord (John 15:20). We can expect these same attitudes and actions to be present in our lives. We should not be surprised when others make promises they cannot keep or betray their own best interests for money.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial.

Mark 14:26-31

26. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

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.

The first thing that stands out about this passage is how clearly Jesus understood what was happening at this time. He knew He would die on the cross, and He knew the resurrection would follow. The things that were about to happen were prophecies of the Old Testament, and Jesus began by reminding His disciples of this.

The specific verse Jesus quoted was from Zechariah 13:7. The shepherd would be smitten, and the sheep would be scattered. This was the fulfillment of a direct prophecy from God. The things that happened to Jesus were not accidents. They were not the result of politics in Israel or Rome. These things had been foretold many years ago, and they were about to come to pass. There was a quality of inevitability in the things Jesus was

teaching. The important lesson was that sometimes things will happen that simply cannot be changed.

We like to think of life as fluid and subject to change at the will of men. Often this seems to be the case, but there are times and seasons determined by the Father. When they come, nothing will delay them.

Note that this message ended on a positive and hopeful note. After all these things were over, Jesus promised to meet these men again in Galilee. They were not only going into a dark valley, but they were also going through it; they would not stay in it forever. This was a message of hope after the darkness of the cross.

We have the denial of Peter. Peter rashly denied the prophecy of the Old Testament, and he denied the specific prophecy of Jesus. Peter did not think these things applied to him. We have all done this in one way or another. We know what the Bible says, and we know it applies to others, but we do not think it applies to us personally.

Jesus plainly told Peter that he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed to announce the new day. This was specific and observable, and it was the Word of God. Peter should have meekly accepted this message.

Instead, Peter became more insistent that he would never deny the Lord. He went so far as to say that the others might be scattered and deny the Lord, but he would die with Jesus before he would deny Him. His bravado caught the hearts of the others present, and they joined Peter in this denial.

Most of us have been guilty of this kind of sin. We know what the Bible teaches. We hear it clearly, but we do not think that it applies to us. We want something else to happen, and we insist that we can do what others cannot. Jesus knew Peter better than he knew himself. Jesus knew that Peter's statement was resting on human ability, and he could not possibly do what he promised. Jesus also knew that Peter would discover his weakness when he heard the rooster crow.

II. Jesus Agonizes in Prayer.

Mark 14:32-40

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.
37. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest 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.

The Mount of Olives was covered with olive trees that the people of Judah grew for their oil. At the foot of the mountain there was a garden that enclosed an oil press, Gath Shammon. This is the origin of the English word *Gethsemane*. When they arrived at this garden, Jesus instructed His disciples to sit and wait while He went into the garden to pray. He separated from Peter, James and John and asked them to watch and wait.

Jesus told these three that His soul was sorrowful with the same kind of sorrow produced by death. He then went on a little way, fell to the ground and prayed the great prayer recorded in verses 35 and 36.

In some ways this prayer is a mystery, but it does reveal the intense struggle between the human nature of Jesus and His divine nature. A great commentary on this is found in the fifth chapter of Hebrews. There, we learn about the intense sorrow and suffering Jesus endured so that we could be saved.

Jesus' prayer was simple. He prayed that, if it were possible, this cup, His impending suffering and death, might be taken away. Jesus knew the cross was in His future. He did not shrink from it. He told His disciples plainly that He was going to die. However, He also realized the enormity of the weight of sin that had to be borne. This intense suffering brought a struggle in His soul, and He honestly expressed this in His prayer.

The second part of His prayer is the resolution. Jesus prayed that the will of God, not His own will, might be done. This contrasts the human nature of Jesus with His divine nature. The human nature wanted to avoid the suffering, but the divine nature was ultimately submissive to the will of the Father.

When Jesus had settled His heart about the coming events, He returned to His disciples and found them asleep. The brave man, who said he was willing to die with Jesus, could not stay awake for an hour in prayer. It was at this point that Jesus gave the great summation of human nature by saying the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. The solution to this is to watch, pray and avoid temptation. Our desire may be to rest and sleep, but we need the watchful attitude Jesus expected to find in these men.

Jesus returned to His prayer, offering the same prayer with the same result. He once again returned and found these men sleepier. They had eaten a large meal, and they were physically weary. They did not have the sense of the importance of His hour that Jesus did, and they slept without excuse. When Jesus questioned them, they gave Him no answer.

Satan did not have to struggle with these disciples. Their resolve collapsed because they got sleepy. The flesh is weak, but the solution is prayer. Our entire spiritual life begins with prayer. Every day we should depend on prayer. Prayer is our lifeline to Heaven, and there is nothing we do that is more important. The events in Gethsemane teach us that prayer always provides strength. Jesus prayed, and the answer to His prayer enabled Him to complete the will of God for His life. Jesus stood firm and did the will of the Father. Peter slept.

III. Jesus Betrayed by Judas

Mark 14:41-46

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.

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.

46. And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

Jesus returned the third time to find His disciples sound asleep. He announced to these sleepy men that it was enough, meaning His prayer session was over. The time had come for Jesus to be betrayed. He woke them up and led them together to the place where the betrayal would take place.

Nothing which happened here was a surprise to Jesus. He knew what was about to happen, and He was completely prepared for it. One simple but profound truth that will change our lives is to realize that God knows the future, but we do not. God knows where we are going, and He loves us and seeks the best for us. We can be assured that when we follow His Word and do His will, we will be more than conquerors through Jesus our Lord.

We must realize that Jesus did not live in an age of instant video news with pictures sent at lightening speed all over the world. That is our age. In His time many people had heard of Jesus, but they could not identify Him. Jesus traveled with a group of twelve other men, and it was difficult at times to tell which one of them was Jesus. The betrayal of Judas was that he personally knew Jesus, and he could point Jesus out to those who had come to make the arrest.

The sad irony is that Jesus was not trying to hide his identity. He had plainly told everyone who He was, and He did so that night (John 18:5-8). Judas' betrayal hurt Judas; it did not hinder the work of God.

As Jesus and His disciples were walking, they met a multitude of men armed with staves and swords. This hastily formed posse was sent by the chief priests, scribes and elders. This was not a legal arrest made by duly appointed officers. This was a mob, perhaps, hoping to meet with resistance and simply execute Jesus and His followers.

It is sadly ironic that the greeting which signifies love and devotion, a kiss, was used to betray Jesus. Judas could

have touched Jesus or come near and pointed to Him, but he chose to kiss the Lord as a sign of betrayal. What is normally an expression of love was perverted into a means of betrayal. We should read this account in Matthew, Luke and John to understand everything that took place at this time.

Jesus went peacefully, and the process that would lead to the cross had begun.

A FINAL WORD

When Jesus was arrested that night, every one of His disciples fled. The sheep were scattered; they all forsook Him. After three-and-a-half years of following the Lord and seeing all He could do and hearing all He taught, their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah suddenly left them. His willingness to surrender without resistance led them to believe Jesus was just a man after all. It was every man for himself, and they ran.

This passage will help us when we know what God wants us to do, but we do not want to do what God tells us. We can become confident that somehow we can work things out in our own strength. In these moments, we can turn to the lessons of this passage and humbly approach the throne of grace in prayer to find grace and mercy to guide us.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Peter and the disciples said they were willing to die for Jesus, but quickly denied Him. What happened to their boast? Did it have anything to do with their prayerlessness (Mark 14:37, 38)?

2. Does it bother you that Jesus was stressed about going to the cross (Mark 14:34, 35)? Why or why not?

3. What did Jesus pray (Mark 14:36) that settled this issue? When facing conflict or difficult decisions, may we pray the same way?

4. Is the Lord's admonition to watch and pray to avoid temptation still in effect today?

11

The Pain of God's Servant— Betrayed, Abandoned and Denied

Text: Mark 14:47-72

Focus: Mark 14:48-50, 53-56, 61-72

Key Verses:

“I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. And they all forsook him, and fled.”

Mark 14:49, 50

Follow His Steps, 1 Peter 2:21-24.

Christ suffered physical, spiritual and emotional abuse as He submitted to the will of God, so He can sympathize with all who suffer abuse.

A FIRST LOOK

This lesson offers us a great contrast between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh is illustrated in the actions of the men in these verses. The spirit is illustrated in the actions of Jesus. Before these incidents, Jesus had spent a season in prayer pouring out His heart to His Father and seeking only to do His Father's will.

While Jesus was praying, Peter and the others were sleeping, and Judas and the evil rulers of Israel were scheming and plotting. They were gathering a group of men, arming them with swords and staves, planning on a nighttime raid on Jesus and His followers.

Jesus was humbly submissive to the will of God, while those acting in the flesh were resisting the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the truth of God's revealed Word. The Old Testament was known to these men, but they had blinded themselves to its teachings. The Law of Moses, their source of national and personal pride, specifically forbade what they were doing, but it did not matter.

Daily Devotionals

- M. — He Sympathizes with Your Hurts, Hebrews 4:14-16.
- T. — Peter Learned To Stand, Acts 2:22-24.
- W. — Who Jesus Is, Hebrews 1:1-3.
- T. — He Is Coming! Revelation 1:7.
- F. — Humiliation of the Holy One, Isaiah 50:6, 7.
- S. — The Gaze of Jesus, Luke 22:55-62.

The great point of these verses is that the spiritual man accomplishes the will of God. No matter what else happens, this will eventually fall to his benefit. On the other hand, the flesh will always fail. Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father while these evil men of old have long since passed into the anonymous ashes of history. The name of Judas became synonymous with betrayal. Peter is known for denial, but Jesus still reigns as Savior and Lord.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Arrest of Jesus

Mark 14:48-50

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.

Three incidents are brought out in Mark's account of the arrest of Jesus. The first is the betrayal by Judas. As we have learned, Judas indicated which man was Jesus by kissing Him. Is there anything more treacherous than an act of love, devotion and tenderness used for betrayal? The action which demonstrates love was, in fact, coldly calculated to bring about death.

The second incident is the bumbling act of Peter in trying to defend Jesus. Peter drew his sword and struck a man named Malchus, severing his ear. This is a great illustration of the works of the flesh. We strike out in fleshly strength to slay the enemy, but all we do is cut off an ear. The blow is showy but not deadly. Luke tells us Jesus actually picked up the severed ear and replaced it, healing Malchus instantly. Sadly, these men were so deluded that no one seemed to notice this miracle.

The third thing we notice in Mark is that as Jesus prophesied, every one of His followers forsook Him and fled. The Shepherd was about to be smitten, and the sheep were scattered. These men, who a few hours ago had pledged they would never forsake Jesus, ran away thinking that their own lives were in danger.

We will never successfully deny the Word of the Lord. We may or may not believe what the Bible teaches, and we may or may not act on what it teaches. In the end, God will be right, and His Word will come to pass. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of God will still be true. The fleshly resolve of men will never counteract the revelation of God.

Then, we learn we should be careful about what we promise. It is one thing to declare we will die with Jesus when we are surrounded by our friends at the end of a peaceful dinner. It is quite another to make the same claims when we are surrounded by an angry, armed mob.

This situation was never out of the control of Jesus. He had been in the Temple with these same men, and they had not arrested Him. Now, it was time for Jesus to die, and God permitted this to happen. All these things were the fulfillment of the Scriptures, even though these evil men did not realize it.

Understanding these verses will help us when our flesh rebels at listening to the Lord and doing what God tells us. A conflict between human will and the Word of God is a conflict between the spirit and the flesh.

II. The Judgment of the Council

Mark 14:53-56, 61-65

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.

61. But he held his peace, and answered nothing. 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, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Mark does not mention the appearance of Jesus before Annas. Instead, he takes us directly to the house of Caiphas. Note how carefully Mark set this scene for us. Jesus was in the inner room with the high priest, all the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. This was a large crowd gathered in the inner room at the residence of the high priest. Jesus was in the middle of this council while Peter sat with the guards around the fire, outside in the courtyard, where he could look in and see all that was happening on that chilly spring night in Jerusalem. Mark points out that these two situations took place side by side.

There were two stages to this make-believe trial. The verdict was determined before any evidence was heard. This council was not seeking truth or justice; they were looking for a way to kill Jesus. They began by hearing testimony from witnesses. They were looking for anyone who could come up with testimony proving Jesus had committed a crime worthy of death. They could find no such witnesses.

There were many witnesses who brought false testimonies against Jesus. No doubt, each one had his own agenda, and since the testimonies were false, they did not agree. There is a kind of mob mentality that affects the flesh and makes men in groups behave in a way they would not if they were alone. Any one of these false witnesses would likely not have gone to Jesus one-on-one and made any accusation against Him but shouting from a mob seemed all right. Again, we see the flesh contrasted with the spirit.

This trial was illegal. First, it was held at night. Jewish law insisted that all trials of criminals before the priests be held in the daytime. Second, it met in the wrong place. There was a hall set aside for the council, and only the meetings held there were valid. This meeting was held in the residence of the high priest. Third, the Jews were prohibited by Law from reaching a verdict on the same day the trial was held, but the verdict was passed immediately at the end of this fake trial.

However, in spite of all this and the contrived testimony, things did not go well for the priests. The false witnesses against Jesus did not agree. There was such a discrepancy that it was obvious they were either lying or did not know what they were talking about. The priests were getting uneasy because the testimonies of these witnesses did not agree.

At this point, the high priest did something completely out of order and began to try to get Jesus to incriminate Himself. The judge became the prosecutor. Jesus had not responded to the false witnesses, and Caiphas asked Him directly, "Art thou the Christ?" (verse 61). Caiphas was forcing Jesus to testify against Himself. Jesus replied, giving us one of the clearest declarations in the Bible, that He was, indeed, the Messiah of Israel.

Jesus answered simply, "I am" (verse 62). Jesus then told this man that he would see Him coming in clouds of glory and would then know the truth of this statement. Jesus was informing this lost man of his own future.

We see the anger and frustration in the actions of the high priest of Israel. He literally tore, or rent, his clothes as if in great mourning, and he turned to the council with his judgment. He stated they had heard enough and did not need any more evidence. In fact, they had no evidence at all, but, nevertheless, they condemned Jesus to death.

Now, note this sad, sad, scene. The highest authorities and most respected men in Israel behaved like angry children. They spat on Jesus, they covered His face and struck Him daring Him to tell them who had struck the blow. Here, we see the depraved fleshly nature of men. Why torment a man who had just been condemned to die? What could these evil men gain by humiliating any condemned prisoner, much less one who was completely innocent?

III. The Denials of Peter

Mark 14:66-72

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.

While this was taking place inside, Peter was warming himself outside. While he watched, note that Peter did not rush in to defend Jesus, a maid of the high priest saw Peter and declared that he had been with Jesus. Peter denied her accusation stating he did not even understand what she was saying. He went out onto the porch, and the rooster crowed.

The pesky maid would not leave Peter alone, and she again stated Peter was one of those who had been with Jesus. Again, Peter denied he knew Jesus. Now, the crowd got into it because Peter was a Galilean and had a distinct speech pattern. The crowd recognized this, and the accusation of the maid began to make sense to them.

Peter began to curse and swear, literally taking an oath that he did not know the man of whom they spoke. Peter did not call Jesus' name for fear of being identified with Him. At that time, the rooster crowed again, and Peter remembered the words of Jesus. Before the cock had sounded twice, Peter had denied the Lord three times. There was nothing left for Peter to say, and when he thought about what he had done, he wept bitter tears of repentance.

Again, the flesh had been weak. Jesus had affirmed under oath that He was the Messiah, and Peter had put himself under the same kind of oath to deny he knew who Jesus was. What a contrast in being led by the flesh and the spirit.

A FINAL WORD

The events surrounding the death of Jesus are the most significant things that have ever taken place in all history. Every

human being in the entire world who has ever lived has been affected by these events. If we believe the Scriptures, this is the focal point of all history. These are the most crucial events that have ever taken place. That makes it important that we carefully study what God recorded about this week.

All our current events and problems will be a fading memory in a few years. What was the front-page news ten years ago? If you can remember, note how unimportant it seems to us now. This is the work of the flesh. In contrast, the work of the Holy Spirit shines brightly through the ages. Jesus is still the Messiah and the only hope for the souls of lost men.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Was Peter wrong in seeking to defend Jesus with his sword? Read Matthew 26:51-56 and discuss the Lord's response.
2. Why were the disciples so quick to flee, even though they had claimed they would die with Jesus (Mark 14:31)?
3. When Jesus stood before the high priest, did He plainly claim to be the Messiah? Read Mark 14:62 and discuss His answer.
4. Did Peter repent of denying Jesus? Other than his tears, what proof is there that Peter repented?

12

The Passion of God's Servant— Paying the Price of Sin

Text: Mark 15:1-39

Focus: Mark 15:1, 12-20, 22, 24,
26, 31, 32, 34, 38

Key Verses:

“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?”

Mark 15:34

The Necessity of Christ's Death, Luke 24:26, 44-47.

Christ was abused, rejected, mocked and crucified to pay the penalty of sin for all people. Every believer should live for Christ who died for him.

A FIRST LOOK

Those who know Jesus as their Savior and Lord can hardly examine the crucifixion of Jesus analytically. Our heartfelt beliefs will stir our emotions, and it is difficult to examine the suffering recorded and the greater suffering implied in these accounts without tear filled eyes.

What we are reading here is our own just sentence carried out on the completely innocent Son of God. This is not merely an account of another innocent man who fell victim to rotten politics and cowardly leaders. Sadly, this happens often. Neither is this an account of a brave martyr who died for a noble cause. Such cases may stir us, and rightly so, but this is the unique account of the totally guiltless Son of God laying down His own life so that we can live. The death of Jesus was not only sacrificial; it was intercessory. He died for you and me so that we will not have to suffer the awful penalty of our sins.

We must remember that Jesus plainly stated in John

Daily Devotionals

- M. — He Gave Himself for Us, Galatians 1:3, 4.
- T. — He Is Our Advocate, 1 John 2:1, 2.
- W. — He Saves from Wrath, Romans 5:8, 9.
- T. — He Redeems from Sins, Romans 3:24-26.
- F. — He Bought Us, 1 Corinthians 6:14-20.
- S. — He Brings Us Near, Ephesians 2:13-16.

10:17, 18 no one could take His life from Him. No power on earth or in hell could kill Jesus against His will to die. The evil men recorded here thought they were in control, but, in truth, all of this was the climax of the eternal plan of God. Jesus had the power to lay down His life, and as He proved, He had the power to take it up again.

More than that, He has the power to give that life to anyone who will repent of his sins and place his faith in Him as his Savior and Lord.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. Jesus Was Wrongfully Condemned.

Mark 15:1, 12-15

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.

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.

The council that found Jesus guilty could not extract the punishment they wanted. The Romans had taken capital punishment away from the Jews at this time, and for Jesus to be killed He had to be found guilty in a Roman court. The consultation of the council was not to determine the guilt of Jesus; it was to try to determine a way to have Him killed.

Note the wonderful control of God over all circumstances. If the Jews had had the power to kill Jesus, they would have stoned Him to death. The Scriptures had foretold that Jesus would hang on a tree. God was always in control of this situation.

Jesus' interaction with Pilate, the Roman governor, offers us many interesting lessons. Pilate was a man who knew right but chose to do wrong. When Jesus was brought before Pilate,

he wanted to know the charges. At first, Jesus was silent, and, then, as recorded in John 18:36, He told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. This was assuring him that Jesus was not a threat to Roman rule in Judea.

According to Mark 15:10, Pilate was not a fool. He knew he was being used by the chief priests. No doubt, Pilate had heard about Jesus' activities in the Temple, and he knew the chief priests were envious of Christ and that jealousy was behind their desire to have Jesus killed.

Pilate sought a political way out of his dilemma by offering to release either Jesus or Barabbas, a known murderer, to the crowd. This was a custom at this time, and Pilate was sure the Jews would want Jesus released. To the surprise of Pilate, the crowd chose to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus.

Pilate seemed puzzled at the decision of the crowd. He questioned their decision, asking what Jesus had done to deserve death. The crowd did not answer but simply cried, "Crucify him." (verse 14). Crucifixion was an especially cruel punishment reserved for the worst possible offenders. The process was simple but horrible. The person to be crucified was nailed to a cross and left to die from thirst or exposure. Often, it would mean day after day of horrible, humiliating suffering before death came.

The sentence was passed. Pilate scourged Jesus, or had Him whipped, and presented Him to the crowd. Perhaps, Pilate thought that seeing the beaten and bloody body of Jesus would satisfy the crowd. Pilate presented Jesus this one last time, but the crowd again cried for crucifixion. Now, the awful sentence would be carried out.

II. Jesus Was Cruelly Mocked.

Mark 15:16-20

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.

These verses record a strange thing. Roman soldiers did not usually do this to those sentenced to crucifixion. These soldiers were rough, hard men accustomed to carrying out gruesome orders. They could callously kill men in battle in the morning and go to dinner. This mockery of Jesus seems to have a tremendous passion behind it. They called the whole band together, including all the soldiers who were off duty or out in the city. They were all joined together in this. These actions were spontaneous; no one ordered them to do this. These men decided themselves to indulge in this cruel and insulting mockery. They found a purple robe and put it on Jesus. They made a crown of thorns and forced it on Jesus' head. They put a reed in His hand for a scepter and began to salute Him, eventually spitting on Him. They jerked the reed out of His hand and hit Him over the head with it.

Why this strange, insulting mockery? The answer is revealed in what they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mark 15:18). These men could not have been angry with Jesus personally. In all probability they had never seen Him before and knew little about Him. These men were angry with the Jews. All their hatred and resentment against this stubborn and difficult people came pouring out and found its object in this one, lonely Jew whom they thought was regarded in some sense as the King of the Jews. The evil combination of bigotry and racial hatred came pouring out against Jesus.

These men were about to be confronted with the cross. As the cross of Jesus comes into the life of any man, woman, boy or girl, it has a powerful way of tearing off disguises. We must answer finally, clearly and honestly about our reaction to Jesus. That is why the great question of all time is, "What will you do with Jesus, who is called Christ?" If you do not believe in Jesus, what do you believe? Instead of believing in love, you believe in hate. Instead of believing in truth, you believe in lies. Instead of wanting honesty, you desire deceit.

The sinful hearts of these Roman soldiers were laid bare before all men in these awful actions. The final test of morality for every person is in how we feel about Jesus. Every one of us will either accept Jesus or we will mock Him in an attempt to minimize our own conviction of sin. We cannot change our hearts, but Jesus can. If we will honestly listen to Him, He will change us.

III. Jesus Was Crucified.

Mark 15:22, 24, 26, 31, 32, 34, 38

22. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

24. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

26. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

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.

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?

38. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Mark's account of the crucifixion differs from those in the other Gospels. Mark leaves out many things the others included. For instance, Mark mentions only one sentence spoken by Jesus, the seven words that He spoke from the cross.

Mark sums up the horror of the crucifixion in Mark 15:24. They crucified Him. This happened outside the city of Jerusalem at a place that looked like a skull, and was, thus, named Golgotha. This was a small hill, on a public road. Many people passed this site on their way in and out of Jerusalem. The crucifixion was a public event.

The soldiers who carried out the executions were allowed to keep the personal property of the prisoners. They could not divide the robe Jesus wore, but they gambled to see who would get it, rather than tear it into useless pieces. Imagine the hard hearts of men who could play games in the shadow of the death of an innocent man.

Pilate had ordered a superscription written over the cross of Jesus. The Jews objected to the wording. They wanted it to say that Jesus had claimed to be the King of the Jews, not that He was the King of the Jews. Pilate had enough of the envy of the

Jews and allowed the superscription to stand as it was. Jesus died under the banner of truth. He was, indeed, the King of the Jews.

The men who had orchestrated the death of Jesus wanted to watch Him die. They gathered at the cross to taunt Jesus claiming He had saved others but could not save Himself. This was not true. Jesus could have saved Himself at any moment in this process. Jesus told Peter that He had twelve legions of angels ready to defend Him had He chosen to do so. Jesus could have easily convinced Pilate to free Him. Jesus could have stopped this any time He chose, but He chose to suffer and die so that we can live. No one murdered Jesus although all men are responsible for His death. It was our sin that held the Son of God to the cross.

Finally, from the depths of His soul, Jesus cried the famous cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (verse 34). Then, He literally dismissed His spirit and the deed was done. Jesus was dead and the penalty had been paid.

At that moment there was a great earthquake in Jerusalem and the veil of the Temple was split from the top to the bottom. The veil served to isolate the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple and with the tearing of the veil, God had declared the Law was fulfilled. No more sacrifices would need to be made because the Lamb of God had died to take away the sin of the world.

A FINAL WORD

It is not possible for us to understand the terrible agony Jesus suffered on the cross. We simply cannot understand all the things that took place during those hours. We are out of our depth, but we can accept what we cannot explain.

The torn veil was a physical way of declaring that the way to God was open to all. God was saying to the soldiers who crucified Jesus that they were welcome at His throne of grace. God was saying to the priests and rulers that they were welcome if they would repent of their sins and believe in Him whom they had hated so much.

In fact, Jesus would later send His men into this city to preach that message. The good news of the gospel is not that

men are sinners, and it is not good news to explore the depths of human depravity. The good news is that sinners can be saved when they will honestly repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus Christ, the one who died so that all can have eternal life.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read Mark 15:9-15 and discuss the class opinions of Pontius Pilate. What kind of man was he?
2. Consider the cruel mockery of Jesus by the soldiers (verses 17-20) and discuss the enormous price Jesus paid to redeem lost people. What more can you do for Jesus in light of such a sacrifice?
3. Discuss the place of His crucifixion, Golgotha, and share any class members' experiences who may have been there in Jerusalem.
4. Why did Jesus accuse God of forsaking Him (verse 34)? Did God forsake Him? Why?

13

The Preservation of God's Servant—He Is Alive in Heaven

Text: Mark 15:40—16:20

Focus: Mark 15:42, 43, 46; 16:1-7, 9-15, 19, 20

Key Verses:

“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 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

Sunday Devotional: Proclaim the Risen Savior! Acts 4:10-12.

Application: Christ was crucified, buried, resurrected, ascended and is alive forever more. Let the living Lord save and rule in your life.

A FIRST LOOK

No matter how powerful the words, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the events recorded in these verses. This is the only durable message of hope ever given to mankind. It is a sweeping statement, but it is absolutely true. The resurrection makes the difference in Christianity and all other religions.

Over the years many men have gathered a following, perhaps even spoke insightful truth and established themselves as religious leaders. Many of these men were killed for what they taught, but Jesus Christ is unique. Jesus died for others, and as Paul taught in Romans 5:7, human beings may do as much for each other. However, that is where human ability ends. We may lay down our lives, but we do not have the power to take them up again.

The resurrection of Jesus was not a private matter done in the presence of special people. The resurrection was a public

Daily Devotionals

- M. — Secret Disciples, John 19:38-42.
- T. — His Resurrection and Ours, Romans 8:11.
- W. — Witnesses of His Resurrection, I Corinthians 15:1-8.
- T. — Raised for our Justification, Romans 4:23-25.
- F. — Consequences of an Unrisen Christ, I Corinthians 15:12-20.
- S. — Source of Living Hope, I Peter 1:3-5.

event witnessed by many, reliable people. After the resurrection, Jesus was seen by a crowd of over five hundred people. We have reliable and accurate testimony about this event which not only changed history, but it changed the hope of every individual human being.

If Jesus did what He said He did and He rose from the dead, we have real hope. The future is not a series of declining days that lead to darkness. The future is as bright as the promises of God. Jesus is there, on the other side of death, waiting to welcome God's children home to be with Him forever. This is the wonderful promise of the resurrection, and these verses establish that promise.

A CLOSER LOOK

I. The Burial of Jesus

Mark 15:42, 43, 46

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 honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

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.

There are several important lessons from the burial of Jesus. First, the Romans would not bury a body if they were not certain the person was dead. The Romans had detachments of soldiers whose grisly job it was to enter battlefields after the battle and kill all the wounded who remained. There was absolutely no doubt that Jesus was dead.

The next thing we notice is the timing of the burial. The Sabbath following the Passover was approaching. This was a high day in Israel and the site of the crucifixion had to be cleared for this observance. The Sabbath actually began at sunset on the previous day. On that day preparation was made for the Sabbath. The Law forbade people to cook, clean or travel far on

the Sabbath. No work could be done so preparation had to be made the day before. Of course, this routine preparation was delayed due to the crucifixion. Now, it had to proceed. Death often invades our lives, but in one way or another, life goes on. The day-to-day chores of living have to be done.

We see how God had prepared the hearts of two men on the council to take care of the body of Jesus. If Joseph and Nicodemus had not acted, the body of Jesus would probably have been taken to the valley of Gehenna and disposed of as garbage. We read about the involvement of Nicodemus in John 19:38-42.

Joseph was a wealthy man from Arimathea north of Jerusalem. He had purchased a new sepulcher, or rock-hewn tomb, in a garden near Golgotha. This was to be a burial place for a family and used for generations.

These men acted boldly and swiftly and were an important part of the overall plan of God. Joseph went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate gave an official release, and these men quickly took the body and prepared it for burial. They were constrained by time and could not completely prepare the body. Because it was getting late, they wrapped the body in linen burial cloths, placed it in the sepulcher and a huge stone was rolled over the entrance to seal the tomb.

If the body of Jesus had not been buried in a specific and obvious way, the resurrection could have been questioned. Jesus was buried in a definite and distinct place. Pilate released the body to Joseph with full assurance from his soldiers that Jesus was dead. The body was literally secured in a stone vault that no one could enter or leave. As we learn in Matthew 27:62-66, the rulers of Israel went to Pilate and requested an armed guard be posted at the grave so that the followers of Jesus could not steal the body and claim He had been resurrected. Pilate agreed, and the tomb of Jesus was made as secure as men could make it.

II. The Resurrection of Jesus

Mark 16:1-7

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 sepulchre at the rising of the sun.
3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?
4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.
5. And entering into the sepulchre, 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.

The Sabbath, perhaps the saddest Sabbath in all the history of Israel, passed uneventfully. Early in the morning of the first day of the new week, three ladies went to the tomb with heavy hearts to perform an unpleasant duty. These women were moved by love, faith and duty. They loved Jesus, and they wanted to see His burial ritual completed. They could have reasoned that He was dead, and it made no difference what happened to His body. The respect we show to the bodies of dead loved ones is a way of showing respect to the memory and character of those who have gone before us. At such times, our efforts are not wasted.

These ladies were acting in faith. They did not know how the stone would be removed so that they could gain access to the body of Jesus, but they trusted the Lord to somehow make a way for them to enter the tomb. This was not a pleasant task. Lazarus' body had been properly prepared, but after a few days his body had begun to stink. These women were not anticipating a pleasant experience that morning, but they were moved by love and duty to show their respect to someone who had been a blessing to them.

It is important to note that, even though Jesus had specifically taught His disciples that He would die and would be resurrected after three days, none of these men were present on this morning. Like so many, they heard the words, but they did not change their behavior.

The thing that worried the women, the large stone, was not a problem at all. When they got to the tomb, they found the stone rolled away. Their concern had been totally without merit. God had already solved their problem before they got to the tomb. What a wonderful lesson for everyone who worries about the future. God has already worked out our problems for us.

They entered the tomb and saw a young man, an angel, sitting there. They were naturally afraid to see anyone alive sitting in a tomb, but the angel told them not to be afraid. He knew they were looking for Jesus and told them plainly that He was not in the grave; He was risen. He encouraged the women to examine the place where Jesus had been laid and make sure for themselves that the tomb was empty.

The angel told them to go and tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus was doing exactly what He said He would do. The disciples would meet Jesus again in Galilee. The Word of God had been proven. Jesus was alive, and He is alive forevermore.

III. The Appearances of Jesus

Mark 16:9-15

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.

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.

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.

15. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

An empty tomb could have been arranged by clever men. There are many possibilities that come to mind. The proof of the resurrection is that Jesus was seen by literally hundreds of

witnesses who knew Him personally. This could not have been faked or arranged. The resurrection either took place or it did not, and our hope of eternal life rests there.

The Bible records a completely credible list of men and women who saw and interacted with Jesus after He died on the cross. When Mary came to the disciples with the report Jesus was alive, they simply did not believe her. Mark records that after Jesus appeared to the men on the road to Emmaus and these men reported to the disciples in Jerusalem, but they still did not believe in the resurrection.

Finally, Jesus appeared in person to the eleven and actually rebuked them for hearing and not believing the testimony of the witnesses. These witnesses had been testifying to the thing Jesus had taught His disciples. The reason for this unbelief was the hardness of the hearts of these men. After all, Jesus had taught them, their hearts had been hardened by the terrible experiences of the past few days. The world of these eleven men had been turned upside down, and they believed their own feelings and emotions rather than the words Jesus had taught them.

The promises of God are fantastic. They challenge the most trusting heart and the most receptive mind. They call on us to accept things our physical senses tell us could not happen; yet, the promises of God are absolutely true. We will die, but we can also live again. Through our faith in Christ, we will live again, as we are living now, but in a new physical body, like the one Jesus had after the resurrection. That is the unique promise of Christianity, and it rests on the fact that Jesus died, was buried and came forth from the grave in complete victory over death and hell.

IV. The Ascension of Jesus

Mark 16:19, 20

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.

Jesus spent many days with these men teaching them about the things they would do in the future. There are many lessons for us in studying the post resurrection ministry of Jesus.

One thing Mark records is the command to preach the gospel as these men went into the world. It is almost taken for granted that they would go, but as they went they were to take the gospel and share it with all men everywhere.

That gospel is clearly defined for us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. The gospel is not that all men are sinners. It is not that Jesus was love, and He taught us to love each other. The gospel is not a better way to live, so that we can be prepared to go to Heaven when we die. All these things are important in their own right, but the gospel is clearly the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Any kind of preaching which omits these important truths is merely pretty words that have little or no eternal substance.

Finally, when His men were equipped and His work on earth was done, Jesus was received into Heaven. We have the record of this in Acts 1:1-11. The apostles of Jesus went everywhere. The Lord was with them, and they did exactly what Jesus had taught them to do. They preached the Word and confirmed their message with the power Jesus had given them.

A FINAL WORD

Mark closes this book with Jesus physically in Heaven but also spiritually here among us. He is living as Lord in His churches, helping them in their activities and going with them as they carry His gospel into all the world.

The apostles, these unlikely witnesses, laid the foundation that has stood through the centuries. Paul taught in Ephesians 2:20-22 that the foundation of the New Testament was laid by the apostles and the prophets. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone upon which this whole spiritual building has grown through the centuries. The foundation that was laid by the apostles has preserved the truth about Jesus for us. Their testimonies were confirmed by the signs that accompanied them in their ministries, so that we would know what they said and wrote was and is the truth.

Whatever we do for the Lord rests on the great foundation which has already been laid. We do not need to add to it, and we will never need a new foundation. Our job is to preach the good news of Jesus Christ; the gospel that can set us free from sin, change our lives and lead us into eternal peace with God.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Consider Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, secret disciples. What did they gain by their lack of public commitment to Christ? What did they lose by their lack of public commitment?
2. Why did the angel specify “and Peter” (Mark 16:7) in making the announcement?
3. Why were the disciples so slow to believe Christ had arisen from the dead? Why is it hard for some to believe in His resurrection today?
4. Why do you think the resurrection of Christ is so vehemently attacked and denied by unbelievers?