

Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 45)

Scripture: Mark 10:17-31

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: September 25th, 2005



Consumer Reports

Mark 10:17-31 (NASB)

¹⁷ And as He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and *began* asking Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" ²⁰ And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." ²¹ And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²² But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. ²³ And Jesus, looking around, *said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus *answered again and *said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter 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 the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And they were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Looking upon them, Jesus *said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." ²⁸ Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." ²⁹ Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ "But many *who are* first, will be last; and the last, first."

Introduction Following Jesus Christ is at the same time, the easiest thing to do in the world and the hardest. It is the easiest because all you have to do is to believe in Him and to follow Him. It is the hardest, because you have to follow Him. I'm not trying to be a wise guy this morning...

I know several men in this Town whom I think are fine men. In fact, I think they are more than just "fine." I think they are really nice guys with a sweet spirit about them—they're the kind of guys you just love to see at the coffee shop or randomly run into in the store. They are happy to see *you*. They know about stuff and when they talk, you like to listen to them. They're family men and when they talk about their kids they do so with pride but not bragging. I know several guys like this... None of whom, to my knowledge at least, are Christians. They may be religious, they may donate money to good causes, they may hold positions of achievement and respect. But to my knowledge, they have not yet brought themselves to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ, or invited Him to come into their lives personally and BE their savior because they know they need a savior.

The man in the passage before us is a man such as this. He was a nice guy evidently. And he was a serious “consumer.” As he surveyed his own possessions, which Mark tells us were substantial, he senses that he lacks the thing that will last—**eternal life**. He wants THIS too, of course. “How do I get that?”

I was thinking about this. What would the ideal financial picture be?

- 1.) You **tithe** every week. You find in your heart that you actually love the Lord that much.
- 2.) I think then the ideal financial picture (your IFP) would then need **good cash flow**. You have enough money available to pay all your creditors on time and you have no significant debt. Under this category I include all the things to achieve and maintain a comfortable lifestyle, food, clothing, fire insurance, computer gear, etc.
- 3.) You have enough **emergency savings** in the event of catastrophe for several months.
- 4.) You would want to **own your own home**, free and clear. And generate enough income to maintain it and even enhance it from time to time. Oh, and a **second home**, just in case...
- 5.) You need money for **adequate transportation**, all that is involved with maintaining that. So, you figure on purchasing a \$25,000 vehicle every four years...
- 5.) You give to **missions** each month. You choose some mission that you care about.
- 6.) You save for a **legacy** to leave for your children. Assuming you have children. If you do not have children, you *still* save for a legacy to give to missions or a ministry that you care about. Part of this may involve saving for college expenses for your children.
- 7.) You want to have money for **vacations**.
- 8.) You want money for **hobbies**.
- 9.) You want money to give at times of **special needs** (hurricanes, blizzards, tornadoes, bail).

But all of this isn't enough, is it? You might *have* all of this in fact. And it isn't enough to make a man happy. And this is what this man, whom Luke tells us was a **ruler** perhaps in the synagogue, wanted. He was a consumer and a good guy. He had lots but he also had some spiritual sensitivity. “How can I add eternal life to my portfolio?”

Thoughtful people today ask the question too. There are more successful people around now than ever before, I think. That fact doesn't get the press and perhaps it shouldn't. There is more money being earned, more people at work, more people in college or in trade school, more homes being purchased, more money being given away, more cars being sold, etc. than ever before. And still our culture has never been more empty feeling than ever before, in my opinion. Without the sense that there is MORE than just this, despite all the “stuff” we seem able to accumulate, life is empty.

This man perceived himself to be a righteous man. In addition to his accumulation of property he also managed to keep the law perfectly. I am sure that included keeping the Sabbath, (although interestingly, Jesus did not mention that commandment.) This man looked at himself in the mirror and said, “Hmmm. Pretty good guy.” So Jesus put the screws to him. “Fine. Sell all you have, give to the poor” (of which there was no shortage) “and come follow Me.”

As it turns out, you can't earn eternal life by keeping the Law of Moses or by being a good person. Do you think people know that today? We do. Because we're evangelical, fundamental, card-carrying, Bible-believing Christians. But the general public, and even *maybe* some of us here today... Do people understand that having, and being a good person, do not WIN eternal life?

This man's problem was deeper than a quick scan of the six Commandments. Many people figure they haven't gone out and actually killed somebody and they've never done any of the others overtly or blatantly either. They figure, "I'm good to go." So did this fellow. So Jesus raised the bar. Actually, He didn't raise the bar, He just REVEALED the bar.

Eternal life starts now, Rich. It begins by completely surrendering your stuff to the Lord who gave it to you in the first place. Then it involves in your head, leaving it behind, and following Him. And that will end you up helping people.

In my Sunday School class today, we're going to again ask the question, "Why do we do what we do?" I'm going to suggest this basic, basic, basic philosophy and strategy of the Real Christian Life (RCL).

God, Others, Me.

I think that comes from Jesus.

You will notice what the "RCL" is *not*. It is NOT "Me, Me, Me." It isn't even "Me, God, others." It is "God, others, me."

Jesus told the fellow, sell all that you have. That would be a blow to "me." I don't have that much but what I have, I like. The ruler could have offered excuses, like, "Hey, I have a wife and a family." "My CD's are due for another six months." "I will look silly to my friends."

Jesus told the fellow, **sell all you possess and give to the poor**. Not LOAN to the poor. Give them something. That is OTHERS.

Jesus said, **Come follow Me**. That is the GOD part. The Christian life is following Jesus. We have many questions...

What about investments? What about my social life? What about career choice? What about stress and family disappointments? Come, follow Him. If He is the center of your life, you're living the Real Christian Life.

And Jesus DID say, **you will have treasure in heaven**. That is the ME. You do get something for following Him. You will notice verses 29-31:

²⁹ Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ "But many who are first, will be last; and the last, first."

Not many rich people will become true Christians apparently. My interpretation of ***the eye of a needle*** is the more direct idea of a real needle. He was using hyperbole to show how unusual it is for rich person to be willing to truly see their riches in context of the kingdom of God. It doesn't happen often, but it doesn't NEVER happen. It is completely possible with God because basically EVERY conversion to Christ is the Lord's doing anyway!

For following Christ there is this promise about ***the age to come***. Isn't it wonderful that this is NOT ALL THERE IS? There is an "age to come" which He also called "eternal life." We long for it like children, and we trust in it like a child unashamedly waits for Christmas morning!

We have staked everything on that belief. Now, here are a couple of closing applications from this passage, as I was thinking about it:

1. You need to decide what "enough" is. Give the rest away, and do so intelligently. Wholesale giving to your child or children may not be in *their* best interests. Pray about your financial picture and receive good counsel on it. Godly financial planning, which has kingdom principles like what we're reading here today, is always helpful.
2. Notice the poor and notice them in a meaningful way. Sometimes some of us may feel over-exposed to the rhetoric and politics of poverty. We get media-blitzed and sometimes even deceived about what reality is. Short-term missions gets you in touch with what real "poorness is," I am told. It is a good calibration to have in your life.
3. Never allow your portfolio or any activity related to it, or any possession you have to get in the way of your following Jesus Christ. How MUCH you have isn't as significant as how it stands up to the Lordship of Christ.
4. Do not hate the rich—Jesus didn't.

I love these kinds of encounters which Jesus had along the way. Mark may have indeed been the "rich young ruler." He certainly understood the plight of this man, a consumer of consumers! May we each receive the riches of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in our lives.

If you are not sure yet if you know what I mean by the "kingdom of Jesus Christ," ask us. Seek the King yourself too, by praying to Him and asking Him to make Himself alive to you. For He surely IS alive. And He is coming again...

Dartmouth

Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 46)

Scripture: Mark 10: 32-45

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 2nd , 2005



Cups and Baptisms

Mark 10:32-45 (NASB)

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, ³³ saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles. ³⁴ "And they will mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again." ³⁵ And James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, *came up to Him, saying to Him, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." ³⁶ And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to Him, "Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on *Your* left." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" ³⁹ And they said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. ⁴⁰ "But to sit on My right or on *My* left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." ⁴¹ And hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. ⁴² And calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³ "But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Introduction In the mid-1970s the man in the picture, Brother Yun, was in his late teens and lived in Henan Province, China. He and his whole family had recently become Christians just on the faintest words about Jesus Christ, but they did not have a single Bible. In fact, no one in their whole town had a Bible. It was still illegal to own a Bible, according to Brother Yun. But through an extraordinary miracle, and after much prayer, he was given a Bible. This story humbled me when I read it this week.

I always think it is relevant to read about the things that happened around Jesus. I think it is relevant to meditate and think about them. I think it is relevant to do so, for more than 5 minutes at a time too. His life was the most awesome, the most important, the most exciting and sometimes the most unpredictable life that was ever lived. His life speaks to people from all countries. It gets directly in the "face" of people of all ages and of both genders.

- If you are a college student, there is Jesus, looking at you, inviting you.
- If you are a senior citizen, there He is, speaking to you too.

- If you are a 40something with more to do and more responsibilities that you think you can handle, busy, parked at 5 locations at once, there He is, offering you wisdom, challenge and a filling with His Spirit.

You cannot go wrong either when you're by yourself, or here on a Sunday morning, dwelling for a time on the life of Jesus.

And so I want to do that today. I want us to think together through this next incident in the life of Jesus. It is relevant, just because it is there. Our job is to search the story through, as an intrinsically priceless treasure chest, and see what's there for us...

Now we are moving towards Jerusalem, and the city is getting close. There is a sense of expectation and some vague dread in the air. The disciples feel it; the crowd behind them feel it and Jesus feels it.

By the way, did you ever wonder what the expression *going up to Jerusalem* means? If you were coming from Galilee and Jericho towards Jerusalem, they're to the north and east. What's up with *up*? When I visited there I realized so simply that as you drive towards Jerusalem, the grade starts increasing. You're actually increasing in elevation, thus *up*. Jerusalem's elevation is about 2,550 ft.

Jesus tells them now for the third time that their visit there will not be fun, and He gives eight details about what's going to happen, more detail than He has told them up to this point. Every time that He talked about this He ends with the promise that He will rise from the dead. Luke 9:51 in the KJV has it

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he STEADFASTLY SET HIS FACE to go to Jerusalem,

Or, as another version has it, ***He set His face like a flint.*** Jesus knew what was coming—how did He know these things? Well, He knew the Old Testament Scriptures. Luke also records, ***Behold we are going up to Jerusalem and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.*** Jesus knew everything that had been written about Him. He knew it from Isaiah 53 and from Psalm 22 and all the other Old Testament places where He was spoken about. So, Jesus steadfastly sets His face to go to Jerusalem although He knows what lies ahead. The disciples on the other hand, are thinking that this is the road to glory!

Zebedee's boys came forward and said, ***Teacher we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.*** Can you believe these guys? Well, actually they're asking for something that Jesus had given them every reason to ask for! Matthew tells us (19:28) that Jesus HAD said to them,

And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

This is what THEY had on their minds as they walk up to Jerusalem. There are thrones waiting for them. Ambition is what's in James' and John's minds. They want to sit on those thrones and have honor and exaltation like a king. They wanted to be nearest to Jesus. Was that wrong? And they also want power.

It is easy to jump here to a sense of indignation at them. But they were only really believing what He had promised. They wanted Him to produce what they wanted. Matthew wrote that it was their Mom, but Mark puts the words in their mouths which I think shows that although their Mom may have said it once THEY were the ones who thought it up.

I think this is a thing we need to be careful about too. Modern Christians can get very demanding in our prayer requests too, and usually for things that are not bad and even things we might expect from the good hand of the Lord. Our prayer requests should be more filled with petitions for help in becoming more like Christ, in all that means. We should spend much time in prayer giving thanks and praising Him for His many excellent attributes. At the least, it should *not* be that most of our prayer time is taken up with requests for alleviation from personal trials or worse, for personal advancement. When we ask prayer about job related matters, is it because we do not *have* a job or because we want a less stressful one, a more lucrative one or a happier work environment. When we ask prayer about a relationship we're struggling with, is it because we want Jesus to whip the other person into shape or even remove the other person from my list of challenges, or because I want to better represent and show Christ to that person?

Notice that Jesus doesn't flash at them or rebuke them. What He said was ***You do not know what you're asking for.*** I can imagine them looking at each other, "Yes of course we do Jesus." He says, in terms they would understand, ***Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.*** Two great PICTURES: a cup and a baptism.

The "cup" is the world of your experience. David uses the picture in the 23rd Psalm: ***My cup runneth over.*** It is the circumstances into which you are placed. Some of you are not from this area. But you're here now and you will spend years here. It is your cup. Some of you have worked at a certain job for a long time. It's not so bad, maybe not so good all the time either but it is your cup. It is the situation you've found yourself in. It is how things have unfolded for you. Jesus is asking James and John, "Can you handle what will unfold for

you?” His cup, handed to Him to drink, involves some very hard treatment. It involves His execution even, unjustly. Almost like, “You want some of this?”

And what did Jesus mean by the picture of baptism? The word baptizo basically means to dip or immerse, or to place into. It is to dip somebody into water or to immerse them into it. It is used of the Israelites, who were **baptized into Moses**, Paul said. They had passed through the waters of the Red Sea, surrounded by the waters, baptized in a sense. They were overwhelmed by the water.

This is a picture of an OVERWHELMING EVENT given to the Lord, which would totally affect Him.¹ He would be immersed and touched on every level of His life. That is a baptism and that is what was waiting for Him. The cross would overwhelm Him. Jesus would be completely saturated with this event.

So He looks at James and John with this on His heart. “This is the price of glory. Are you able to pay it?” They’re a little arrogant of course: “Sure, we can handle it.” They do not lack for courage at that moment at least! Jesus still doesn’t rebuke them though. Their cups will unfold soon enough. They did NOT know what they were really asking for. Neither do we, sometimes when we ask things from God. But sometimes God grants it anyway. One writer said, “If crosses would leave us alone, we would leave them alone too.”² But they do not. They are handed to us. They too would suffer like Jesus.

Now the interesting thing, is how it actually turned out for James and John. James was the very first of the apostles to die as recorded in Acts 22. He was beheaded by Herod—the first of Jesus’ apostles to be martyred. **John** was the last. We’re not told exactly how John died—some of the writings of the early church fathers suggest he was boiled in oil. Others say he died a natural death in exile on the prison island of Patmos. But it was not an easy life for John, either. But the thing is that James and John form a sort of PARENTHESIS of martyrdom., within which as the turn of each one came, were put to death for the sake of Jesus. It was their cup and their baptism. SO, Jesus granted them their request!

God is sovereign and has a plan for each of His children. It misses the facts of the disciples’ lives—their cups—to just say He always wants only happiness and comfort and health and pleasure for Christians. That is not how it always works out. To follow Jesus involves a plan, yes. And our lives are part of a grand plan that goes beyond our graves. But before the grave, if we are obedient, it may involve suffering. I’m sure this is not pleasant to hear and CERTAINLY not something you’ll hear from the big television preachers.

Some Christians struggle today with persecution. In the world there are probably more Christians right now in hard countries than there are in countries where its easy to be a Christian.

Some Christians struggle and suffer to stay in hard marriages. Marriage is pretty much of a black and white thing in the Bible. And because it is hard to stay together for some, it ends up being suffering.

Some Christians struggle with their singleness and aloneness; others who are parents of hard children, suffer to maintain their loyal parenting and their Christian parenting even though their kid could care less about righteousness.

Some Christians suffer with the cup of poverty. Others struggle with the cup of sickness. But we view our lives as MORE than just ease and convenience now. I don't like trouble or pain or fearful situations any more than anyone else does. But sometimes this is how our lives unfold. We go with it, if we're true Christians. We trust the Lord's plan, despite these things. As Jesus did, as He ***set His face to go up to Jerusalem.***

Now, as the other disciples get annoyed at James and John—and who can blame them?—Jesus uses this opportunity to talk about what real Christian leaders are like. They are servants, not worldly, ***lording it over*** people and loving authority. Even He didn't come to BE served, but ***to serve.*** Will we learn this lesson? Serving in the body of Christ—in your whole Christian life—is not about you. It isn't about how you feel about your ministry, or whether you've become bored or tired or not. It is about serving others. Where is there a need? Can you pitch in and serve? Can you make serving part of your cup, and do it with no thanks needed? Can you do it for years and find pleasure just in serving Jesus?

Hey, I didn't write this. Jesus said these things to these disciples who wanted prominence among themselves.

We are not to be patterned on the world. If your business or the organization with which you work does things a certain way—the church is not to be that way. We are supposed to be different. The last shall be first and the first last. I try to practice this in little, unnoticeable ways. I don't always defeat ambition or pride or wanting honor, but I try. I try to teach our all our leaders the virtues of servant leadership. And if I fail, hopefully there is another leader at that moment who is SUCCEEDING at it and providing the good example.

I remember being at a major function at Dallas Seminary years ago. It was a reception being held in one of the auditoriums there. I looked into the room before and there was one of the more famous and honored professors, setting up tables. I had that professor for a couple of classes. But all that he taught in those couple of classes, were nothing compared to what I learned when I saw him setting up tables alone with no one watching!

Our cup and baptism folks, is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, if we love Him. I do not think He is impressed with our worship so much as He is impressed with our service. Most in this church receive no or few applauds for their serving. We clap for singers. What about for Children's Church or Nursery workers or lawn mowers or people who visit others who need a meal or a prayer in the hospital. What about our Sunday School teachers who donate a couple of hours every week to minister to our kids. They are the real servants. We have many servants here—about 42% of our adults are currently engaged in some regular ministry of serving.

Do you know it almost feels a little *dangerous* to read about Jesus. But it is so healthy! It is so alive. I feel a little nervous about the prospect of being with Him. He is the Lion, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* who is warm and friendly, but by NO MEANS a tame lion. No, He is not that...

¹ Ray Stedman, Sermon *The Ambitious Heart*, 1975.

² A.B. Bruce, quoted in Stedman, *ibid.*

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 47)

Scripture: Mark 10: 45

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 9th, 2005



Serving Each Other and Why We Do It

Mark 10:45 (NASB)

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Introduction We ended last week without saying anything about Mark 10:45 which is probably one of the most important things that we have recorded, that Jesus said. In fact Mark 10:45 is probably the key verse in all of the Gospel of Mark! He had said to James and John, that for Christians, whoever wishes to be great needs to become a servant and whoever wishes to be first shall be the slave of all. That is the ethic that defines real Christianity from “churchianity.” Then in verse 45 He said, ***For even the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.*** He is looking James and John square in the eye and offering Himself as an example. As if to say, “Even I, James and John, am not here to BE served. I am here to serve. I will serve you each, and all who follow Me and embrace Me by faith by giving My life for you.” The main idea is that His mission was to serve, not to be served. That is what should distinguish us as evangelical, Bible-believing followers of Jesus Christ.

There is a difference between being a servant and just volunteering some help. Volunteering help is something we’re always glad to receive in the church and as individuals and every church needs volunteer help. But it is not the same thing that *being a servant* involves. Think about your heart as you look at this chart, from Tom Constable, a professor at Dallas, which I think will show you what I mean:

Contrasts between a Helper and a Servant

A Helper	A Servant
A helper helps others when it is convenient.	A servant serves others even when it is inconvenient.
A helper helps people that he or she likes.	A servant serves even people that he or she dislikes.
A helper helps when he or she enjoys the work.	A servant serves even when he or she dislikes the work.

A helper helps with a view to obtaining personal satisfaction.	A servant serves even when he or she receives no personal satisfaction.
A helper helps with an attitude of assisting another.	A servant serves with an attitude of enabling another.

1

This is what it should be when we serve in any way in connection with the body of Christ. It might be in church office, or even just in coming to church and rubbing shoulders with different people.

Our example and mentor is Jesus, and only secondarily other Christians. We should be so grateful to Him for what He did for us that we are permanently impressed with that. We should never hear in the body of Christ, “If no one else will do it, I guess I can...” That is not the heart of a servant who has been bought out of sin. We serve, because He has first served us, if you are a Christian.

And you should go away from the body of Christ not feeling ignored or unimportant. Sometimes you get to be on the receiving end of being served. You should feel enabled to live better! You should feel served, like someone important.

- It might be how we deal with parking or seating in here. (How we park and choose seats, by the way, reveals our heart attitude pretty clearly.)
- It might deal with giving rides or helping with each other’s homes or financial needs.
- It might be in ministering to our kids. Who *should* give up time to teach Children’s Church? Or teach Sunday School? Or work with the teens or keep Nursery?
- It might deal with serving just by listening for longer than 2 minutes and not giving the person a lecture on how they *should* feel or how they *should* trust God more.
- And it might even be some service we give each other which goes far beyond these day-to-day things. You should read missionary biographies, by the way. As much as we read for entertainment—there are excellent and very practical examples of serving in the missionary biographies!

Notice what Jesus said: ***to give His life a ransom for many.*** Three things are important in this short little phrase that Jesus said about Himself:

1. His life would be a ***ransom***, a price paid to free a slave or a prisoner;
2. The ransom was not paid to Satan, as some erroneous theories of the atonement teach. Satan is presented in Scripture as a foe to be defeated,

¹Tom Constable. *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 10:45. Galaxie Software; 2003.

not a ruler to be placated. The ransom price was paid to God to satisfy His justice and holy wrath against sin. In paying it, Christ “bore our sins in His own body on the [cross]” (1 Pet. 2:24). See also 2 Cor. 5:21.²

3. **for** means “in place of.” Christ’s substitutionary death on behalf of those who would put their faith in Him is the most glorious, blessed truth in all of Scripture (cf. Rom. 8:1–3; 1 Cor. 6:20; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19). Jesus calls that “the many.” There will be many who trust in Him and for whom He would die.

The Lord Jesus is the ultimate picture of a servant.

- When I get tired of other people, I need to look at Him.
- When I feel misunderstood or unappreciated, I need to look at Him.
- If I think what someone is asking of me is too much, I need to look at Him.

He is “the One who had every right to authority” who gave up everything to meet our needs. And for us, this is the “mark of how to function in the kingdom of God.”³

Now we are not called to serve without any equipment. Every Christian has what Rick Warren calls their “SHAPE,” which is what you have in your own and distinct⁴:

Spiritual gift(s)

Hearth, or passions—the things you are excited about

Abilities, or natural talents

Personality, and

Experiences. All of these are part of what make me “me.”

And God has engineered me to utilize these tools and assets that I have, for serving in His kingdom.

How does He have in mind for you to serve Him? Have you pondered that question? It is more than just being good and staying out of trouble. He means for us to look for ways to serve and be the **slaves of all**. If we want to be great in His kingdom. Let’s take a couple of minutes and seek Him together on this...

²MacArthur, John Jr. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed., Mk 10:45. Nashville: Word Pub., c1997.

³ Ray Stedman, sermon on Mark 10, given in 1975.

⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* chapters 30 and 31.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 48)

Scripture: Mark 10: 46-52

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 16th, 2005

What Do You Want Me to Do For YOU?

Mark 10:46-52 (NASB)

⁴⁶ And they *came to Jericho. And as He was going out from Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ And many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him *here*." And they *called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, arise! He is calling for you." ⁵⁰ And casting aside his cloak, he jumped up, and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, *I want* to regain my sight!" ⁵² And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road.

Introduction Here's what we would like to happen: we would like to have, for starters,

- A completely healthy childhood
- 20s/30s: perfect vision and hearing, no addictions at all, perfect match to the height-weight charts, no ADD, ADHD, AIDS, ALS, HIV, MS, OCD, PMS, SARS, TED, EBV, PID, RA, URI, THR, TKR or DOA.
- Middle age: running/swimming a couple of miles per day, 5 days/week; 8 hours sleep per night; vision is still 20/20; one whole spouse, nothing BUT one spouse (so help you...); no out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- Always: daily enjoyment of 1,500 *scrumpdillyicious* calories/day. (Did we mention those lovely height-weight charts???)
- Senior citizen: 20/20 vision, perfect hearing, no depression; no one mad at us; important people paying attention to us whenever we want it...

To this end we take classes, read hundreds of books, listen to seminars, lobby for public funding, insure ourselves, medicate ourselves, take karate, yoga or Tai Chi, join weight-loss clubs, gyms and therapy groups, watch hours of Oprah, Dr. Phil and Jack LaLanne Juicer ads, and finally pray, pray, pray to have the healthy life.

But unfortunately, the human condition involves brokenness. And it always has. In fact. In Jesus' day, "brokenness" had little to impede it, at any age. It was random. As Jesus hit the road out of Jericho, he came upon one sadly typical broken human being on the side of the road. His name was

Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, which is funny because “Bartimaeus” actually means “son of Timaeus” so it’s redundant! (There must be a point in that...)

We have here in this story, the most rudimentary, the most fundamental, the most basic and the most powerful illustration of what it is to encounter Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, the Messiah of Israel, the Lamb of God, the Chief Shepherd of the Church, the Bride of the Bridegroom. It is to have Him come to your outcry and say, ***What do you want Me to do for YOU?*** He had just said that a little while before to James and John who also put in a request with Him. Here, He says it a second time to a random blind guy.

What happens of course, is that this random blind fellow who is sitting by the road waiting for people to give him alms, hears that ***Jesus the Nazarene*** was coming through. Evidently he knew something of Jesus’ reputation for he calls out ***JESUS SON OF DAVID HAVE MERCY ON ME!!!***

Right here we have a picture of all humanity. Broken, in need somehow of fixing, and Jesus comes by. The great Southern Baptist preacher W.A. Criswell did a whole sermon on just this point. He saw “JESUS PASSING BY” as the very reason why Mark told the story at all. Jesus is passing by all of us. Who will call out to Him and who will not do so?

But I am not going to seek the meaning today in His passing by and how He is available today to anyone who calls out to Him. I am more overwhelmed today just in the raw, simple power and presence of Jesus Christ that I see WHY our faith is the most powerful, the most wonderful thing on the planet. I want you to be overwhelmed with me today in this. With all the complicated investigations of Christianity that go on, and with many people wondering, “Is it real, and if so, what parts of it are real?” I find the most authenticity just in the record itself. We need to somehow introduce people just to the record itself! So look with me just at the incident carefully. Let it wash through you today...

Luke joined Mark with his own description; which seems to describe the same event with a few minor variations. It is in Luke 18

▪ Luke 18:35-43 (NASB)

³⁵ And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging. ³⁶ Now hearing a multitude going by, he *began* to inquire what this might be. ³⁷ And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. ³⁸ And he called out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ³⁹ And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he had come near, He questioned him, ⁴¹ “What do you want Me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, *I want* to regain my sight!” ⁴² And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has

made you well.”⁴³ And immediately he regained his sight, and *began* following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

When you look up the Greek meaning of "Timaeus," you discover why. The word means, "honor". This beggar was named "the son of honor." Now, what was it that James and John had asked Jesus for? Honor, was it not? "... that we may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Here was a blind man named "the son of honor," who sat beside the road.¹

And as he calls out, annoying the people around him (Ray Stedman says "they shushed him,") Jesus goes over to him and asks ***What do you want me to do for you?*** A true servant is going to ask people what Jesus said twice in Mark 10, It is a great question to ask people. Jesus doesn't say some of the kind of things that we might say,

"I'm too busy,
I've got a schedule you know,
I'm supposed to be in Jerusalem soon,
my organization doesn't concur that I should give you time,
you aren't worthy or cleaned up enough for my attention." None of that.

Among the famous Christians around the country today—and I have met a number of them—the ones who have impressed me the most are those who have time. Or who make time. They focus in and give you their undivided attention. They listen to you. They have time...

Jesus gives Bartimaeus the answer of a true servant. No qualifications. ***What do you want me to do for you?*** This is our Jesus, purely so. He was a servant to those who recognized Him for who He truly was, although their knowledge may not be extensive. This blind "Son of Honor" could not detail the Christology of who Jesus Son of David really was. But He cried out to him and Jesus went over to him.

Now, have you ever noticed that every single one of the miracles of Jesus that we read about in the Bible benefited someone? And in a profound way. This fellow's need is very deep. He can't see. If you imagine the lifestyle of a blind man, with no monthly check, no social services, no Seeing Eye dog, and not much of anything to get by on other than the random, occasional good mercies of a few people, you can see his desperation.

In verse 49 there is the hint of something interesting: the people say, ***Take courage, arise, He is calling for you.*** They seem to sense that THIS IS ONE

¹ Ray Stedman, <http://www.pbc.org/dp/stedman/mark/3320.html> March 23, 1975

whom Jesus will minister to. A sense of anticipation and hopefulness for his man. The people sense, He will not NOT bless this man.

A few years ago at *Congress* in Boston, Joni Eareckson Tada was speaking, from her wheelchair, in a riveting talk that I have the video of, if any of you would like to see it. (Some of you were there with me). She told of NOT being healed. She told of being a young woman, after her paralyzing accident which left her a quadriplegic, and how she attended a Kathryn Kuhlman healing crusade in Washington D.C. She told of Kathryn Kuhlman's flowing white robes and the pageantry of the platform. Joni told of her own hopefulness at being healed, and of being in line with other wheel chaired people. But then as the evening wound down, the ushers began quietly wheeling those for whom there would not be time to bring up on the stage and how she was heartbroken. She asked the Lord, "Don't You care?"

This fellow made it through the circumstances somehow and Jesus comes over. ***What do you want Me to do for you?*** "Why, my sight of course! I want to see!" And his persistence serves him well: Verse 52 is one of those wonderful, powerful, CORE verses in the Bible:

And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.

Luke has it ***And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.***

He sees! He follows Jesus! He glorifies God! The people who saw it praised God! And that my friends, is what is real about Christianity. It is about Jesus, about what He did for people when they were here. No one deserves His attention. No one is qualified for His goodness. But He gives it freely. To the person who calls out to Him. To the person who engages FAITH and wraps it around himself and cries out, "I need You and I think You can help me."

No where do the disciples beat the bushes for these people. In the New Testament there is the proclamation about Jesus but never any manipulation. Its as if figuring out who is GOING to have faith, isn't the concern of the disciples. Some will cry out ***JESUS SON OF DAVID HAVE MERCY ON ME*** and some will not. Some will not EVER do so, no matter how much proof they are given. So be it. That is beyond our control. But SOME WILL BE PERSISTENT and it is ALWAYS exciting to see that. I think some of you have been wrestling

with finding faith. It has not come easily but you are, “No, No, JESUS!!!!!! Come by here!”

But there will always be blind beggars by the road. They need to hear. Many need to hear. Our job is to get the story to them. I never worry too much about having just the right “sinner’s prayer” ready to teach people. I’m not even sure what the right sinner’s prayer IS!! But the Lord Jesus looks at the heart of the blind beggars that we are, and responds to faith. It is faith that made him well. It is faith that saves today!

JESUS THEN

- Heard
- Went over to him
- Asked him what did he want Him to do for him...
- Responded with a healing that just happened, connected to Bartimaeus’ faith
- Was followed

JESUS NOW

- Still hears
- Still comes alongside people
- Still invites the request for help
- Still responds with grace and goodness, connected to people’s faith
- Is STILL followed

It is enough for me that Bartimaeus, Son of Honor, could see and then could follow Jesus. We never read of him again in the New Testament so we don’t really know if he went to Jerusalem with Jesus or what became of him. But Mark brought him into the story and simply tells us he glorified God. That is the end result of people coming to know Jesus. God gets glorified and praised. That is enough of a result and it is our ultimate purpose and goal.

As servants of Jesus Christ, every task we do for Him ought to be free of charge, making ourselves slaves of all. Every task we do for Him should result in joy and praise to His credit. Every ministry we engage outwards, to this community, ought to benefit people that perhaps THEY will glorify and praise our God, Who heals, Who meets needs, Who saves, Who calls more and more people to follow Him.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 49)

Scripture: Mark 11:1-11

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: February 5th, 2006



When the King Stepped on to the Stage

Mark 11:1-11 (NASB)

¹ AND as they *approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He *sent two of His disciples, ² and *said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. ³ “And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.” ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at the door outside in the street; and they *untied it. ⁵ And some of the bystanders were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave them permission. ⁷ And they *brought the colt to Jesus and put their garments on it; and He sat upon it. ⁸ And many spread their garments in the road, and others *spread* leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before, and those who followed after, were crying out, “Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; ¹⁰ Blessed *is* the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!” ¹¹ And He entered Jerusalem *and came* into the temple; and after looking all around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

Introduction Over time, who’s on stage has always been of great interest to many people. Steelers and Seahawks, tonight, punctuated by Mick and Keith. In October Renée and I viewed *Fiddler on the Roof* on Broadway, a memorable event for us. In politics, what better takes the applause than a Presidential inauguration and in pageantry, a royal wedding? In our passage today, Jesus Christ steps on to the stage. Such as it was, anyway on Sunday April 6th, AD 32.

It has been almost four months since we were in the Gospel of Mark. We move now back into this Gospel, the shortest and simplest record of the life of Jesus Christ. We have read and considered 425 verses¹. We have 253 verses² left in this book to expound upon--the rest of this Gospel deals with the events of the last week of His life. Jesus has now made His way down to Jerusalem for the final time. It ends with a short description of His resurrection and a short postscript where He commissions His disciples to always tell people the good news about Jesus, and a few predictions. I hope you will never get tired of the Gospel. If you think about it and if you watch this culture we’re living in, you cannot help but become more and more impressed with how much people need to encounter Jesus Christ. *I don’t mean to bum you out, but*

¹ 62.7% of the Book

² 37.3% of the Book

I hear about people being so lost and directionless.

- One friend of mine moves from year to year in San Francisco, pretty much aimless except to get by—he has a disabled son and lots of disappointment. He goes to work, plays a little guitar from time to time, and gets by.
- I have a friend in Washington D.C., a single man, 50ish, one of five brothers. He works for a supermarket chain, is content to go to work, and come home and listen to music. He is cynical but he is not hostile to the idea of God and Jesus, but God seems remote to him, distant, untouchable.
- I met a woman this week from Boston, professional woman—successful, driven. She is going through a divorce; she is hurting and she knows the basics about Jesus, but how can He be of any relevance to her now, trapped in a bad marriage? She wants to do what’s right in life but she doesn’t really see yet what Jesus has to do with *her*?
- I see and hear about people exploring meaning and significance in their jobs and in their trade, in art, in music, in business.
 - I hear them talk about politics and politicians.
 - I read their “blogs”; hear them in the locker room; and in the diner.
 - I see them on campus and watch them in the stores.
- And sometimes I talk with people or see it, when they have given up the search for significance. They are merely existing and scraping out what small scraps of pleasure they can find. So sad...

It will not come as a surprise to you to hear me say this morning, but it becomes increasingly obvious to me that people really need Jesus Christ. And when I hear about someone who has found Christ, it makes me happy.

The Jesus who we read about in the Gospel of Mark is the most exciting individual that ever lived.

He had no cell phone--He had no electronics at all. He had no car (or truck). We never read about Him entertaining people on stage or in an athletic contest. We know nothing about His appearance. We have no recordings of His voice. We have precious little data about His emotions or feelings—we have no specific reference to Him laughing (although I have no doubt that He did!) We have no writings that He sat down and penned. He never traveled further than maybe a hundred miles from where He was born, if that, and He never made it even to His forties. But this one, single life, changed all of mankind. And when He arrived, it was heralded by angels, wise men and shepherds. All of time awaited that night in Bethlehem. Now, thirty years later, He walked into Jerusalem for the last time.

What we have is four, independent histories written about His life, two by eye-witnesses and two by close associates of eye-witnesses. They mesh together perfectly and where we have come to today, is only the second event in the life of

Jesus that is recorded by *each* of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—His entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday of what some people call “Holy Week.”

Now in verse 1 we read, ***and as they approached Jerusalem at Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives He sent two of His disciples and said to them...*** You can see on the picture, the Mount of Olives in the upper right. The Mount of Olives is still there—it strikes me as being just a little bigger than the hill that New Bedford Country Club sits on, as you’re looking up Hathaway Road from Smith Mills. Not a great height. So this is where Jesus and the boys are coming around, as they head down into Jerusalem. The first thing Mark tells us is this thing with the young donkey colt... This story is often assumed to be a miracle but does it have to be?

Ray Stedman points out that “Jesus had made certain prearrangements for this day. He knew that he was coming into the city and that he was to fulfill prophecies which had been made hundreds of years earlier. So he had made arrangements in advance for fulfillment of the prophecy concerning this colt. Thus we do not need to see this as some miraculous supply of his need. The colt was tied where it was because he had arranged for it to be there. When the word was given that the Lord had need of it, this was all the owners required, because the Lord Jesus had made such arrangements earlier.

If you recall, we saw previously that Jesus had made a quick trip to Jerusalem about three months earlier, in what would be our month of January. It is very likely that he made these arrangements at that time. For Jesus knew the day and the hour he was coming into Jerusalem, and he knew what would be required of that moment. The prophet Zechariah had clearly described what this would be like. The prophet had cried out,

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9 (NASB)

Jesus knew that prophecy, knew that it would need to be fulfilled. So he had made arrangements, I think, that on this particular day, he would be coming into the city on a colt. He knew exactly what day this would be, for the book of Daniel tells us that, almost five hundred years earlier, an angel had appeared to the prophet Daniel and had told him that a certain amount of time had been marked out by God, and would be given over to the fulfillment of certain climactic and dramatic events which concerned the people of Israel.”³ So he made the arrangements to enter the city, and came riding down the slopes of the Mount of Olives, riding on a donkey, on a colt on which no one had ever sat, in fulfillment of the predictions of Zechariah and Daniel.

³ Ray C. Stedman, sermon on Mark, June 1st, 1975; <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/3322.html>

It's interesting that each of Matthew, Mark and Luke went out of their way to say that this young colt had never been sat upon. I am told that animals that have never been "broken" are hard to sit on the first time. But Jesus sat on him, and he was quiet, responsive, and obedient, and carried him through the streets of the city.

So doesn't this mean, that if Jesus set it all up, it is NOT necessarily a fulfillment of prophecy? I don't think that invalidates our claim (and Jesus') at all. There are aspects of this He *could not have* set up: the response of the crowd as He came into the city and the attitude of the rulers. Also, Luke adds something interesting in his account of this moment... In Luke 19:41-44 we read

41 And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, 44 and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

Amazing words, fulfilled to the letter forty years later when the Roman general, Titus, brought his armies and began a prolonged siege of Jerusalem, and eventually overcame it. And against the general's command the temple was burned, and the gold of the temple's treasury ran into the cracks of the stones. In their efforts to get at the gold, the soldiers pried apart the stones, and literally left not one stone standing upon another. As he rode down the side of the Mount of Olives, Jesus knew all that was coming, and he wept because, as Luke records, he says, "***you did not know the time of your visitation.***"

That is one of the most tragic sentences in the Bible. God had sent out invitations to this great event five hundred years before, had told when it would happen, had given an exact time schedule, had told how to recognize the King. But when he came, nobody in the city knew who he was, except a passel of Galilean peasants and their children, who were there celebrating the Passover. What an ironic twist! Yet that is often what happens with us. We do not know the time when God is suddenly in our midst.⁴

There were something like 80,000 residents of Jerusalem at the time. But most of them are not the ones crowding to see Jesus. From other accounts we know the people along the road were not so much citizens of Jerusalem as people from Galilee, who were in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Many were children. And yet, as they saw Jesus coming, they felt deeply moved to cry out

⁴ Stedman, *ibid.*

the very words that fulfilled Psalm 118. You cannot read this account without seeing that these words must have been much in the Lord's own mind as he went through this experience -- and, unaccountably, also in the minds and hearts of these people. In this psalm David cries,

The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.
Psalm 118:22

This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Psalm 118:24

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. Psalm 118:26

Finally, in verse 11 we read ***And He entered Jerusalem, and came into the Temple, and after looking around He departed for Bethany with the twelve since it was already late.***

That does not sound very significant, yet it tells us what He came to do. This was an official visit of the King of Israel, an inspection tour of the heart of the nation. He went into the temple, where the very heartbeat of the nation was throbbing, represented in the worship that was lifted up to God. And he looked at everything. We know what he saw: commercialism, moneychangers, exploitation, corruption, and injustice. He saw dirt, filth, and squalor, pride, hypocrisy, and haughtiness. He saw that religious ceremonies were being carried on without any meaning whatsoever. But he did not say a word. He just looked around at everything. Nobody noticed him, because he had been there many times before. But they did not know this was an official tour of inspection by the King.

God comes into our lives that way, doesn't he?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if God looked at us only when we came to church on Sunday morning, if he would read our hearts only when we were sitting with the Word of God open before us, and thinking all the nice things we should? Would that not be nice? But he does not; he catches us in the bedroom and in the kitchen and at the office -- and in our car! He comes in and looks around at everything, and does not say a word.⁵

So often, when the King steps on to the stage, He goes unnoticed. We're about the business of church, and ourselves. But the King is here. He is in our midst. He wants our full attention. He wants to bless us and teach us and shepherd us. It isn't the palm leaves and the shouts of "Hosanna" so much as the recognition of who He is. It is to know and live like He is really King. This is

⁵ Stedman, *ibid.*

worship. Living like He is King. Honoring Him as the sovereign ruler of our lives. What does that mean for you today? Is He your King? Ask Him into your life. Invite Him to sit down on the throne of your decision-making. Have Him as your king.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 50)

Scripture: Mark 11:12-25

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: February 12th, 2006



The Tree, The Temple, and the Tree (when God-worship becomes Commerce)

Mark 11:12-25 (NASB)

¹² And on the next day, when they had departed from Bethany, He became hungry. ¹³ And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went *to see* if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ And He answered and said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening. ¹⁵ And they *came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; ¹⁶ and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. ¹⁷ And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." ¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching. ¹⁹ And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city. ²⁰ And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots *up*. ²¹ And being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." ²² And Jesus *answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. ²³ "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be *granted* him. ²⁴ "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be *granted* you. ²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.

Introduction You have so many needs, widely varying. Some of us have unique and dramatic needs and some of us have normal and routine needs but we have all issues we're thinking about, wondering about. I am convinced that in the middle of all these needs we have, stands the Lord Jesus Christ. I am completely persuaded that somehow, He is always relevant to my needs. If I am a **young person**, dealing with identity issues, He stands there. If I am in the **middle of life**, wondering about meaning and all of that, there He is. If I am a **senior citizen**, looking back, surveying most of my life, remembering lots of things, He is there even as He was there when you were younger. Our needs are NEVER irrelevant to Jesus Christ.

I think that's why I like to read about Him, even when the things I'm reading about aren't immediately *about* my problems. It is because I think He's always there, where I am, in the middle of what I'm wondering about. When you're young you wonder about **who you'll end up with**. There's Jesus, in the middle of that issue. When you're old, struggling **with health**, maybe even **alone**, or **feeling alone**, there He is. You have

needs. He knows. So when we read and study and preach about Him, look to Him from the midst of your life. He is never, ever IRrelevant and the things we read about from His earthly ministry can often be applied to your life, in the Holy Spirit. As we go through the final chapters of the Book of Mark, bring your life to Jesus prayerfully. Say to Him, "Lord, as I think about your life and whatever you taught about, and all the things in that last week that you experienced, meet me in MY life. I trust in you. I so very much want to feel Your hand in my life each day. Meet me here, Lord Jesus!

We come today in the Gospel of Mark, to the day after Palm Sunday. That would be Monday of "Holy Week" somewhere in March or April, AD 32 or 33. Jesus and the disciples are walking back into Jerusalem, probably once again across the ground that is now faced by the "Golden Gate." Somewhere on the road from Bethany to the gate, **He became hungry.** The Lord Jesus Christ, became hungry. He was human. And although He could have just created a sandwich right on the spot, He looks for more normal means. "Yo, there's a fig tree. Let's check it out."

And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He answered and said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening. Many have been amazed at this miracle. It seems so unlike Jesus. It is the only miracle in the entire record of Jesus' ministry which is a pronouncement of judgment and condemnation and destruction upon anything. It seems so strange that it would occur to a tree that did not have figs, when it was not the season for figs. This has bothered many people. Why did Jesus curse this tree that did not have figs, when it should not have had figs?¹

Ray Stedman, a Bible teacher from California, said this thirty years ago: I want to tell you that I puzzled over this problem for years, until I finally decided to conduct some research. When I came to California, I planted a fig tree -- just to see what it would do, and to learn from it. I learned the answer to this riddle from the fig tree in my yard. The first spring I watched with interest as the barren limbs of that tree began to swell, the buds began to fill out, and the leaves began to appear. And to my astonishment -- I did not know this about a fig tree -- little tiny figs appeared right along with the leaves. I thought, "Well, that's strange: the fruit comes right along with the leaf. Fig trees must be very unusual that way." So I watched these little figs grow and turn from green to yellow, and begin to look as if they were ripe. One day I sampled one. To my amazement, instead of being full of juice and pulp as a normal fig would be, it was dry and withered inside, with no juice at all. I opened another, and another, and found the same thing. I thought, "Oh, my fig tree is a lemon!" But then, to my amazement, I saw that the tree began to bear other figs, and these began to swell and grow bigger. And when I opened one, I saw that it was a normal fig, rich and juicy and filled with pulp. And the tree has borne a

¹ Sermon *The King is Coming* by: Ray C. Stedman Series: *The Ruler who Serves* Message No: 8 Catalog No: 3322 Date: June 1, 1975 <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/3322.html>

great crop of figs ever since. So I learned something: a fig tree has two kinds of figs -- one that I call "pre-figs," which look like figs but are not figs, but which always appear first. I learned that if a tree does not have those pre-figs, it will not have real figs later on. This is the explanation for what Jesus found. It was not the season for real figs. But when Jesus looked at this tree, he found no pre-figs, and so he knew that this tree would never have figs, but produced nothing but leaves. The life of the tree had been spent producing its luxuriant foliage, so that it looked like a healthy tree, but was not. And so he cursed it, and the next day it was withered to its very roots. That tree was a symbol of the nation Israel, as we will see, because what follows here is a dramatic acting out of the symbol of that cursed fig tree.²

Now it might seem trivial to check in on this, with what some might ask. What gives Jesus the right to curse a tree? But let me go there for a minute or two. We need to remember that as Son of God and Son of Man Jesus had full rights of ownership over all of creation. He is the creator after all, and it is His sovereign right to create and to destroy. But it was not in meanness. And contrary to the beliefs of some today, including J.R.R. Tolkein, I am sure, trees do not possess souls. A tree, fig or otherwise, is a tree. It is alive but it is plant life. We destroy them all the time today. If a tree is in the way, we cut it down. Many of us burn tree-wood by which to keep warm. I daresay none of you has a wood-free home or completely wood-free furniture. And in some parts of the country logging is a basic part of the economy. It should not surprise us that the Son of God should make use of a tree for His purposes. See this: His act of cursing the barren fig tree was not arbitrary.

It is an acted out parable that prophesies what is in store for a people who have proved faithless and whose temple, the very symbol of their faithless religiosity, will be destroyed along with the city of Jerusalem (a prophecy fulfilled in A.D. 70). Jesus prophetically fulfills Isaiah 34:4³; Jeremiah 8:13; 29:17; Hosea

² Stedman, *ibid.*

³ **Isaiah 34:4** And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, Or as *one* withers from the fig tree. **Jeremiah 8:13** "I will surely snatch them away," declares the LORD; "There will be no grapes on the vine, And no figs on the fig tree, And the leaf shall wither; And what I have given them shall pass away." **Jeremiah 29:17** thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rotteness. **Hosea 2:12** "And I will destroy her vines and fig trees, Of which she said, 'These are my wages Which my lovers have given me.' And I will make them a forest, And the beasts of the field will devour them. **Hosea 9:10** I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first *season*. *But* they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame, And they became as detestable as that which they loved. **Hosea 9:16** Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, They will bear no fruit. Even though they bear children, I will slay the precious ones of their womb. **Micah 7:1-6** WOE is me! For I am Like the fruit pickers and the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat, Or a first-ripe fig *which* I crave. ²The godly person has perished from the land, And there is no upright *person* among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed; Each of them hunts the other with a net. ³Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, And a great man speaks the desire of his soul; So they weave it together. ⁴The best of them is like a briar, The most upright like a thorn hedge. The day when you post a watchman, Your punishment will come. Then their confusion will occur. ⁵Do not trust in a neighbor; Do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom Guard

2:12; 9:10, 16; and Micah 7:1–6, which liken Israel’s faithlessness to a fig tree gone bad and about to be destroyed. The fig tree has put forth leaves but has no fruit. Similarly, the evidence of true discipleship to Jesus the Messiah is the bearing of the fruit of faithfulness and righteousness. The refusal to participate and bear fruit is a denial of the dynamic reign of God that is producing food for the harvest.⁴

Interestingly, Mark tells us ***His disciples were listening*** as He curses the tree. That’s interesting because they may just as easily NOT have been listening. But at that moment they were “heads up” to this unusual little incident. Probably they looked at each other, shrugged, and went on with Him down into the city.

Once there, a second incident in the Temple happens when Jesus became agitated and here is the main issue in our passage today, a thing which the tree incident foreshadowed and predicted. We must be careful to NOT read into this more than we are actually told. ***And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; ¹⁶ and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. ¹⁷ And He began to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”*** This is one of the most intriguing scenes to imagine from Jesus’ earthly ministry. He overturned the tables and imposingly chased people out of the court area of the Temple where the commerce was transacting.

The market atmosphere existed in the court of the Gentiles, the outermost courtyard within the temple enclosure. Jesus’ literal house cleaning represented His authority as Messiah to clean up the corrupt nation of Israel. Verse 16, unique in Mark, shows the extent to which Jesus went in purifying the temple. He was protecting the integrity of what the Temple was supposed to be and by doing this, He was acting as a faithful servant of the Lord. The Isaiah prophecy was a prediction yet unfulfilled as well as a statement of God’s perennial intent for the temple. In Jesus’ mouth it was also a prophecy of conditions in the messianic kingdom.

Mark added “for all the nations,” which Matthew omitted from Isaiah 56:7. The phrase has special significance for Gentile readers. God permitted Gentiles

your lips. ⁶ For son treats father contemptuously, Daughter rises up against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man’s enemies are the men of his own household.

⁴Elwell, Walter A. *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*. electronic ed., Mk 11:12. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996, c1989.

to come and worship Him in the temple court of the Gentiles indicating His desire to bring them into relationship with Himself.⁵

The wrap-up is on the way back out of the Temple area that evening. There's the tree, withered, dead. Peter notices it: "Yo, the tree is fried." And Jesus teaches now about faith and prayer. Here's the lessons from this passage today...

1. We can ask great things of God. And while we're doing so God looks at our heart and looks to see if there is any unforgiveness in our hearts.

2. It is always an absurd thing to go to God and act like we're fine, when we're not. I think lots of times we are sensitive to this and so we just don't pray at all. The better thing is to render forgiveness to whomever you are angry at, resentful towards, disappointed with. Do it while you're praying. Talk to God about it. Then ask Him for great things and engage your faith. Believe God. Don't ever stop doing that. The Jesus that you are praying to, is the same one who we just read about. His power knows no end or exhaustion. He will do great things for us but we need to work at being worthy. By forgiving. That's the thing we can do! Forgive. And trust.

3. Who do you need to forgive this morning? What new thing can you entrust to God today? Commerce is not a thing that should go on around God's house. But prayer is. And trusting God, and forgiving people ought to be things we do when we're together here at our church. This isn't the Temple of course, but it IS a house of prayer. And we have many nations represented here, just as the original Temple was intended to have.

4. Jesus Christ is always relevant. He is never irrelevant. He receives the approach of the person who is willing to forgive others, and who is willing to trust Him and ASK Him to give him what he needs. He is the possessor of glory and the name above all names!

⁵Tom Constable. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 11:15-17, Galaxie Software, 2003.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 51)

Scripture: Mark 11:27-33

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 5th, 2006



When the Irony Peaked Out

Mark 11:27-33 (NASB)

²⁷ And they *came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders *came to Him, ²⁸ and *began* saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?” ²⁹ And Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and *then* I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ “Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.” ³¹ And they *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ ³² “But shall we say, ‘From men’?”—they were afraid of the multitude, for all considered John to have been a prophet indeed. ³³ And answering Jesus, they *said, “We do not know.” And Jesus *said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Introduction You don't have to read too many stories about the life of Jesus before you start noticing lots of ironies¹, especially in the encounters He had with various people. It starts right in the beginning with the irony² of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist, who himself seems to sense the weirdness:

7 And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.”⁸ “I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” Mark 1:7,8

There were demons around who knew the ironies of Jesus all too well, and we read in 1:34 that He wouldn't let them speak ***because they knew who He was.***

¹ “irony” – an incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result (Merriam-Webster On-line Dictionary, 2006)

² *The Evangelical Commentary of the Bible* notes: “Irony plays a large role in the juxtaposition of a number of encounters with Jesus’ opponents (11:27–12:37) and the preceding teaching on faith in view of impending destruction. (Cf. this section on questioning in Jerusalem with the similar questioning in Galilee [2:1–3:6].) As though on cue the adversaries of Jesus appear one after another and unwittingly validate his scathing denunciation of their hypocrisy and refusal to accept him as the authoritative voice of the Father. Within the precincts of the temple space he claims a right to occupy, Jesus challenges the highest court of Jewish authority, the Sanhedrin, comprised of chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders (v. 27).”

His disciples were perpetually amazed at the ironies of this man they had followed. What more ironic observation is there than what we read in Mark 4:41

And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

In fact I think you could trace these kind of ironies all the way through the Gospel, one conversation or incident after another, where Jesus does or says something quite different than what was expected. He is amazing!

But there is one group of people that the incredible ironies of Jesus Christ were lost upon. And Jesus' ministry reaches the "peak of irony" with them. It is these guys whom we read about in verse 27: the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. Hmph. These are the men who of all people *should have* understood who Jesus was. These men are the very highest court of Jewish authority, the Sanhedrin, and it is *them* that Jesus challenges for their corruption on the Temple plaza. The group was an imposing delegation. From what we know from the other gospels, it included Caiaphas, the high priest, and his venerated father-in-law Annas; the scribes, who interpreted the law of Moses, and the elders, appointed to basically rule Israel (under Rome).³ This would be like being called for questioning by a joint group of Supreme Court justices, key Senators and members of the President's cabinet. You had better know what you're doing!

And what we have, is them *trying* to discredit Jesus. Who do you think you are, anyway? Where's the badges of your authority? Where's your credentials? You don't dress like us. You don't hang out here on the courts of the Temple. Where are you from? Nazareth? Ppff.

Their Question

And as they're walking about in the courts, and this is a thing that teachers did with their students—they come up to Him and confront Him with ***By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you authority to do these things?*** Notice that they DO seem to see that Jesus possessed an authority. His miracles were beyond dispute. And people were enthralled with Him, something maybe they were jealous about. But he had no training, no official recognition, no "ordination." By all appearances He was self-appointed. They had in mind I am sure, the incident of the day before when Jesus cleaned the place out and dramatically proclaimed that they were all missing the point of the Temple, which was prayer. And so here this rabbi is again, acting all authoritative.

³ Ray Stedman, *The Ruler Who Serves* sermons from Mark, 1975. DHP 2002, p. 133.

“When you refine any issue down to its essentials, what you have left is the issue of authority in life. Why do you act the way you do? How do you justify what you say and do? No one ever is his or her own ultimate authority. Presidents can be impeached. Kings can be deposed. We all defer to an authority beyond *ourselves*, something that sets boundaries for our actions, something that governs our decisions. When we confront the question of authority we are dealing with that which is fundamental to all human behavior.”⁴

But Jesus doesn't come out and say what we might think He would do at that moment: “I am the son of God and the son of Man. I am the light of the world. I am the bread of life. I am the Chief Shepherd. I am the heir to David's throne. I am the living water. I am the door. I am the Savior. I am the Messiah for whom you have all been waiting. I am the bridegroom.” Instead, He brilliantly answers their question with a question, and as Stedman says, “conceives a remarkable test” to give them.

Jesus' Counter-Question

I'm sorry, I just love how Jesus deals with wise guys! ***I will ask you one question. Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men?*** I would love to see the look on their faces. ***Answer this one and I'll answer yours.*** And of course they can't answer His question about the veracity and validity of the ministry of John the Baptist. (Only Mark has this challenge recorded.) It puts the Sanhedrin guys on the defensive and in a way that neither can they win this discussion nor accomplish their goal of discrediting Jesus. They can see that either way they answer, they lose. It was like in the game of chess placing your opponent in a “fork.” Whatever you do next, you lose a piece. He had created an unavoidable dilemma for them. “The baptism of John was something new and startling in Israel. The priests had many ritual washings under the Levitical system, but those were performed in the Temple according to strict rules. But John's baptism was different. John was not a priest yet he baptized. He baptized not in the Temple but in rivers and streams, wherever he could find enough water. Because it was unprecedented John's baptism was controversial and feelings ran high on both sides of the question.”⁵ John had imposed a radical and fresh new authority—he, without the acceptable credentials--was freshly calling the people to repentance and change—and that is what his baptism was all about. His ministry of baptizing people was of course, ***from heaven*** as Jesus put it. And that is an interesting way to characterize a religious ceremony: from heaven or ***from men***. It comes down to that. By the way, I think there are many religious ceremonies and practices which people SAY are sourced in heaven but are really man-made and basically man-satisfying. And ceremonies always raise up the basic question of authority. I need to be careful

⁴ Stedman, *Ibid.* p. 131

⁵ Stedman, *Ibid.*

here because I know people like lots of different kinds of ceremonies and they derive security from going to ceremonies—but if you think biblically, and theologically, you will discover that many of the ceremonies that people devote themselves to, are things men made up. God never mandated them. Events like “christenings,” and getting ash rubbed on to your forehead, and some of the little things that are done at funerals as well as some of the parts of many weddings, going to “mass,” I ask you, is it from heaven or from men? Well, this is the question—full of irony given where Jesus was asking this question—on the Temple Mount—that He shot back at these guys who were seeking to outfox Him. I don’t think some of the things we do that are man-made are bad necessarily but we need to think through what we do. Are the ceremonies we do from heaven or from men?

The men in the Sanhedrin were not thinking clearly about the thing John the Baptist had been doing out in the countryside. They knew that many people sensed something authentic and guileless in John the Baptist. But they didn’t believe John was an authentic prophet and they didn’t believe his baptism was **from heaven** but they knew many people did. Jesus had scored on them...

Their Unbelief and the Tragedy of Unbelief Today

Jesus of course had “scored” on His own disciples many times. He had caught them in inconsistency, short-sightedness, even hypocrisy. But because they believed in Him and knew He loved them they learned to listen to His teachings even if they made them uncomfortable. And while the occasional Pharisee or priest WOULD come to Jesus with an open and teachable heart, most did not. Their reaction to Jesus was simple *unbelief*. They were interested in this passage in Mark in cornering this Nazareth agitator and miracle-worker. And in 12:12 we read **they were seeking to seize Him**. They had had quite enough of His “perspective.”

So often today, with all the complicated issues in front of us, and there are many, it comes down (I believe) to simple unbelief. A person is either open to the authority of Christ, or he is not. It can be that simple. Jesus had quite a résumé of well-attested miracles, and still many did not believe in Him. Jesus had a 4.0 “grade point average” when it came to passing intellectual or legal tests. And still many did not believe in Him. Jesus was always the perfect blend of kindness and straightforwardness in dealing with people, and STILL many would not believe in Him. If not Jesus as Messiah, then who? Many would say, “Anyone BUT Jesus” because of the simple but deep and tragic matter of unbelief.

People want to defend homosexuality and abortion and cohabitation and many other immoral behaviors and they say, “Who’s to say these are wrong?”

God says so in His Word. “Well, I’m not so sure I believe that.” People want to accept any or all religions as at least partially valid. The Bible doesn’t validate that. “Well, I’m not so sure the Bible is right.” People deny that hell exists and they say, “A God who judges is no god at all” despite the plain revelation in the Word that God will judge sin and that hell is a very real place. They say, “Well, I don’t believe in a god like that.” Unbelief is the issue. The Sanhedrin refused to accept that Jesus was Messiah, NOT for lack of evidence but because they just didn’t want to believe in Him. It is tragic. It was tragic then and it is tragic now.

How Does this Passage Speak to Us?

Now, I heard some messages on the radio recently, one on anxiety, another on “being all God wants you to be.” Those are fine things but sometimes I wonder if anyone just studies the life of Jesus for itself? I love doing that. And I always find relevance in the life of our Savior. Here’s a few things I think this passage says to us:

1. Our Jesus is wonderfully brilliant. That may go without saying but from time to time in our culture I see Jesus depicted as something other than brilliant. But I am greatly encouraged every time in Scripture I see the Lord showing His great wisdom and insight and perception. And in His brilliance we can see deeper about life than we normally would. When He spoke, new things opened up. It is no wonder that in the earliest days of the church, it wasn’t just the facts about Jesus that were circulating around word of mouth, it was His sayings too.

2. Jesus’ life was marked by surprises. You think a certain thing is going to end up happening, and something completely different happens. Those are the great ironies in His life. I think the Christian life is a chain of ironies too. If you really walk by faith, you will be led to all kinds of unexpected discoveries of His grace and providence. You can see this if you read the missionary letters we get. The Christian life is SUPPOSED to be full of surprises. We make a mistake if we try to be so controlling and safe-guarding that we eliminate all the surprises.

3. Taking the question of the baptism of John the Baptist, we ought to always be willing to evaluate our own ceremonies. Is our practice of believer’s baptism from heaven or from men? Is the Lord’s Table something we do, that was invented by men or from God? Is marriage just man-made, or from heaven? Hopefully the important ceremonies, the ones that really involve God, were invented BY God.

4. We will spend the rest of our lives dealing with the question of authority. For us as Christians we have decided that our ultimate authority in matters of faith and how to live, is the Word of God. If God has spoken on a matter, we listen to that. And we make decisions and choices according to His Word. We intelligently choose to submit ourselves to the authority of Scripture.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 52)

Scripture: Mark 12:1-17

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 19th, 2006



And He Began to Speak...and They Were Amazed at Him

Mark 12:1-17 (NASB)

¹ AND He began to speak to them in parables: "A man PLANTED A VINEYARD, AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. ² "And at the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive *some* of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. ³ "And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ "And again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. ⁵ "And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so with* many others, beating some, and killing others. ⁶ "He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷ "But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' ⁸ "And they took him, and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*'; ¹¹ THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?" ¹² And they were seeking to seize Him; and *yet* they feared the multitude; for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And *so* they left Him, and went away. ¹³ And they *sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him, in order to trap Him in a statement. ¹⁴ And they *came and *said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ "Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." ¹⁶ And they brought *one*. And He *said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.

Introduction Commissioned in 1936, the RMS Queen Mary was the most awe-inspiring ocean-going vessel in the world. She was 1,019 feet long, at 81,237 tons displaced twice the tonnage of the Titanic, had 12 decks (the promenade deck was 724 feet long), and carried 1,957 passengers attended by a crew of 1,174. Transformed from a luxury liner to a troop transport in World War II she carried 765,429 members of the military to and from the European war zones. The Queen Mary was retired from regular passenger service in 1967 after making 1,001 Atlantic Ocean crossings, and is presently harbored in the port of Long Beach, California. Even today, her magnificent and gleaming exterior cuts a beautiful profile against the blue waters of the Long Beach harbor. But when the Queen Mary was retired from active passenger service, it was discovered that part of her gleaming exterior was hiding something far less attractive and substantial. The Queen Mary's three elliptical smoke stacks--36 feet long, 23 feet wide, and ranging from 70 down to 62 feet in height--were made of sheets of steel over an inch thick. During her decades of service, at least 30

coats of paint had been applied to the massive smokestacks, forming a shell around the steel interior. But when the smokestacks were removed for maintenance after her decommissioning, it was discovered that they were nothing but shells. When lifted off the liner and placed on the docks, they crumbled! Over the years, the thick steel of which they had been made had turned to rust from long exposure to heat and moisture. The beautiful exteriors of the smokestacks revealed a rusty, crumbly interior that spoke not of beauty and elegance but of deterioration and decay. The external appearance was hiding the internal reality. . . . Jesus encountered a situation in Jerusalem where the same inconsistency was present. The Pharisees lives had apparently become like the Queen Mary's smokestacks--gleaming on the outside, rusty on the inside. "Hypocrites," Jesus called them (Matt. 23:25-28). They were like dishes that were polished until they shone on the outside, but inside had the grease and crumbs from yesterday's feast festering and attracting flies. They were like the tombs outside the city wall that camouflaged the resting places of dead people's bones with coats of bright whitewash. Gleaming on the outside, gruesome on the inside. . . . Paul said the Jews, the most privileged people spiritually on earth, had become spiritually hypocritical. And he said that God's name was being blasphemed among the Gentiles because of it (Rom. 2:24). . . ."¹

The passage before us includes this parable indicting the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, and then a little dialogue Jesus had with a bunch of feisty religious leaders. On the timeline of "Holy Week," things are heating up. We're into a section of Mark's gospel which is largely SPEECH. The time of demonstration and Jesus' authenticating who He said He was with action is now past. And so we look at many words in this section. Which gives us a chance to step aside for a minute, and look at consider the idea here that a big part of our faith is verbal. It is driven by ideas which in turn are driven by words. The passage begins with ***And He began to speak to them in parables...*** and it ends with ***and they were amazed at Him.*** I am sorry. Some days, that is just enough for me. I am content to just daydream about that. His speech was always just right for the moment. His ideas were crisp. His vocabulary was appropriate. His word-pictures were understandable.

Words are a vital thing in our lives. Words communicate ideas and ideas are what make us who we are. The word-exchange in this passage is not safe, though. Jesus' words are not safe. They are words of severe discipline about the state of the hypocrisy in Jerusalem. This is the kind of parable that a liberal preacher would rather not talk about. In fact, I don't think anyone wants to think about the darkness of hypocrisy.

And when it comes to the important things it is good to insist on intelligent, meaningful talk. Christianity is not *just* about talking, but it is heavily dependent on ideas in speech. Words communicate ideas, and all the variations on ideas. Words can educate and they can encourage. They can build up and strengthen

¹ Illustration from www.bible.org

a person. They can also tear a person down. Words can confuse. They can distract. Words can do a lot of things and even control the kinds of decisions.

If you do a word-study in the New Testament just on the word, **words** you come up with some remarkable statements. For instance,

Jesus said, (Mark 13:31) **Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.**

In John 3:34 Jesus said, **For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.**

In John 6:63 we have recorded more of Jesus words, ABOUT words: **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.**

There was something unique and powerful in the words that Jesus used. Not magical. But uniquely wise and powerful. Christians really need to become word-smiths, aware of the impact of words we use.

In Ephesians 5:6 Paul wrote, **Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

He also told the Thessalonians (I Thess. 4:18) to USE the words he had said about the second coming of Christ to comfort one another: **Therefore comfort one another with these words.**

On the other hand we can get too picky about words too, and then they become a harm, as Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:4,5: **If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.**

Also important is what Paul said in Colossians 4:6 **Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.**

Now I do not think this means we have to be serious, sour-faced intellectuals all the time. Balance always testifies well to the presence of Christ in our lives. And I personally believe there's lots of room for humor and light-heartedness. But care should be given that we do not wander too far and we should be mindful of edification ALL the time.

The controversy Jesus was dealing with was driven by words, and how they were used. Jesus talked a parable to ILLUSTRATE the true condition of the

Jewish leaders who were criticizing Him. Jesus told this story to show that **THEY** were like the ***vine-growers***. Can you imagine the boldness and daring of our Lord who, in this veiled and yet very clear way threw this parable right into their teeth! He is describing to them who they are, and what they are doing. And, indirectly, he is answering their question, "By what authority do you do these things?" He says, "Here is my authority: I am the owner of the vineyard. I am the rightful heir to it. I am the beloved Son whom the Father has sent. You've killed the prophets, stoned and beat those who came from God; now here I am, the Son." And he told these men what they would do: They would beat him, kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard. Jesus is under no delusions as to what is going to happen to him. But then he goes on to predict what would ultimately happen, that God has the final answer.²

Theirs is a false religious authority that presumes to dictate, and to usurp power and authority that was never rightfully theirs. **IT WAS HYPOCRISY OF THE WORST KIND**. Jesus makes this crystal clear. But he says, "That is not the end. When human authorities act that way, you can remember that God is not yet through." And what he said here actually took place. On the day of resurrection, the one whom the builders rejected indeed became the foundation of the corner. As the resurrected Lord he stood with his disciples and said, "All power, all power in heaven and on earth has been given unto me," (Matthew 28:18b). He is the Lord of everything, in control of history, the ultimate determiner of all that happens in human affairs.³

Forty years later, Roman armies came in, surrounded the city of Jerusalem and captured it, and the chief priests, the scribes and the elders were led away in chains into captivity, to be dispersed among the nations. God did exactly what he said he would do in this parable. This is a lesson to us, and to all who read this account, that man's authority is always limited, and can never be equated with God's rule and authority in the affairs of men. Men's authority is always limited as to duration. Men can sit on the seat of unrighteous, unjust power for just so long, and then something happens to sweep them out of office.

But as the entrapment maneuver shows—Jesus turning the trick against his inquisitors—In fact we have responsibilities **TO** our government. As ruthless as Rome could be, isn't it interesting that Jesus commands that appropriate tribute and civil respect be given to the government. For us, it is no less so. What is due Caesar, we should give to "him." I think that means we do not evade income taxes and we do not look for ways to break the law.

² Ray Stedman <http://www.pbc.org/dp/stedman/mark/3323.html>

³ Stedman, *Ibid.*

Although people have sometimes wondered, authority over people is a matter that God takes seriously. He cares how people are treated. And He cares that civil order and a healthy society are things PROMOTED by the Christians in it, not undermined by them.

We also see, in some of these Jewish leaders that overly rationalistic people are usually opposed to Christianity. The Sadducees were the rationalists of their day. They didn't believe that there IS a resurrection of the body. If you can't see it, they wouldn't believe in it. But our faith—the same as the apostles and the same set of beliefs put forward by Jesus—goes beyond the merely “rational.” What can be more “irrational” than dealing with demons? Or than speaking to a sea storm directly and getting results? Or than commanding disease to just leave? No, our faith is driven by the God-man and we have attached ourselves to the hope that He offered. It looks crazy perhaps to the pure rationalist.

Finally are you aware that our faith will meet with opposition? That is ultimately because of the ideas that we hold to and promote. What ideas? We hold that

1. Jesus was and is completely impartial in all His dealings. He does not favor one group over another. He did not favor the advantaged or the recognized leaders, nor does He today. And, He did not enable the downtrodden. He was just as likely to show mercy to a tax-collector as to one of His disciples. He affirmed a centurion as quickly as He might a repentant prostitute and more than one Pharisee received mercy from Him. He did not favor men over women, business owners over laborers. His sense of justice was *utterly* fair and objective.
2. Jesus is the King of the whole earth and His regency transcends the centuries and time itself. There is no other King. He is the one Savior that there is, and He invites us to trust in Him exclusively for reconciliation with God.
3. Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. He didn't look like much in dress or ceremony when He was here but He was nonetheless the chosen One. He fulfilled every expectation there was to be pronounced Messiah.
4. We, as Jesus' followers, need to be forthright in what we believe. We should not be clever or stealthy. We should be plain speaking and even blunt, though always charitable and kind. The world may not like this idea of transparency and may oppose or subvert it.
5. He is coming again. He rose from the dead and He ascended into heaven and He will come again and set up a Kingdom against which no one can prevail, even if they wanted to.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 53)

Scripture: Mark 12:18-27

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 26th, 2006

The Evil of Unbelief...Or, When Marriage Will Be Irrelevant

Mark 12:18-27 (NASB)

¹⁸ And *some* Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) *came to Him, and *began* questioning Him, saying, ¹⁹ “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES, and leaves behind a wife, AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD TAKE THE WIFE, AND RAISE UP OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER. ²⁰ “There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died, leaving no offspring. ²¹ “And the second one took her, and died, leaving behind no offspring; and the third likewise; ²² and *so* all seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. ²³ “In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.” ²⁴ Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God? ²⁵ “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ “But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage about the burning bush*, how God spoke to 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 of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”

Introduction You either DO believe in something more than this life, or you do not. A bumper sticker I saw a while back read, “You’re born, you work, you die.” Basic. Cynical. Common viewpoint today. If you do NOT believe in something more after this life, then your code should be to grab for all you can *here* because this is all there is, and this is all you get. In fact as soon as you die, “you” becomes nothing. A memory, at best.

The passage in front of us is about some very interesting issues: what happens after death, the possible practice of “levirate” marriage in the afterlife, angels, the power of God and rationalism. I can hardly think of a passage packed with more intrigue than this one! We’re still on the Temple mount, with Jesus being cornered, one group after another presenting all kinds of challenges. First it was the crowd, two days before--they wanted to make Him king, on the spot. Then it was the moneychangers and the sellers of sacrificial animals as Jesus made a demonstration of His outrage at their blatant commercialism. Then a group of Pharisees and a group of Herodians, trying to trip Him up. Finally there is this group of Sadducees. To contrast the two groups briefly,

- **The Pharisees** were several thousand fundamentalist Jews who interpreted the Law carefully, and with close attention to tradition. They had no political power and they emphasized their own concepts of purity. They believed strongly in a resurrection of the dead
- **The Sadducees** were urban, wealthy, educated Jews and part of the Temple and priestly aristocracy. They had good relations with the Romans and thus had great political power. But they were the rationalists of their day and were very UNsupernatural. They did not believe in angels and they most certainly did not believe in a resurrection of the dead

This last group came around Jesus and put before Him an utterly ridiculous and even a mocking question: They quote from Moses (Deut.25:5,6), clever don't you think? **Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, and leaves behind a wife, AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD TAKE THE WIFE, AND RAISE UP OFFSPRING TO HIS BROTHER.** ²⁰ **"There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died, leaving no offspring.** ²¹ **"And the second one took her, and died, leaving behind no offspring; and the third likewise;** ²² **and so all seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also.** ²³ **"In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.** We would probably call the Sadducees "rationalists" or "humanists," people who look at everything in a If -I-See-It-I-Believe-In-It kind of way. "I can't see it, I'm not going to believe in it."

We have that viewpoint today. Our culture is kind of schizophrenic in this regard: on the one hand there is this fascination with the macabre, and with the "spirit-world" and with science fantasy. But on the other hand the culture appears to me to be far LESS inclined to just believe in traditional ideas about spiritual realities. We have the Sadducee mindset all around us, I think.

So these fellows cook up this fairly absurd scenario to try to confuse Jesus about Scripture. Can you feel their attitude? The Pharisees, at least, were a little more direct: **By what authority do you do these things?** And, "Caesar, right? So like, do we pay tribute to him?" But these Sadducees have a deeper kind of unbelief happening. You can see that in people today too, I think. There seem to be levels of not believing. There's nervous belief, (perhaps like the Dad whose son was demon possessed, **I do believe. Help my unbelief**, Mark 9:24) which is a basic willingness to believe the Gospel. There's half-and-half doubting, a willingness to believe in the POTENTIAL that the Christian tale is true. I think Nicodemus, at the point of John 3:2 might be a biblical example). There's skepticism, with some acknowledgement of the ancientness of Christian tradition but hesitation to believe that we have much of the true story. In the New Testament this would probably be the teacher Gamaliel (Acts 5). Then there's basic disbelief, which is evil in deepest form. These Sadducees were of that kind. They were determined to not believe Jesus' claims. And this silly story they try to trap Jesus with, as Jesus evaluates it, just completely reveals their disbelief.

Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God? (verse 24). Jesus is blunt: “You’re wrong and here’s why you’re wrong.” There are two basic and fundamental mistakes in the world of unbelief, and one could say these kick in business, politics, science, family life too—the first as Jesus said it, is ***you do not understand the Scriptures***. “You do not know what a living God knows.” We are a Bible church. Ultimately that is because we want to understand the Scriptures. We want to feature and focus on the Bible. We think that’s the place where you get understanding and discernment and you get light to make decisions by. And we need to know not only Scriptural content but also HOW TO INTERPRET the Scriptures well. That is called “hermeneutics” and if people today had some good hermeneutics they would be far better off. And that’s a big part of the mission of a good Bible church. Help people come to understand the Scriptures.

The second thing Jesus indicted the Sadducees with was ***you do not understand...the power of God***. Hey Sadducees: you do not know what a living God can do. If in their minds, people factor out, they CROSS out the potential to see a powerful God coming to bear on their problems it is no surprise they will be as confused as they are today.

“How do I know which way to go? How do I deal with sickness? What about my need for a home, for a car, for safety, for protection. What about the inner things in my head and heart? Can God help me there?” The Sadducees were quick to dismiss a God who is HERE, who is willing to show His power. And it is something that Jesus zooms in on this with this hypothetical question about “levirate marriage.”

By the way, one commentator noted that Jesus might have been tempted to make fun of it back at them. He could have asked them why they did not investigate her cooking, for example. When a woman has seven husbands one after the other, all of whom die off, something is suspicious in the kitchen! But Jesus doesn’t go there. He is not in a playful mood...

Now in verse 25 we have some fascinating news. ***For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.*** First of all, be assured, Jesus indicates, the dead WILL rise. Rationalists will be very disappointed on that day when all of a sudden they are alive again. I’m not sure where rationalists go until then—hell presumably—but on that day their UNbelief in the afterlife is going to look pretty silly. ***WHEN*** they rise from the dead, ***they neither marry nor are given in marriage***. “Marriage was designed by God for companionship and the perpetuation of the human race on the earth. Jesus was emphasizing the fact that in heaven there will be no exclusive or sexual relationships. Believers will experience an entirely new existence in which they will have perfect spiritual relationships with everyone

else.¹ The implication is that one of the major reasons for marriage is to carry on the race. (Homosexuals cannot do that, by the way, and thus a major reason to oppose homosexual “marriage” is that it just makes no sense.) But in heaven there won’t be any need to carry on the race because there won’t be any death. As far as the companionship reason for marriage, you will be perfectly in companionship with everyone.

Now I know what some of you are thinking. You’re thinking, “Hey, I don’t want to be in companionship with everyone else. I’m a solitary kind of person, you know.” Or you might be thinking, “Hey, I like the closeness and the thrill of marriage.” Well let me assure you that when you get to heaven, you will be perfectly delighted with the arrangements. You will have a new body. You will have a new mind and a new heart. You will be free of sin and any sinful tendencies at all. You will be best friends with all the saints. You will never run out of time. You will not grow old and dysfunctional. You will not get hurt or disappointed. You will not be misunderstood. You will not lack for the right words. And you will not get bored. Then, marriage will be clearly a thing of this world.

And Jesus goes out of His way to say, ***but are like angels in heaven*** which of course smarted in the faces of the Sadducees who officially did not BELIEVE in angels. Angels “are deathless and live in a different order of existence where they have no need for marital relations or reproduction of offspring. Their lives center totally around fellowship with God. So it will be in the afterlife for human beings rightly related to God.”² Please notice that Jesus did not say that people in the resurrection will BECOME angels. But as regards relationships, they will be LIKE angels. It is a small distinction but important I think. We shall remain who we are. We will not lose identity, just be redeemed and completely changed. We will enjoy the immortal state that angels have always had. There is a fascinating thing that the apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 6:2,3: ***Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? ³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?*** I cannot guess all that it means. But it indicates that ***the saints***—and that is all believers—will have some kind of role distinct from angels themselves, even something supervisory.

The Sadducees did not grasp that God will establish a whole new order of life after death and resolve all apparent difficulties connected with it. In short, their question was irrelevant. The Sadducees wrongly alleged that the idea of a resurrection was absent from the Pentateuch. But Jesus, using a question

¹MacArthur, John Jr. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed., Mk 12:25. Nashville: Word Pub. c1997.

²Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985.

expecting a positive answer, appealed to **the Book of Moses**, the Pentateuch, and spoke of **the burning bush** (Ex. 3:1-6). In this passage God identified Himself to Moses, affirming, **I am the God of Abraham . . . Isaac, and . . . Jacob** (Ex. 3:6). God implied that the patriarchs were still alive and that He had a continuing relationship with them as their covenant-keeping God, even though they had died long before. This demonstrates, Jesus concluded, that **He is not the God of the dead**, in the Sadducean understanding of death as extinction, **but of the living**. He is still the patriarchs' God which would not be true had they ceased to exist at death, that is, if death ends it all. And His covenant faithfulness implicitly guarantees their bodily resurrection.³

Isn't it exciting to be a Christian? As a Christian, I have tied my whole belief system to Jesus Christ and what He taught. He taught that there is a life after death and that it will be incredible. It will not end. It only gets better and better. And the way "in" to that eternal life is to trust Him PERSONALLY now. You see, you don't get in just because you go to church or just because your Mom or Dad is a Christian. You get in free of charge IF you personally place your faith in Him. He offers complete forgiveness of ALL your sins, once and for all, by you

First of all, believing that you need a Savior. And
Second of all by trusting in Him to BE your Savior.

That may seem obvious if you grew up in the church. But as soon as you reach 18 or 20 or 22, you will find that the world offers other ways to believe. You will find no other way to heaven but through Jesus Christ. If you have not yet really trusted in Him, you can do it at any time. He will respond to you. He will start you on the first day of eternity. And you will be with Him and with all the saints together, in heaven, forever.

³Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck, *Ibid.*

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 54)

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: April 9th, 2006



The Last Question on the Test

Mark 12:28-34 (NASB)

²⁸ And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; ³⁰ AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' ³¹ "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³² And the scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher, You have truly stated that HE IS ONE; AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; ³³ AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

Introduction Once again, we are on the Temple Mount or somewhere near by. Jesus has been in discussions, sometimes disputes with various people on that last Tuesday before Good Friday. He was met on the previous Sunday by a crowd of Passover pilgrims, mainly down from the Galilee. He was confronted by the Pharisees and challenged about His power and authority. The Sadducees snidely tried to trap Him with a trick question (which He expertly countered with a blunt assessment of their *complete* failure to grasp the Scriptures OR the power of God. And then there's a single **scribe** nearby, watching these discussions, who brings up **THE LAST QUESTION ON THE TEST FOR JESUS...** "What is most important? What is highest priority? ***What commandment is foremost of all?*** The rabbis counted 613 commands in the Mosaic Law, 365 positive and 248 negative. They recognized that all were not equally important or equally foundational. They debated which were the "heavy" commands and which were the "light" ones.¹

Jesus answers with the "Great Shema," the 4th verse of the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy: ***'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; ³⁰ and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,***

¹Tom Constable. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 12:28, Galaxie Software, 2003.

and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' He is going to say that people need to have clear thinking on three things. The first is in their duty to love God Himself. The second is that people who are truly kingdom minded will understand that the king expects them to love each other. The third is not a teaching but an illustration of the truth that coming into the kingdom for some, is a process. Today, with all the pressure and the busyness and complexity of modern life you might wonder, "how can I ever handle it all? Where do I begin?" What do you do first? Where do you go from there? Now, I don't think Mark was thinking about US when he wrote down what happened that day on the Temple Mount. But Jesus said some things to this scribe that apply to us today just as they did in His day or in Moses' day when he wrote what God had said in the greatest commandment and in the second greatest commandment...

So first, the person who has entered the Kingdom will recognize and practice

I. as Christian Priority One

a. **Hear** – Every pious Jew would repeat the entire passage of Scripture every morning and every evening. (Num. 15:37–41; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21). That's how important God's people of old considered God's call to them. Top priority for us too should be to hear His voice. HEAR is not just a command to be memorized and repeated to yourself over and over and over. It is an invitation to listen to a God who desires to communicate with us. And the first thing He communicates is that He is the only God there is!

b. **One God—The Lord is our God; the Lord is one.** Mark has this but Matthew does not. This is probably because Mark is writing more specifically to a Roman readership and many of them were NOT monotheists before. It is vital to GOD for people to understand that He is the only God. Christians are monotheists, even in a pluralistic world. Today it is becoming increasingly unpopular for Christians to insist that their God is the only God. We are thought to be intolerant, bigoted, narrow-minded and even crazy. Know that it will only intensify, I believe. But also know that we are simply maintaining what God has always insisted that His people maintain—His singular deity. He made it clear to Moses some 3,400 years ago. Jesus made it clear again 2,000 years ago. And nothing has changed in heaven since then. America may rise and fall, as do all nations, and the Lord will be our God and the Lord will remain one.

c. **Love Him**—Here is what we are to do with our God. We are to love Him. This passage uses the word "love" twice. First, we are to love God with our whole being. It isn't legalism that God wants. The Pharisees and scribes had that lifestyle down. It was a love for God. It is to love Him in the morning, in the noontime and to love Him at suppertime. It is to make your most important decisions with obedience and service to Him at heart and to make EACH DAY a pursuit of Him. It is to fight the fight against sin because you care about what

God thinks. It is to wait on Him by faith because you think He will bring His resources to bear for your best interests.

I remember at this point the Bible reference that Renée and I had inscribed in our wedding bands in the weeks before we were married in 1975. It is the reference 1 John 4:19. Those words from the apostle John read, ***We love because He first loved us.*** And we love God, we try to love Him, not just out of duty or raw obedience but because He first loved US! How has He left us unloved? When has He abandoned you? When has He left this world without a Messiah and without a Savior? In Old Testament times, the Lord made it clear over and over that He wasn't just after people *going* to church or *tithing* or *attending* some special event or rendering mere outward obedience in any of the outward demonstrations of worship:

1 Samuel 15:22 ***And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.***

Hosea 6:6 ***For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.***

Amos 5:21-24 ***"I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. ²² "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. ²³ "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. ²⁴ "But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.***

Micah 6:6-8 ***With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? ⁷ Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?***

God wants His people to love Him. And Jesus underscores that on the Temple mount to this scribe. **DO YOU LOVE GOD TODAY?** If you do, do not hesitate to say it to yourself. We sing it often enough. But do you feel it? In your mind, is He worthy of your highest devotion? Does He deserve a little time from you in His word and in prayer? Does He deserve your making Him high on your list of things to do? Does He deserve your cultivating and figuring out what it means to practice gratefulness? Does He deserve to be loved for what He has done for you? If you look into your mind, and you find that you know a certain amount *about* Him, is He worth learning a little MORE about Him? And last, do you just love Him in your feelings? Do you want to be with Him? Do you want to know what His plan is for your life? Do you want to see if there are good and effective and intelligent ways, to tell OTHER people about Him?

- i. **All your heart**—the Great Shema, called God’s people to love Him with all their hearts. That is the **control-center**, the **headquarters** of where we make our most important decisions.
 - a. Young people, this translates “big time” into who you will choose to spend your life with. God wants you to choose someone who loves God, not someone who just gives lip-service to God. For YOU to love God with all your heart means that you will only allow another HUMAN into your heart who loves the Lord.
 - b. For all of us, this means that we will give God the BEST of our time, not some scrap of leftover.
 - c. We must guard our hearts and WANT to serve God and FEEL love for Him which reaches into how we make daily decisions. No legalistic obedience can make this happen.
 - d. The story is told of an English gentleman, a knighted member of Parliament in fact, who invited some guests over for dinner to his manor. The guests noticed in the corner of the dining room an old dog, laying there and watching his master. As they sat down at the table for a beautiful roast beef dinner, the master carved off thick slabs of beef for each guest and carefully laid them on expensive china plates and passed one to each guest. As they began to dine, the master took his knife and carved off a small piece and placed it on the bread plate. He then got up from the table and took his china dinner plate with most of his slab of beef on it and placed it in front of the old dog. The guests of course noticed this and one asked, “Sir William, how does the old cur deserve such treatment?” “Ah, my friends, I love this animal. His name is Sir Giles. And ten years ago he pulled me unconscious from my burning stable. He is my best friend and my serving of supper is the least I can do.”
- ii. **All your soul**—our souls are the deepest part of us as humans. This is where we are Who We Are. It is that part of us which is most self-conscious. We are to love God THERE where and in those aspects that are most private and personal and who I AM.
- iii. **All your mind**—Our mental capacities and activities WILL show whether we love God or not. I think few things today must be more offensive to God than when the intellectuals of our land call for Him to step aside. “Move over God. You are no longer acknowledged as Creator. We know that evolution has taken over. Stand aside God, because a few people think you don’t exist, and we don’t want to offend them, you have no place or mention in our schools. We would craft law and corollary WITHOUT you.” On the other hand, nothing excites me more than the student or the professor who, alongside their great intellect and energy to learn is the looking for where God’s fingerprints are in their science!
- iv. **All your strength**—This is the bodily powers that we have. We use them to get up and go to work. We use them to garden and

landscape. We use them to ski and snowboard and fish. We use them to play baseball and soccer and basketball. We use them to climb mountains and deepsea dive. We use them to make money and go to entertainment functions. But the man or woman who loves God will use his or her ENERGIES to serve the Lord who loves us so much! He will help the people of God physically, any way he can. He will make decisions, create room in his heart, give his time and energy for the service of a kingdom ruled by the ONE God. This is the greatest commandment.

II. Christian Priority Two

Love your neighbor as yourself—this is such a simple command. I happen to love myself quite a lot. And the Lord calls me to love you at least that much. If I make sure my body gets some rest, I need to accommodate and help you likewise. If I make sure I get a bite to eat a few times a day, I need to make sure you get the same. If I make sure I have a place to sit or a place to park, it is REAL important to God that I love you at least that much. This is the second greatest commandment, Jesus told the scribe.

Love is not just a word to write on a plaque and put on your wall. Love is what you do to people that irritate you, when you are upset and angry and hostile and feel like striking back. You start with God. Remember his love to you. Remember his forgiving spirit, how he wipes out everything without requiring anything from you. Respond to it and immediately pass it on to the one you are involved with. Love toward God is the most important thing in our life. Jesus is right when he says loving God is top priority. Everything else will flow from that love, but if you put anything else first, the whole process will soon run dry.²

III. The third thing that Jesus made clear on the plaza, to the scribe was that all of that isn't quite enough to get into the kingdom. That's really something! Those two commandments—if I loved God and I loved my neighbor—are not quite enough to get me into the kingdom. You also need Jesus Christ in your life. Coming into the Kingdom for some, is a process. It doesn't happen overnight. Oh, I believe that each person who is a Christian DID have a point in time when they became saved. They made a commitment to Christ, personally and secretly and individually. But it was the conclusion of a process for some. They START to understand. They START to get it and that grows.

APPLICATIONS:

1. When you plan your week, is the Lord the first thing on your list of what's important?

² Ray Stedman, <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/3324.html>

2. Are you giving attention to nurturing in your life a love for God? Do you reserve enough of your energy and time and attention for Him? I know you like music. But do you listen to people teaching about Him? I know you like .mp3s. But do you download some podcasts of good sermons from speakers that you like? I know you're busy and you've got money to make and knowledge to acquire. Do you make time to serve others? That is important to the God you claim to know. I don't mean because Momma or Daddy or an elder is watching. I mean when you're by yourself?

3. Though you might be a proud member of some organization, a faculty, a medical team, a sports or music association, do you look at yourself as FIRST a disciple of Jesus Christ and all other allegiances are secondary to that? That will affect your decision-making sometimes.

4. Are you so in love with the Lord that you will not allow any other person to distract or downgrade or compromise or dilute your love for Him? Not a boss, not a girlfriend or boyfriend, not a spouse, not a brother or sister and not even a good friend?

Dartmouth

Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 55)

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: April 16th, 2006 (Easter)

The First Feelings on the First Easter

Mark 16:1-8 (NASB)

¹ AND when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, they *came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they *saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. ⁶ And he *said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is* the place where they laid Him. ⁷ "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.'" ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Introduction The army of Napoleon Bonaparte had advanced to within six miles of the Austrian town of Feldkirch. The mountain village was undefended, and unless help arrived, it would fall without a struggle. As Napoleon made plans to attack the following morning, Christians gathered o pray together in the little church in the center of the town. It was the night before Easter Sunday, 1805. At sunrise, the bells of the little church began to ring. The sound of those bells echoed among the mountains and reached the ears of Napoleon. It never occurred to Napoleon that this day was Easter Sunday. When he heard the bells ringing, he mistook them for bells of celebration, He thought that the people of the town were celebrating the arrival of the Austrian army. Immediately Napoleon canceled the planned attack and moved his troops away from Feldkirch. The town was saved because the enemy heard the

[1]

sound of Easter joy and retreated. Just in turn, Death is in full retreat from what happened today, in Jerusalem about 1,977 years ago.

Well, this is always a straightforward message to prepare because both you and I pretty much know what I'm going to preach about. Today, we celebrate the "Risen Savior, who's in the world today!" We go through life and we order our lives, on the assumption that we "know that He is living whatever

men may say.” All for us, stands or falls with that belief. If Jesus really and truly did NOT rise from the dead then we are of all people on the earth the most to be pitied. Paul wrote that if that is the case, ***your faith is worthless,***

[2]

you are still in your sins . So here we are again, singing, imagining the scene and declaring our belief in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today I want to take us into the garden along with Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. And the feelings on that first resurrection Sunday morning were more in line with what we would associate with Halloween than they were with Easter! These three women were not thinking like we do, having known and understood about the resurrection and enjoying a deep and ancient tradition of that doctrine. I can only imagine that they were in a state of triple-shock, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. There Jesus was, as His cross was pulled down—dead. Bloody dead! And they were around late Friday afternoon as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and a few others quietly undertook the business of entombing Jesus of Nazareth. One can only imagine that their conversation had waned by Sabbath’s end on Saturday night... What was there to say? It was the deepest, blackest feeling of gloom and despair. Any of them or ALL of them would have gladly sacrificed her own life if it would have kept Jesus alive... SO we take up the story in Mark 16, on Sunday morning...

¹ AND when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

Obviously they did not understand that Jesus would rise from the dead. “In the final scenes, in Jerusalem, **the little people** [i.e., the minor characters in Mark’s story] exemplify especially the teaching about being ‘servant of all.’ Earlier, Jesus served others. Now in his time of need others serve him: Simon the leper receives him in his house; a woman anoints him with ointment worth a worker’s annual salary; Simon Cyrenean takes up his cross; Joseph takes his body from the cross and buries him; and a group of women go to the tomb to anoint him after his death. These actions are acts of service done for Jesus by people who courageously sacrifice or risk something—^[3] money or arrest or reputation—to carry them out. . . .

First, they were dominated by a feeling of FRUSTRATION. HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET INTO THE TOMB? They did not know that a political situation had occurred (Matthew 27:62-66). A Roman “guard,” a squad of soldiers had been assigned to seal and guard the tomb. The women knew none of this but only that a large rolling stone at the entrance to the tomb would have stood between them and their act of desperate love.

I think it is hard for us to feel their frustration. On they went, spices in hand, in the early morning dark not thinking, “we’ll deal with the stone when we get there,” apparently.

Then, AMAZEMENT as they found (verse 4) that the **stone had been rolled away**. Not what they were expecting, at all!

⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. ⁶ And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him. ⁷ “But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.’”

Mark’s few details of the tomb’s occupant are interesting: although he doesn’t bluntly tell us—and that is even more compelling—the apparent angel is male-looking and young-looking. Their reaction is amazement. And the angel says, “Do not be amazed.” Oh right, Mr. Angel, we see this kind of thing every day!” I don’t think the angel is telling them somehow to deny their feelings, but more that they should not be surprised that what was happening is what Jesus had told them would happen. As if to say, “Don’t be surprised that this is as it should be. He isn’t here. He has risen.” **Just as He said to you** (verse 7b).

And he gives them a little tour of the tomb. In Jerusalem, when you go to the “garden tomb,” which is probably NOT the actual tomb of Christ, but probably IS a genuine first century tomb... They point out the stone bed, with the place for the head and the place for the feet. They tour guides are very specific about that. Just as the angel was!

You can hardly blame Mary, Mary and Salome. They are in complete **flabbergastment!** This is not your typical Easter-morning feeling. It is total surprise. When was the last time you felt this emotion? I don’t go after it, myself. I like things predictable, I like to see what’s coming and be emotionally “in charge” of myself.

Third, was the final true Resurrection-morning feeling: FEAR – they fled from the tomb **trembling and astonishment had gripped them**. It was a fifteen minute experience that would change their lives. No one would ever be able to tell ANY of them that the body had been somehow stolen away by Peter or John. Or that Jesus was only wounded and in a coma. They knew he was dead, they knew that his corpse had been entombed and they knew that now the body was gone. And some kind of awesome and terrifying agent had told them that He was ALIVE!!!!

Joy did not set in yet. We approach Easter with joy and celebration and a

silly merging of new-life and Springtime feelings of renewal. Mary and Mary and Salome knew none of that. Their first resurrection-feelings were frustration, amazement and fear. Let us not gloss by that too quickly, my friends. The resurrection is a truly awesome thing. In fact, few things deserve the word “awesome” like the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But the sweetness of their joy would start soon enough. Mark was not led of the Spirit to record those events and the genesis of joy. Matthew, Luke and John would take up that task. Mark ends abruptly. **They said nothing to anyone, they were afraid.** And if that indeed is where Mark laid down his pen, it seems an almost certain prelude that he suspected or even knew that others would finish the story. (The words of verses 9-20 are highly disputed as they are not in the oldest manuscripts.)^[4]

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important belief in the Christian system of belief. It is an incredible truth to grasp and let sink in. It is the basis for all the promises that Jesus made to ALL who would embrace Him by faith. It is the basis of His unique claim to be THE Savior of the world. It is the basis of this wonderful world-wide fellowship and family of Christians which we call The Church.

If you embrace it, by faith, and really allow the amazement and wonder of it to sink in to your mind and heart, it will change you. It is this doctrine, once I heard it really expounded, that changed my life. It is pure wonderment and power. It is what He offers us, free of charge, for the believing in it.

It makes you want to tell other people about it. You may or may not DO that, but you WANT to. May we each have some fresh opportunities this week to tell someone—perhaps unexpected—**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you** (1 Peter 1.3.4).

[1]

Ray Stedman, *The Ruler Who Serves*, p. 271.

[2]

I Corinthians 15:7

[3]

Tom Constable. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 16:1. Galaxie Software, 2003.

[4]

Dr. Thomas Constable summarizes: “Some interpreters believe Mark ended his Gospel

with verse 8. This seems unlikely since if he did he ended it with an example of disciples too fearful and amazed to bear witness to the resurrected Jesus. Throughout this Gospel we have noted many unique features that appeal to disciples to serve God by bearing bold witness to Jesus even in spite of persecution and suffering. The women's example would hardly be a good example for Mark to close his Gospel with.

The ending of Mark's Gospel is one of the major textual problems in the New Testament. The main reason some interpreters regard verses 9–20 as spurious is this. The two oldest Greek uncial manuscripts of the New Testament (fourth century), Codex Sinaiticus (*Aleph*) and Codex Vaticanus (B), plus many other old manuscripts, do not contain them. Moreover the writings of some church fathers reflect no knowledge of these verses. On the other hand, verses 9–20 do appear in the majority of the old manuscripts, and other church fathers refer to them.⁴¹² Some interpreters believe the vocabulary, style, and content of these verses argue against Mark's authorship of them.⁴¹³ This has led many modern scholars to conclude that verses 9–20 were not part of Mark's original Gospel.⁴¹⁴

However the abruptness of the end of the Gospel, if it ended with verse 8, has convinced most scholars that there must have been another ending that disappeared early in church history. Many who hold this view also believe the early church supplied verses 9–20 to provide a smoother conclusion to the Gospel. Many evangelicals believe that the present ending is the inspired one, and for reasons presently unknown to us it was not a part of existing copies of some very old manuscripts.⁴¹⁵ Another evangelical view is that Mark ended his Gospel with verse 8, or his ending beyond verse 8 was lost. Someone else or others compiled an ending out of accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances under divine inspiration and added them to form an appropriate ending to Mark's Gospel.⁴¹⁶ I favor the former evangelical view, though the more basic issue is the inspiration of verses 9–20.⁴¹⁷ I believe these verse are divinely inspired." *Tom Constable's Expository Notes ont the Bible*. www.soniclight.com

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 56)

Scripture: Mark 12:35-44

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: June 11th, 2006



Fame, Fame-Cravers and One Who Was Oblivious

Mark 12:35-44 (NASB)

³⁵ And Jesus answering *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, "How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT THINE ENEMIES BENEATH THY FEET.'" ³⁷ "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; and so in what sense is He his son?" And the great crowd enjoyed listening to Him. ³⁸ And in His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and *like* respectful greetings in the market places, ³⁹ and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, ⁴⁰ who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation." ⁴¹ And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. ⁴³ And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

Introduction One thing I have always thought was interesting is how mountain gorillas cup their hands and pound on their chest to attract attention or warn off other gorillas. I think people do this in a way too. We "beat our chests" to get people to give us acclaim or to make it plain that we are impressive! There are people who crave the attention and admiration of others. They crave fame. There is also the occasional person who doesn't crave fame, he just IS fame. His agenda isn't to prove anything, because he doesn't need to. He is, by definition, important. There are also those who are neither famous nor do they crave fame; they are humble, and they just go about their business out of faithfulness. Three very different kinds of people. And these are illustrated in the passage in front of us at the end of Mark 12. The first is Jesus, who IS fame. The second is the person who craves fame. And the third is the person who couldn't care less...

Fame

Mark tells us Jesus asks a question of the Pharisees (Matthew 22:41). And this is not a question that is easy for us to understand. Indeed, I think many of us would just blow by this question. But it establishes Jesus' identity all over again.

How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ “David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT THINE ENEMIES BENEATH THY FEET.”’ ³⁷ “David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; and so in what sense is He his son?

He responded to the situation before Him. He wanted to know the sense in which the teachers of the law believed that Messiah was David’s son. The Old Testament clearly taught that Messiah would be a descendant of King David (2 Sam. 7:8–16; et al), who had lived a thousand years previous. The leaders believed this, but their understanding of Messiah’s relationship to David was only that of another victorious Jewish king from David’s dynasty. Mark focused the readers’ attention on Jesus’ authoritative teaching by omitting the Pharisees’ answer, which Matthew included to discredit them (Matt. 22:42). How could Messiah be both less than David (his son) and more than David (his lord) at the same time? It’s really a cool question and Jesus uses his superior knowledge of the legal and prophetic writings to justify his actions and to defend against criminal accusations. Psalm 110:1 showed that the Messiah was not only David’s junior in age but also his senior in rank. He is the Son of God, God as well as man. Only through the Virgin Birth does Jesus possess the dual nature that allows Him to be both David’s Son and David’s Lord. Mark’s record of the crowd’s positive response to Jesus’ teaching further stressed its authority. Israel’s religious leaders challenged it, but the multitudes acknowledged it.¹ Jesus was pointing out that the title “son of David” did not begin to sum up all that is true about the Messiah who is also “son of God” (Luke 22:70). The inescapable implication is that Jesus was declaring His deity.² The irony is that while the experts cannot answer the apparent contradiction, Jesus himself as the Son of God as well as the son of David is the living answer to the riddle. For those with eyes to see, Jesus speaks with divine authority (“the Lord,” “my Lord,” “the Holy Spirit,” v. 36) and not only enigmatically discloses his divine and human origins but also prophesies through the words of the psalm his coming resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father. Jesus’ messianic kingdom therefore supersedes David’s political domain and the nationalistic expectations of his opponents. His warfare probes deeper into the domain of the dark demonic powers that occupy the space of human beings and of nations; hence his goal as Messiah is to put his enemies underfoot (v. 36). With this veiled affirmation of his messiahship Jesus reaches the high point of authority in his debate with the interpreters of Scripture, placing them under his feet as he assumes in his own person the authority and space of Old Testament religion symbolized by the temple.³

To you and me this may not seem very important or relevant. But for Jesus to establish His absolute identity was extremely important. Messiahship

¹Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mk 12:36.

²John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed., Mt 22:45 (Nashville: Word Pub., c1997).

³Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* ., electronic ed., Mk 12:35 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, c1989).

is not a thing talked about much in modern culture but it is THE issue for Jesus Christ, living in ancient Israel. And you will notice Mark's kind of stuck-in-there observation: **And the great crowd enjoyed listening to Him.** Though they do not understand the deeper implication of what Jesus is doing, the crowd nevertheless listens to him with delight because of his authority over the scribes (v. 37b).⁴

For us, we need to know that Jesus WAS who He said He was. In every sense. There is NO sense in which His identity was unclear or inadequately documented. He is not only the savior of modern Christians, He is the savior for the whole world and in every time. He is also the Chosen One, that ancient Israel waited through long centuries to receive and follow and worship.

I wonder sometimes if we have too low a view of Jesus. We acknowledge His efficiency in paying for our sins. We proclaim and depend upon His death and resurrection. We call out to Him to make our lives happy. But He is also Israel's Messiah first, and then their savior, and then our savior, and then our King. His fame will know no end, one of these days.

Fame-Cravers

Then Mark tell us about what I call the "fame-cravers." Seven features characterize them, according to Mark:

Long robes A long, flowing cloak that essentially trumpeted the wearer as a devout and noted scholar.

greetings. Accolades for those holding titles of honor. formal titles—Rabbi (teacher), master, father.

best seats in the synagogues. The bench in the synagogue nearest the chest where the sacred scrolls were housed—an area reserved for leaders and people of renown (James 2:3) and facing the whole congregation.⁵

Place of honor at banquets. Special evening meals at which they were seated next to the host and received preferential treatment.⁶

What I call "money grubbers," and whom Jesus described as those who **devour widows' houses.** Jesus exposed the greedy, unscrupulous practice of the scribes. Scribes often served as estate planners for widows, which gave them the opportunity to convince distraught widows that they would be serving God by supporting the temple or the scribe's own holy work. In either case, the scribe benefited monetarily and effectively robbed the widow of her husband's legacy to her.

⁴ *Ibid*, Elwell.

⁵ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2:165 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985).

⁶ *Ibid*, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

long prayers. The Pharisees attempted to flaunt their piety by praying for long periods. Their motive was not devotion to God, but a desire to be revered by the people.⁷ Their typically long prayers presented an impression of piety that masked greed. They pretended to love God greatly, but their aim was to get people to love them greatly.⁸

Mark's seventh symptom is his statement about the contributions made at the Treasury (lit., "the receptacle"). **Many** wealthy **people** who gave **large amounts** (lit., "many coins" of all kinds—gold, silver, copper, and bronze). Sometimes they would even have musicians going before them, trumpeting their arrival and contributions. There were 13 trumpet-shaped metal receptacles (Heb. *shofar*) that the priests had placed against a wall of the women's courtyard to receive the Jews' offerings.⁹ The court of the women was within the court of the Gentiles, the outermost court of the temple. A low barrier separated the court of the Gentiles from the other courtyards and the temple building that lay within this enclosure. The court of the women was farther from the temple building than the court of Israel, which only Jewish men could enter, or the court of the priests, which only the priests could enter. Jesus had given His preceding teaching in the court of the Gentiles. Now He evidently moved into the court of the women.¹⁰

Of these Jesus said, **Beware**, a word we rarely seem to use today. This means "to see" or "to watch." It carries the idea of guarding against the evil influence of the scribes.¹¹ Fame-cravers are not just an embarrassment or an annoyance; they are dangerous, and their attitudes are an infectious disease. May the Lord protect us from any such attitude.

Do you notice any similarity between these symptoms of spiritual bankruptcy that Jesus fingers on the Temple mount: robes, greetings, seating, money attitudes? They all have to do with APPEARANCE and what people think about you. When the focus goes off of how God feels about us, we will place it on what our other people think about us.

One Who Was Oblivious

In contrast to the "fame-cravers" is one unnamed **poor widow** who gave **two lepta**. A *lepton* was the smallest bronze Jewish coin in circulation in Palestine. Two *lepta* were worth 1/64 of a Roman denarius, a day's wage for a laborer (6:37). For his Roman readers Mark stated their value in terms of Roman coinage, namely, **a fraction of a penny**.¹² She was oblivious to the notice of

⁷ *Ibid*, MacArthur.

⁸ *Ibid*, Constable.

lit. literal, literally

⁹ *Ibid*, Constable

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Constable

¹¹ *Ibid*, MacArthur

¹² *Ibid*, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

other people. She gave out of her devotion to the Lord. And Jesus commends that as **putting in more** than all the others combined. And He tells us why: **they had given out of surplus, but she out of poverty, all she owned, all she had to live on.** Bible teacher H.L. Willmington put it this way: “The ones who gave much, amounted to little—the one who gave little, amounted to much.”¹³

Now I will be the first to acknowledge that churches today can be very conniving and clever in how they raise money. And church leaders can be downright evil and despicable in their motives. But taking it back to this woman, she just gave as unto the Lord. She didn't say, “They have enough in this magnificent Temple of Herod.” She didn't rationalize, “They don't need my little lepta.” Jesus sees her, and says she is the hero of the hour. She was not letting her right hand know what her left hand was doing (Matthew 6:3). She needed no applause or recognition. She gave sacrificially and cheerfully.

That is how we are to give too. I try to not think too much about giving. I imagine the Lord watching me every week or every time I write a check. This is what I think we are supposed to do with giving. It isn't about what other people think or even know. It is about what God thinks.

Please do not let the comment that Jesus made escape you either. It isn't just the FACT that she gave, it was the fact of giving out of poverty. This is high worship. It is a pleasant aroma to the Lord Himself, not because of some kind of self-abasing asceticism. But because she obviously trusted God to provide for her. This honors the Lord. It says to the Lord, “I love you.” May we crave HIS commendation alone in how we give and how we treat each other.

The Great Contrast

There is a great contrast that is made here in how to live. It could not be plainer.

- A pursuit of Jesus is what drives any giving which is worth-while.
- Any true pursuit of Him purges fame-craving.
- A real pursuit of Christ will help in making us oblivious to the baser passions of the world.
- A genuine pursuit of Jesus Christ will make us generous.
- The pursuit of Him wins the praise of Jesus, Himself.

What is it that you want out of life? Do you want the acclaim and applause of people? That is natural enough. And common enough. Or do you want the

¹³H. L. Willmington, *The Outline Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Mk 12:42-44.

Lord Jesus Christ to say to you, "You have sought Me and you have found Me. You have done a good job as my servant?"

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 57)

Scripture: Mark 13:1-8

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: June 25th, 2006

Times, Epochs and Birth Pangs

Mark 13:1-8 (NASB)

¹ AND as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples *said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down.” ³ And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?” ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. ⁶ “Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He!*’ and will mislead many. ⁷ “And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. ⁸ “For nation will arise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will *also* be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

Introduction Do you ever wonder, “What’s going on?” Do you ever scan the news and think, “what’s going to happen next?” Do you ever ponder over where we as a country, or we as a movement or we as a nation is heading? One can get kind of complacent pretty easily. You kind of get sleepy-headed, looking at just your lawn’s condition (assuming you have a lawn), or that little project you’re working on, or that little circle of people in your life. And pretty soon, you kind of go to sleep and imagine that’s the whole universe right there, or that’s all that’s really important. But things can change... And things are not always as they seem.

- ♦ A politician or a business leader is at the top of his or her influence. Something happens—a health issue, a financial setback—and they find themselves out on the street...
- ♦ The sun can be shining beautifully and then a tsunami rolls on to the beach and wipes everything out.
- ♦ I don’t mean that all change that comes is always bad... Church life a hundred years ago (1906) was quite different than it is today. There were a lot of evangelical, Bible-believing fundamentalist born-again Christians and they were just as devout as we like to think ourselves, just as committed to the Scriptures, just as hungry for God... But their church life consisted on going to church every Sunday, attending

Sunday School every Sunday, going to a mid-week service, reading the Bible at home, and church suppers. But in 100 years our methodologies have changed radically, in the years after 1906...same Bible, same Holy Spirit, different people and very, very different methods.

Do you ever wonder,

“What’s going on, on old planet earth?”

“Where are we headed, is anyone in control?”

Things may look like one thing on one day, but changes are coming. Jesus, of course, knew all things. He was the master at sensing and in fact, knowing this. After He rose from the dead, He was with the twelve apostles on the Mount of Olives... In Acts 1:6-8 the guys ask Him, **Lord, is it at this time that You are restoring the Kingdom of Israel?** They had seen incredible things in the past three plus years. And they knew about the kingdom of God. NOW would be a logical time, to them, to really bring it all together. NOW would be a great time to bring things back to their peak as they had been—they had heard—under King David. We could really use you NOW, Jesus, to jump on that throne and really make things come together!” One cannot fault Peter and James and Philip and Thomas and Simon the Zealot, and the rest of them. They were really hungry to see it all happen...

Christians since the beginning, have imagined that they were living in the last days? It is a natural mistake. The apostles themselves wondered, and hoped. WHEN will Jesus bring the age to a conclusion? And in our generation like none other there has been a nervously excited interest in current events and how they might match up to biblical prophecy. The question, “When?” is a valid question. Would you really want to know, though, that the Lord is coming again in say, 2008? Or in 2015? Some would say, “Sure,” but most, if you think about it, might rather have things as they are. Signs will herald a soon return, but it is not for us to know the **times and epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.**

We begin today into the 13th chapter of the Gospel of Mark. This is the longest sustained teaching of Jesus in the Gospels, a section known as “the Olivet Discourse” because as Mark tells us, **As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple** Peter and James and John and Andrew were on that same hill about six weeks previous, asking Him questions privately. Matthew and Luke both record this conversation and it is largely about **ESCHATOLOGY**, the doctrine of last things. Other major places in the N.T. which deal with final things include 1st.Thess.4, 2nd Thess.2, 2nd Peter 3 and of course Revelation 4-22. We will reference what Matthew and Luke contribute to us too, and you can find their record of what Jesus said in Matthew 24 & 25 and Luke 21:5-36. Ray Stedman points out that

“Matthew makes a great deal over what happens to Israel” [in the end]. “Luke is the only one who tells us of the fall of Jerusalem, and the subsequent captivity of

the Jews and domination of the city by the Gentiles. But Mark is the one who emphasizes the danger to faith which is going to arise in the age which follows the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord.”¹

But before that, in verses 1 & 2 we read, ***And as He was going out of the Temple one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”*** I think you and I would have been impressed. I have seen what is left of those stones. They are still there. And from what Josephus and other sources have informed us about what the Temple of Herod looked like, it was magnificent.

Anyone who came to Jerusalem, saw the sights and were in awe. And with all the discussions Jesus had been having, and confrontations, with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the scribes, they’re thinking, “What’s going on?” Surely these stones and this Temple is what it’s all about, at least in part?

Jesus’ reply though, wasn’t what was expected...***And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down.”*** I can imagine Peter saying, “Excuse me?” “Haven’t you been a little too harsh, Jesus?” Perhaps they wanted to get from Him some positive statement about the Temple. Only in recent years can you actually see some of the massive stones, under the western wall in a tunnel, that are still there from Herod’s Temple. Some of those SINGLE stones are forty feet long and eighteen feet high.

Jesus knew that in a short forty years the whole place would be destroyed. The Jewish historian Josephus was there and he recorded much of what he saw. It was an incredible and total devastation of Jerusalem. Rome’s fury would not be denied. The Temple was burned. The furniture and worship implements looted... In Rome there is the ancient Arch of Titus, which depicts the sacking of the Temple in Jerusalem... The devastation and desolation was total and without mercy.² But on that day, things were calm and beautiful.

In verse 5 Jesus told them to stay awake! To be alert. This is to be the lifestyle of Christians throughout this age. We are to not be foolhardy and gullible. The first sign He says, is the coming of various religious pretenders, false christs. Today there are many of these. We would like to believe that only a few foolish people would believe them, until you include the great cults that have arisen in the last 150 years. There are millions of people who have been misled and have fallen prey to movements claiming special manifestations of Jesus Christ, even to reincarnations of Him. We are to take the phenomenon

¹ Ray C. Stedman, sermon “Watch” Discovery Publishing, PBC homepage, June 22, 1975.

² <http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/>

seriously and not be fooled by them. We cannot see Jesus yet, my friends, do not be mistaken. He is not here yet, except by His Spirit. Jesus predicted though that **many** will be misled, and therefore it should not completely surprise us if this happens, even to people we care about.

Verses 7 and 8 give what Jesus calls a list of **birth pangs** but not “signs of the times.” As Dr. Constable notes, “They are part of God’s program for the present age that includes judgment as well as salvation.”³ I think that helps us understand, a little “what’s going on?” The tragedies that strike are to be expected in this last dispensation before Christ returns. We should do everything we can to help in them, and I hope none come here. But when they do, and if one comes here, we should understand that these things are part of this age.

Ray Stedman noted that some said World War I was the fulfillment of this word, **nation against nation**, and that World War II was the fulfillment of this word, **kingdom against kingdom**. I think that is forcing the times into the prophecy. Since the first century there have been many huge conflicts. There have been many famines. But these are not the end. They LEAD UP to the end, and perhaps in an accelerated way.

The key for us is to understand the big picture. I think a true Christian **loves His appearing** as Paul said. We see that God is in control of all things and always has been. We see that time IS measured, and there ARE such things as **times and epochs** and that we cannot know the exact time of Christ’s coming. But we also know that He IS coming again. It may be soon. But if it is not, that has been planned. If in God’s providence we all shall die a natural death, and our children will, and our grandchildren will, and our generations must long and wait for the great day of the Lord, we are in good company. And, we are greatly blessed to live in the times we do—we should NEVER complain.

We shall continue in our examinations of what Jesus said about the end times, on that renowned hill east of Jerusalem. May He captivate us, with Himself. May we study His words and understand what He has revealed.

For He is the Alpha and Omega.

He is the Bright Morning Star.

He is the Lamb that was slain.

And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (Rev. 19:16).

³Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 13:7 (Galaxie Software, 2003).

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 58)

Scripture: Mark 13:9-13

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: July 2nd, 2006

PP 1,2

A Dose of Reality

Mark 13:9-13 (NASB)

⁹ “But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to *the* courts, and you will be flogged in *the* synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰ “And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ “And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it* is the Holy Spirit. ¹² “And brother will deliver brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ “And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.

Introduction If Christianity was a big scam; if it was a world-wide conspiracy of cover-up, a fraud, a rip-off, then why would so many early Christians be willing to give their lives just to say they were part of the movement? If, as some cults seem to do today, there was a culture of deception and a world of pretend, why would many of the early Jesus-followers be ready to sacrifice all just to maintain their membership in the movement—a movement with no buildings, no political power and no assets.

PP 3

From an apologetics standpoint, one of our best points to make in favor of the authenticity of our faith is the genuineness of belief of early Christians, many who suffered severely for their convictions and persuasion that Jesus WAS who He said He was, and that His promises WOULD come true. Did you know that between A.D.30 and 305 (275 years) the Christian faith underwent ten severe persecutions? (That’s the same length of time from now, back to 1731!). And in that first 275 years—when the church was new and possessed no assets—if you count up the years when *actual* persecuting went on, it comes to 123 years, almost *half* of the time the church existed for the first almost three centuries! Actually, if you study the history of the church you find pretty quickly that persecution, sometimes severe and terrifying, has been more of a staple in the Christian experience than an oddity. We live in a strangely *quiet* time for

American Christians...¹ In other countries though, today, it is estimated that as many as 160,000 Christians die for their faith *each year*. Christians die for their faith every day. They are sold into slavery and buried alive in **Sudan**. They are raped and executed in **Central America** and the **Balkans**. They are burned alive, beaten and stoned in **India, Indonesia** and the **East Timor**. They are imprisoned and abandoned by their families in **the Middle East**. Today violence against Christians is widespread primarily on the continents of Africa and Asia, but Christian persecution exists in every country on the planet every day of the year.²

Reality: Being On Guard (vs. 9a)

1

1. **Nero** (Roman emperor AD 54–68), persecution stirred up in AD 64. In this persecution was the Apostle Paul killed and the apostle Peter crucified in Rome. This first persecution ceased under Vespasian (reigned AD 69–79).
2. **Domitian** (Roman emperor AD 81–96). John, the apostle and evangelist was exiled to Patmos during this persecution. After the death of Domitian, John was released and came to Ephesus in AD 97, where he wrote his Gospel and where he lived until the time of Trajan.
3. **Trajan** (Roman emperor AD 98–117). Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch suffered in this persecution.
4. **Marcus Aurelius**, his other name being **Antoninus Verus** (Roman emperor AD 161–180). Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, and the Christian martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, two cities in France, were martyred in this persecution.
5. **Septimius Severus** (Roman emperor AD 193–211). This persecution extended to northern Africa, which was a Roman province.
6. **Maximinus, Gaius Julius Verus** (Roman emperor AD 235–238).
7. **Decius** (Roman emperor AD 249–251). In this persecution was Fabian martyred; Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, forced into exile; and Origen imprisoned and tortured.
8. **Valerian** (Roman emperor AD 253–260).
9. **Aurelian** (Roman emperor AD 270–275).
10. **Diocletian** (Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, reigned AD 284–305) and **Maximian** (reigned AD 285–305) governed as emperors together. Diocletian began his furious persecution against the Christians in 303. The emperor ordered the doors of the Christian church at Nicomedia, the capital, to be barred, and then burnt the edifice with 600 Christians within. Many edicts were issued by him against Christians. Churches were demolished, Christian books were seized and burnt, Christians were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. The persecution brought a considerable number of martyrs, and it continued until 313, when Emperor Constantine set Christians free and proclaimed religious freedom
http://www.cryingvoice.com/Christian_martyrs/TenPersIntro.html

² Jeff Miller, www.Bible.org Sermon on Mark 13 “A Follower’s Preparation”

This brings us to what Jesus says to His disciples, recorded for us in Mark 13, and the first admonition is to **be on your guard**; I do not think Jesus was saying, “watch your back so you don’t get persecuted.” I think He was warning them against defecting WHEN they got persecuted. I am kind of sorry to let you know this, but the general tone of the Bible is NOT, “LET’S GET SAFE.” It is “LET’S FOLLOW CHRIST.” And along the way there’s probably going to be opposition.

We read these warnings and assurances in Scripture: ***For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Neither has He hidden His face from him; But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.*** Psalm 22:24 ***The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him.*** Nahum 1:7 ***Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*** Matthew 5:10 ***AND Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*** Matthew 5:12 ***These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*** John 16:33. AND the apostle Paul wrote, ***And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*** 2 Timothy 3:12.

So in our whole passage today, we have from Jesus really a dose of reality. The first reality:

Reality 1: Hard Testimonies (vs. 9b)

for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.

- Three predictions from Jesus: there will be legal action against followers of Jesus, physical punishment resulting *from* the legal action and finally forced testimony before high political leaders. Christians should not view this as a curse, but as an opportunity.

Reality 2: a Prelude Condition to the End (vs. 10)

- In vs.10 Jesus says this far-reaching prediction: ***And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.*** Matthew 24:14 has it ***And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.*** This means that all nations must hear the Gospel before Jesus will come again. I think this is interesting because there are various interpretations as to the actual fulfillment of this. A nation can “hear” today just by having radio reception

in which case probably all nations NOW have heard. But if it means that every person in every country must have a chance, we're not there yet. I remember a few years ago Campus Crusade endeavored to bring the actual Gospel message to every city on the planet by 2000 something or other, needless to say, an ambitious endeavor! Dr. Constable writes:

- This verse is not a promise that if disciples will preach the gospel to all nations in a particular generation God will then begin the kingdom, as postmillennialists teach. Man cannot bring in the kingdom by the universal preaching of the gospel. God will bring it in at His appointed time. This is not a promise that everyone will become a believer in Jesus either.³

Reality: a Ministry of the Holy Spirit (vs. 11)

- Verse 11 is both an exhortation to the disciples NOT to be anxious about what they might say if they got in trouble for being a Christian—AND THEY WOULD--AND a promise that the Holy Spirit would give them the words to say when they needed them. We tend to think of other things that the Holy Spirit does for us, but this promise may be very underrated. Inside of us, and that is where the Holy Spirit is for a true believer in Christ, He will give the words. I see no reason to think that somehow expired with the end of the first century!

Reality: Severe Family Betrayals (vs. 12)

- Perhaps the darkest part of Jesus' predictions, and the hardest to bear would be the prospect of being betrayed by loved ones, even to the point of death by execution. Nothing could make less sense to us, emotionally. But the original disciples needed to prepare themselves even if this happened. Morison wrote: "As there is nothing that excites such love as the gospel, when intelligently received, so there is nothing that occasions such hate as this same gospel, when passionately rejected."⁴

Reality: Endurance Required While Being Hated (vs.13)

- Let us not forget that Christians are called to endure. God wants us to persevere and not cave in under persecution or any other trial we may suffer. The Christian who must face cancer; the Christian who must endure a tsunami or a hurricane, the Christian who must weather war join in kinship with the Christian who must endure persecution.
- It is a lonely calling, to find yourself under persecution, Jesus implied: ***hated by all on account of My name...*** But rescue is coming, He said. I don't even like people not *liking* me, let alone hating me. But that will ultimately be what many Christians must endure: hatred. The real hate

³Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 13:10 (Galaxie Software, 2003).

⁴Constable, *Ibid.*

crimes will be committed against Christians, Jesus said. We should not be surprised. And we need to be determined to endure any hatred. In God's providence it may not fall to us here, but it falls to many thousands of Christians in other lands. Next week, Lord willing, we will hear from a wonderful lady who has traveled and ministered in many countries where believers in Jesus Christ have endured very hard persecution. It will be a moving time and a humbling time.

Applications:

1. When you and I are challenged about our faith, we are to speak boldly by the Spirit in our answer
2. TESTIMONY is always important to Christ. That is why believer's baptism is so important, too. The Lord wants us to be willing to publicly testify in front of people—from the easy and risk-free situation of baptism, to personal evangelistic opportunities that we might have, even daily, even to the rare chance to testify to the reality of Christ in front of important or powerful people.
3. The getting of the Gospel to people, "here, there and everywhere" ought to always be one of our biggest priorities. There are other urgencies—discipleship, training, counseling etc. But the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ, and spending the time and money necessary to accomplish that is always right in line with the revealed will of God in the Bible.
4. We should not be surprised by the ferocity and the deep absurdity of persecution. It doesn't mean we have to like it, but we should not be taken by surprise if even family members, even close ones turn on us if we really seek to live for Jesus Christ.
5. We should look at suffering for our faith, should we be called upon TO suffer for our testimony, in the context of God's plan for the future. Yes, we are future-oriented people and that is because we are a people of faith. We live with the conviction that a whole other world is coming in the future, with Jesus reigning as King.
6. The final application today is that we need to know clearly what it is we are giving testimony to! Christians get excited and exercised about a lot of issues today and I am not sure many non-Christians know what it is we really stand for. The core of our testimony is the news that Jesus of Nazareth WAS Israel's true Messiah, that He died and rose from the dead, that He offers new life and future salvation to any and all who will trust in Him, and that He is coming again.

Dartmouth

Bible Notes

Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 59)

Scripture: Mark 13:14-23

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: July 23rd, 2006

Dose of RealityII: A Dark Prediction

Mark 13:14-23 (NASB)

¹⁴ “But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea **flee** to the mountains. ¹⁵ “And let him who is on the housetop not go down, or enter in, to get anything out of his house; ¹⁶ and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁷ “But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! ¹⁸ “But pray that it may not happen in the winter. ¹⁹ “For those days will be a *time of tribulation* such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, and never shall. ²⁰ “And unless the Lord had shortened *those* days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of **the elect** whom He chose, He shortened the days. ²¹ “And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, *He is there*’; do not believe *him*; ²² for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead **the elect** astray. ²³ “But **take heed**; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

Introduction I’m always curious to see how people react when they hear that the Bible predicts the future. They are often surprised and some people react very skeptically, unless we say that Jesus only predicted happiness and flowery cheer. But the prediction in today’s passage is not happy and not cheery. It is a dark prediction. I never knew *at all* that the Bible talks about future events from when I was growing up (though I stumbled to church and went through the motions.) But once I started to learn what’s actually IN the Bible, I became aware that it is full of predictions. Here’s a basic breakdown...Bible=66 books. Includes lots of history, law, poetry, apocalyptic/visionary, letters, and prophecy. It is said that 1/3 of all pages in the Bible are prophetic.

The idea of biblical prophecy is fascinating. Peter said this: ***But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*** (2nd Peter 1:20,21) God decided to communicate with people, often through other people. Sometimes He

talked about things His people or others needed to know *right then*. And sometimes He communicated things *for the future*. That is prophecy, or what we call in theology, “eschatology.” In Mark 13, as Jesus was on the hillside called Olivet, with His disciples, He brought up eschatology, and in Mark’s account, rather abruptly. You should know that there are two, what we call “parallel passages to Mark 13 in Matthew’s and in Luke’s Gospels. They are Matthew 24 and most of Luke 21 (vss.5-36). As we study Mark 13 you can also study Matthew 24 and Luke 21 to get the full picture.

Now we read in Mark 13:14 ***But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*** He had been responding to the disciples’ admiration for the Herodian Temple Mount buildings... He had started to warn them about coming persecutions. Now He brings up the “abomination of desolation.” A first question might be—especially if you are new to the study of eschatology—what’s an “abomination of desolation?” Well, what’s an “abomination?”

Abomination is defined as anything which is abominable—that means loathsome, hated.

“Desolation” is something which is sad, lonely, a barren wasteland. So, an “abomination of desolation” would be something **hated and loathed, which makes barren**. Whose “M.O.” (method of operation) does that sound like? Just on a general level, it sounds like Satan, to me. He is the most hated and loathed creature there is, and his sole purpose is to make things desolate, barren and lifeless.

When the Bible uses the expression, it means an “an inward spiritual and moral revulsion at great wrong in religious matters (perhaps also accompanying emotional disgust) seems to be the main notion involved in the four Hebrew nouns [used]. Since there is only one living and true God, a pure spirit without bodily parts, ALL FORMS OF VISIBLE REPRESENTATIONS OF GOD FOR WORSHIP (or even for artistic expression, many have thought¹) ARE ABHORRENT TO HIM, AS WELL AS ALL FORMS, CEREMONIES, RITUALS AND OBJECTS CONNECTED WITH IDOLATRY.

You might say, “What’s the big deal? People draw caricatures, and paint paintings of each other all the time and there is little offense.” Why does God resent a little misrepresentation of Himself? The answer is found in His utter and complete holiness and character. His name, His being, His glory are all important. This is something a person first learns when they really become a Christian. When I first became a Christian, I might have thought, “I never knew that God’s glory and holiness were so important.” And that is what is satisfied completely by Jesus’ atonement on the cross. The cross is not just about US. It is primarily about God’s glory being completely satisfied and displayed.

So, when Satan or his agents come along and mock God or His Son, it is a very serious thing. And the phrase **abomination of desolation** actually goes back to around 580 B.C. with its use by the prophet Daniel. We read in Daniel 9:27, ***And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.***

This is the focus of the notion of “abomination” in the Bible. When Jesus spoke of the “abomination of desolation” which is spoken of through Daniel the prophet” (Dan 9:2, 18, 26), He has reference to an act consummately sacrilegious, one which utterly desolates (spiritually) some highly significant religious object or place. Some biblical interpreters feel that the Jesus’ prophecy relates the four references in Daniel of the sacrilege committed by Antiochus² IV (Epiphanes), pagan king of Syria, who sacrificed a sow on the holy altar before the Temple of Jerusalem, in about 168 B.C. Other Bible scholars which includes a good number of fine evangelical authors, have sought fulfillment in the desolation of Jerusalem and its Temple together (70 A.D.) with subsequent erection of a pagan house of worship at the site by the Romans, later in the 1st cent. A.D. Yet with many other evangelical Bible students, I think Jesus clearly places the event in the future. Many interpreters feel that Paul’s brief “apocalypse” of the final “man of sin” (2 Thess 2:8-12) is an extension of Daniel’s and Jesus’ prediction. Paul distinctly relates it to our Lord’s Second Advent.³

And without taking the time to construct all the reasons for why I think Jesus was speaking primarily of the future, that is the assumption I am making throughout our exploration of what Jesus said in this section of Mark’s Gospel. Let me say one observation though about my brothers whom I have known over the years who see much of this section and most of the Book of Revelation as past. For some reason there seems to be an innate DESIRE to see it that way, or a reaction to some crazy dispensationalists or excesses or sensationalist presentations of eschatology. Personally, I don’t think a commercial craze like the *Left Behind* series does anything to advance biblical scholarship, though it sure gets a lot of people excited about the idea that Jesus might come back at any moment. When I first became a Christian in 1972, the rage was a book called *The Late Great Planet Earth*. (As I remember it, Hal Lindsey was interpreting “locusts with faces of men” of Revelation 9 as helicopters.) Many of us read that with the feeling, “Whoa! How come nobody ever told ME this stuff?” But excitement settles nothing about whether an idea is correct or not. And many I have known over the years, have suffered such an extreme distaste for dispensationalism that they have fled to the halls of reaction and adopted a “all that stuff already happened” viewpoint. I respect that viewpoint, but I do not believe that it does the best job with the biblical text.

The bottom line attitude should be, I believe, as Paul wrote to Timothy, ***in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*** (2nd Tim.4:8) As evangelical Christians, whatever the details of the unfolding of the last days, we are to “love His appearing.” We long for it. We talk about it. We imagine it. We pray for it. We should not ask God to hasten it, but we love to HOPE for it. We long to see the Savior coming with all that it will mean.

Now back to the text, with a premillennial hermeneutic as my assumption. Jesus said ***when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*** He said that to His disciples. Some of them might have lived to see (or at least hear) about the sack of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the destruction of Herod’s Temple. I am sure it made John sad to hear it, at least he was still living. And that destruction and blasphemy by the 10th Legion was extreme. The Temple Mount was destroyed and the people of Jerusalem dispersed. Israel was no more, all the way until 1948. But I believe Jesus was talking to the boys about a time far distant from the first century. An initial fulfillment of Daniel 9 occurs in 168 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes, a secondary fulfillment (we might say, of the spirit) of Daniel 9 again in 70 A.D., but the complete fulfillment will not come—with all the symptoms that Jesus is now going to talk about, until some time in the future.

The abomination of desolation has been thought to be many things. Basically, it is something abominable associated with idolatry that would defile the temple resulting in its desertion by the godly. I think it is most reasonable to think it is probably a person⁴, the antichrist himself, standing in some kind of rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

This is the final sign of the impending coming of Jesus Christ. When these conditions, in Israel, in Jerusalem, are seen, then it can be said His coming is very close. And both Jews and seeking Gentiles at that time will need much courage. Jesus says to those people alive at that time, and living in Judea, to

Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (vs. 14b) There will be people living in Jerusalem at that time, who are starting to seek God. They should flee.

And let him who is on the housetop not go down, or enter in, to get anything out of his house (vs. 15). People at that time, as now, will have houses with rooftops that you can go up upon.

And let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. (vs. 16)

But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! (vs. 17)

But pray that it may not happen in the winter. (vs. 18) Which is an interesting thing for Jesus to say—prayer will be important and the mercy of God will be something that seekers can appeal to.

I see no reason why ALL of these things can't be applicable to people living in Israel—assuming there IS an actual Israel, which there IS now, since 1948—in an end time.

Jesus then said in vs. 19, **For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, and never shall.** This is a key point. Whenever He was speaking of, it had to be a time of incredible difficulty, unique in history. It cannot just have been local. It has to be SUCH a bad time, that it in fact is the BADDEST time in all history. It is difficult, as bad as it was, to cram the Jewish War of 66 to 70 AD into that description.

The basic Premillennial map of end times looks like this...

Build-up in Israel including a new Temple--Rapture of the Church--7 year Tribulation period (divided into halves)--Second Coming of Christ--Battle of Armageddon--Binding of Satan--Millennial Reign of Christ--Loosing of Satan--Great White Throne Judgment--New Heavens & Earth.

In vs. 20 we read that Jesus said, **And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days.** This tribulation upon the earth has such potential to destroy that all life would cease, except for God's sovereign controlling of it. It is interesting that Jesus uses the phrase, "the elect." There is a group of people in the mind of God whom He loves utterly. They are "the elect." They are chosen by Him. They are selected from among the masses of humanity. God does not ask any one's permission to elect the elect. He does so sovereignly and in complete justice and love. For them, He predetermined that the tribulation would ONLY be seven years. For their sake, the planet is preserved from the wrath of the enemy.

Then again there is a warning to avoid any deceiving false-Christ, which of course the antiChrist is the ultimate. Again there is the expression, the elect from the lips of Jesus. Satan and his agents would LOVE to fool even Christians. They would love to get a few to buy into their system. Jesus was warning the disciples, and us, not to be fooled. Watch and observe and be wise. Learn your Christology well. Learn your pneumatology and your general theology well. Know what is real and what is counterfeit.

With all this eschatology, if indeed these were predictions future to Jesus' day, what of it for us? What can we take away from these words?

1. First is the plain point that Jesus makes, in verse 23, ***Take heed, behold, I have told you everything in advance...*** As Christians we have a map of how things are going to unfold in the last days, in pretty specific terms. We do not know when this will be but we know how it will be.
2. When you read the news, or watch it, we do not grope in the darkness for meaning. Even if every news item is not some prophecy being fulfilled every day, we know that the general course of time will see more and more evidence that the end times are growing closer. We should not be surprised at increasing wickedness. We should not be shocked when, as Paul foretold, ***difficult times will come, for men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power...*** (2nd Tim.3:1-5).
3. History is marked out, under the Lord's sovereign control. We do not need to fear the WORST that creation can offer. Even Satan's worst, as scary as it is, will be ended by the ***sword of the Savior's mouth...***
4. Jesus Christ is coming again. Regardless of the details of the prophecies, all evangelicals understand and love His appearing. I hope we are alive in this life to see it, but even if we are not, we will be there. Imagine that. It is the blessed hope that keeps us going through anything and everything that this life throws at us. He is coming again...

If you do not know Him yet, you can! Invite Him to be your Savior and Lord. Ask Him to forgive you for your sins and to infuse you with His hope and joy. I believe He responds to anyone who truly seeks Him and invites Him in...

NOTES

The Coming Prince by Sir Robert Anderson was a famous attempt by one of Scotland Yard's chief inspectors around the turn of the 20th century, to demonstrate that between Artaxerxes' declaration of the rebuilding of Solomon's temple in Nehemiah's day, to the triumphal entry of Jesus in Jerusalem was exactly 483 years (69 "sevens.") ... Others have attacked Anderson's book and claimed it is inaccurate. Nonetheless, it is an impressive piece of scholarship. *The Coming Prince* by Sir Robert Anderson can be read at http://philologos.org/_eb-tcp/

Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost offers an excellent commentary and explanation of Daniel 9:24-27 ⁵...

Daniel 9:24-27 (NASB)

²⁴ "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. ²⁵ "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. ²⁶ "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷ "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

¹ Not hard to understand... How many people say, when shown a photograph of themselves, "That doesn't look like me! I don't like that picture?"

² Antiochus IV (175-164 BC), was the 8th ruler of the Seleucid empire. He gave himself the surname "Epiphanes" which means "the visible god" (that he and Jupiter were identical). He acted as though he really were Jupiter and the people called him "Epimanes" meaning "the madman". He was violently bitter against the Jews, and was determined to exterminate them and their religion. He devastated Jerusalem in 168 BC, defiled the Temple, offered a pig on its altar, erected an altar to Jupiter, prohibited Temple worship, forbade circumcision on pain of death, sold thousands of Jewish families into slavery, destroyed all copies of Scripture that could be found, and slaughtered everyone discovered in possession of such copies, and resorted to every conceivable torture to force Jews to renounce their religion. This led to the Maccabean revolt, one of the most heroic feats in history. The Antiochus bust discovery is important in the study of Biblical archaeology, it reveals an image of the man who was mentioned in the Book of Daniel.

Antiochus IV usurped the throne of his brother Seleucus IV who died. Antiochus was determined to hellenize Israel and make them a people who were worthy of bordering Egypt, he needed a loyal hellenized population there. The Jews were quickly becoming more Greek than any other time in history. A group of Jews came to Antiochus with a plan. They proposed that the high priest Onias III should be removed and his hellenized brother Jason should take his place. They should set up a Greek Constitution and coin Greek money.

The plan was followed and all the Jews were outraged. It was the first time since the Babylonian Captivity that a non-Jewish government had interfered with the priesthood (treating the sacred office as though it were nothing other than a governmental office). But the worst was yet to come. Now the hellenizers had full control of the government in Jerusalem and they began to build gymnasiums within the city and encouraged the young to spend all their time there. The young priests engaged in sports, Jerusalem was filled with Greek styles, Greek clothes, Greek names, Greek language and worst of all, Greek religion and Greek morals.

The most radical hellenizers felt that things were not moving fast enough so they convinced Antiochus to remove Jason and replace him with Menelaus who was not even a member of the priestly family. Menelaus had no sympathy for the Jewish traditions whatsoever and was only concerned about his own power. The Temple treasury did not contain enough money to pay Antiochus what he had promised so he sold some of the holy vessels of the Temple to raise the money he needed. It was now the goal that Judaism was to be destroyed. In the mind of Antiochus to be un-hellenized was stiff-necked nonsense. If Judaism stood in the way then Judaism was to be destroyed so he gave the orders.

The Syrian army marched into Jerusalem and many of the people were killed and others escaped to the hills. Only the known Hellenists were allowed to remain. Orders were given: NO Sabbath, NO Holy Days, and NO Circumcision. A Statue of Zeus/Antiochus was placed in the Temple above the altar. The most detestable animals (the pig) were brought and sacrificed on the altar. An abominable act was perpetrated on Kislev 25, 168 BC according to the Book of Maccabees that "left the Jewish people desolate." (They call this the Abomination of Desolation in Daniel) but Jesus taught that this was a preliminary occurrence of a greater fulfillment coming in the last days, during the seventieth week of Daniel. www.bible-history.com

³ R.D. Culver, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, electronic edition.

⁴ Tom Constable's *Expository Notes* states: The abomination would be standing where it did not belong. Mark described Jesus saying that the abomination (Gr. *bdelygma*, a neuter noun) would stand (*estekota*, a masculine participle) as a person who set himself up as God in the temple. The fact that Jesus used a masculine participle to modify a neuter noun suggests that the abomination is a man.

⁵ **9:24.** Daniel was first informed that God's program would be consummated in **70 "sevens."** Since Daniel had been thinking of God's program in terms of years (v. 1; cf. Jer. 25:11-12; 2 Chron. 36:21), it would be most natural for him to understand these "sevens" as years. Whereas people today think in units of tens (e.g., decades), Daniel's **people** thought in terms of sevens (heptads). Seven days are in one week. Every seventh year was a sabbath rest year (Lev. 25:1-7). Seven "sevens" brought them to the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-12). Seventy "sevens," then, is a span of 490 years. The 490 could not designate *days* (about 1 1/3 years) for that would not be enough time for the events prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27 to occur. The same is true of 490 weeks of seven days each (i.e., 3,430 days, about 9 1/2 years). Also if days were intended one would expect Daniel to have added "of days" after "70 sevens" for in 10:2-3 he wrote literally, "three sevens of days" (NIV, "three weeks").

Also since Israel and Judah had failed to keep the sabbatical years (every seventh year the land was to lie fallow, Lev. 25:1-7) throughout her history, the Lord enforced on the land 70 "sabbaths" (cf. Lev. 26:34-35). Thus 490 years would be required to complete 70 sabbatical years with one occurring every seventh year.

This span of time was decreed for Daniel's people (cf. "your people" in Dan. 10:14; 11:14) and the Holy City (cf. 9:16, 24). This prophecy, then, is concerned not with world history or church history, but with the history of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. By the time these 490 years run their course, God will have completed six things for Israel. The first three have to do with sin, and the second three with the kingdom. The basis for the first three was provided in the work of Christ on the cross, but all six will be realized by Israel at the Second Advent of Christ.

1. At the end of the 490 years God will **finish** the **transgression** of Israel. The verb "to finish" (*kālā'*) means "to bring something to an end." Israel's sin of disobedience will be brought to an end at Christ's second coming when she repents and turns to Him as her Messiah and Savior. Then she will be restored to the land and blessed, in answer to Daniel's prayer.

In Old Testament days the highpoint in Israel's festival calendar was the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). On that day the nation assembled before God, acknowledged her sin, and offered blood sacrifices to cover that sin. Though that sacrifice covered Israel's sin for 12 months, it did not permanently remove that sin (Heb. 10:1-3). It was necessary that a sacrifice be offered God that would permanently remove all the accumulated sins. This sacrifice was offered by Jesus Christ who by His death made payment for all sins

that had not been removed in the past (cf. Rom. 3:25). So His atoning work on the cross has made possible His future “finishing” of Israel’s transgression.

2. God will **put an end to sin**. The verb $\square\tilde{a}\square\text{am}$ has the idea of sealing up. Here the thought is sealing something up with a view to punishment (cf. Deut. 32:34; Job 14:17). This emphasized that Israel’s sin which had gone unpunished would be punished—in or through Jesus Christ, her substitute, who would bear the sins of the world on the cross. Then at Christ’s second coming he will remove Israel’s sin (Ezek. 37:23; Rom. 11:20-27).

3. God will **atone for wickedness**. The verb “to atone” ($k\tilde{a}p\square\text{ar}$) means “to cover or expiate.” This too relates to God’s final atonement of Israel when she repents at Christ’s second coming, as the provision for that atonement has already been made at the cross. Israel’s day of atonement should be kept in view here too, as in the first of these six accomplishments. On that day God provided a just basis on which He would deal with a guilty people. The blood applied to the mercy seat (“the atonement cover,” Lev. 16:14) over the ark of the covenant enabled Him to dwell among his sinful people. Similarly Daniel’s prophecy promised that because of Christ’s blood shed on the cross God would deal with sinners, and here in particular, with sinners in Israel.

Being propitiated (i.e., satisfied) by Christ’s blood, God can atone for or expiate sin. The Greek words for “atonement cover” (*hilasmos*; KJV, “mercy seat”) and “propitiate” (*hilaskomai*) are related.

4. The second three accomplishments deal with positive aspects of God’s program. Being satisfied by the death of Christ, God will **bring in everlasting righteousness**. The form of the verb “bring in” here means “to cause to come in.” The word “everlasting” (here pl. in Heb.) means ages. Thus this phrase (lit., “to bring in righteousness of ages”) is a prophecy that God will establish an age characterized by righteousness. This is a reference to the Millennial kingdom (Isa. 60:21; Jer. 23:5-6).

5. God will **seal up vision and prophecy**. All that God through the prophets said He would do in fulfilling His covenant with Israel will be fully realized in the millennial kingdom. Until they are fulfilled, prophecies are “unsealed.” (“Seal” translates the same verb, $\square\tilde{a}\square\text{am}$, used in the second of these six accomplishments.)

6. God will **anoint the most holy**. This may refer to the dedication of the Most Holy place in the millennial temple, described in Ezekiel 41-46. Or it may refer not to a holy place, but to the Holy One, Christ. If so, this speaks of the enthronement of Christ, “the Anointed One” (Dan. 7:25-27) as King of kings and Lord of lords in the Millennium.

These six accomplishments, then, anticipate the establishment of Israel’s covenanted millennial kingdom under the authority of her promised King. The six summarize God’s whole program to bring the nation Israel the blessings He promised through His covenants (Gen. 15:18-21; 2 Sam. 7:16; Jer. 31:31-34).

c. *The divisions of the 70 “sevens” (9:25-27)*

9:25. Important revelation was then given Daniel about the inception of this important time period and its divisions. The 70 “sevens” would begin, Gabriel said, with **the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**. This decree was the fourth of four decrees made by Persian rulers in reference to the Jews. The first was Cyrus’ decree in 538 B.C. (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 5:13). The second was the decree of Darius I (522-486) in 520 B.C. (Ezra 6:1, 6-12). This decree actually was a confirmation of the first decree. The third was the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (464-424) in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:11-26). The first two decrees pertain to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the third relates to finances for animal sacrifices at the temple. These three say nothing about the rebuilding of the city itself. Since an unwalled city was no threat to a military power, a religious temple could be rebuilt without jeopardizing the military authority of those granting permission to rebuild it. No one of these three decrees, then, was the decree that formed the beginning of the 70 sevens.

The fourth decree was also by Artaxerxes Longimanus, issued on March 5, 444 B.C. (Neh. 2:1-8). On that occasion Artaxerxes granted the Jews permission to rebuild Jerusalem’s city walls. This decree is the one referred to in Daniel 9:25.

The end or goal of the prophecy is the appearance of **the Anointed One, the Ruler**. This refers to Christ Himself. God the Father anointed Christ with the Spirit at the time of His water baptism (Acts 10:38), but the anointing referred to here is the anointing of Christ as the Ruler in His kingdom (cf. comments on “anoint the Most Holy” in Dan. 9:24). This prophecy of the 70 sevens, then, ends not with the First Advent of Christ, as some suggest, but rather with the Second Advent and the establishing of the millennial kingdom.

This 490-year period is divided into three segments; (a) 7 “sevens” (49 years), (b) 62 “sevens” (434 years), and (c) 1 “seven” (v. 27; 7 years). The first period of 49 years may refer to the time in which the

rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, permitted by Artaxerxes' decree, was completed (444-395 B.C.). Though Nehemiah's wall construction project took only 52 days, many years may have been needed to remove the city's debris (after being desolate for many decades), to build adequate housing, and to rebuild the **streets and a trench**.

9:26a. The 62 "sevens" (434 years) extend up to the introduction of the Messiah to the nation Israel. This second period concluded on the day of the Triumphal Entry just before Christ was **cut off**, that is, crucified. In His Triumphal Entry, Christ, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, officially presented Himself to the nation of Israel as the Messiah. He was evidently familiar with Daniel's prophecy when on that occasion He said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42).

Thus the first two segments of the important time period—the 7 sevens (49 years) and the 62 sevens (434 years)—ran consecutively with no time between them. They totaled 483 years and extended from March 5, 444 B.C. to March 30, A.D. 33. How can 444 B.C. to A.D. 33 equal 483 years? For an answer see the chart "The 483 Years in the Jewish and Gregorian Calendars." (For more details see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977, and Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969.)

According to Daniel 9:26 **the Anointed One** was not "cut off" in the 70th "seven"; He was cut off **after** the 7 and 62 "sevens" had run their course. This means that there is an interval between the 69th and 70th "sevens." Christ's crucifixion, then, was in that interval, right after His Triumphal Entry, which concluded the 69th "seven." This interval was anticipated by Christ when He prophesied the establishing of the church (Matt. 16:18). This necessitated the setting aside of the nation Israel for a season in order that His new program for the church might be instituted. Christ predicted the setting aside of the nation (Matt. 21:42-43). The present Church Age is the interval between the 69th and 70th "sevens."

Amillenarians teach that Christ's First Advent ministry was in the 70th "seven," that there was no interval between the 69th and 70th "sevens," and that the six actions predicted in Daniel 9:24 are being fulfilled today in the church. This view, however, (a) ignores the fact that verse 26 says "after the 62 - sevens, ' "not "in the 70th seven, " (b) overlooks the fact that Christ's ministry on earth was three and one-half years in length, not seven, and (c) ignores the fact that God's six actions pertain to Daniel's "people" (Israel) and His "Holy City" (Jerusalem), not the church.

When the Anointed One would be cut off, Daniel was told, he would **have nothing**. The word translated "cut off" is used of executing the death penalty on a criminal. Thus the prophecy clearly points to the crucifixion of Christ. At His crucifixion He would "have nothing" in the sense that Israel had rejected Him and the kingdom could not be instituted at that time. Therefore He did not then receive the royal glory as the King on David's throne over Israel. John referred to this when he wrote, "He came to that which was His own [i.e., the throne to which He had been appointed by the Father] but His own [i.e., His own people] did not receive Him" (John 1:11). Daniel's prophecy, then, anticipated Christ's offer of Himself to the nation Israel as her Messiah, the nation's rejection of Him as Messiah, and His crucifixion.

9:26b. The prophecy continues with a description of the judgment that would **come** on the generation that rejected the Messiah. **The city** which contains **the sanctuary**, that is, Jerusalem, would be destroyed by **the people of the ruler who will come**. The ruler who will come is that final head of the Roman Empire, the little horn of 7:8. It is significant that the *people* of the ruler, not the ruler himself, will destroy Jerusalem. Since he will be the final Roman ruler, the people of that ruler must be the Romans themselves. This, then, is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem about which Christ spoke in His ministry.

When the leaders of the nation registered their rejection of Christ by attributing His power to Beelzebub, the prince of the demons (Matt. 12:24), Christ warned that if they persisted in that view they would be guilty of sin for which there would be no forgiveness (Matt. 12:31-32). He also warned the nation that Jerusalem would be destroyed by Gentiles (Luke 21:24), that it would be desolate (Matt. 23:38), and that the destruction would be so complete that not one stone would be left on another (Matt. 24:2). This destruction was accomplished by Titus in A.D. 70 when he destroyed the city of Jerusalem and killed thousands of Jews. But that invasion, awesome as it was, did not end the nation's sufferings, for **war**, Gabriel said, would **continue until the end**. Even though Israel was to be set aside, she would continue to suffer until the prophecies of the 70 "sevens" were completely fulfilled. Her sufferings span the entire period from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to Jerusalem's deliverance from Gentile dominion at the Second Advent of Christ.

9:27a. This verse unveils what will occur in the 70th seven years. This seven-year period will begin after the Rapture of the church (which will consummate God's program in this present Age). The 70th "seven" will continue till the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Because Jesus said this will be a time of "great distress" (Matt. 24:21), this period is often called the Tribulation.

A significant event that will mark the beginning of this seven-year period is the confirming of a **covenant**. This covenant will be made **with many**, that is, with Daniel's people, the nation Israel. "The ruler who will come" (Dan. 9:26) will be this covenant-maker, for that person is the antecedent of the word **he** in verse 27. As a yet-future ruler he will be the final head of the fourth empire (the little horn of the fourth beast, 7:8).

The covenant he will make will evidently be a peace covenant, in which he will guarantee Israel's safety in the land. This suggests that Israel will be in her land but will be unable to defend herself for she will have lost any support she may have had previously. Therefore she will need and welcome the peacemaking role of this head of the confederation of 10 European (Roman) nations. In offering this covenant, this ruler will pose as a prince of peace, and Israel will accept his authority. **But then in the middle of that "seven,"** after three and one-half years, **he will** break the covenant. According to 11:45, he will then move from Europe into the land of Israel.

This ruler will **end . . . sacrifice and offering**. This expression refers to the entire Levitical system, which suggests that Israel will have restored that system in the first half of the 70th "seven." After this ruler gains worldwide political power, he will assume power in the religious realm as well and will cause the world to worship him (2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:8). To receive such worship, he will terminate all organized religions. Posing as the world's rightful king and god and as Israel's prince of peace, he will then turn against Israel and become her destroyer and defiler.

9:27b. Daniel was told that "the ruler who will come" (v. 26) **will place abominations on a wing of the temple**. Christ referred to this incident: "You [will] see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation" (Matt. 24:15). John wrote that the false prophet will set up an image to this ruler and that the world will be compelled to worship it (Rev. 13:14-15). But then his end will come (**the end that is decreed is poured out on him**). With his false prophet he will be cast into the lake of fire when Christ returns to the earth (Rev. 19:20; cf. Dan. 7:11, 26).

This covenant could not have been made or confirmed by Christ at His First Advent, as amillenarians teach, because: (a) His ministry did not last seven years, (b) His death did not stop sacrifices and offerings, (c) He did not set up "the abomination that causes desolation" (Matt. 24:15). Amillenarians suggest that Christ confirmed (in the sense of fulfilling) the Abrahamic Covenant but the Gospels give no indication He did that in His First Advent.

As stated, the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel at the beginning of the second half of the 70th "seven," that is, it will be broken for three and one-half years. This is called "a time, times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14). The fact that this is the same as the three and one-half years, which in turn are equated with 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6) and with 42 months (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), means that in Jewish reckoning each month has 30 days and each year 360 days. This confirms the 360-day Jewish year used in the calculations in the chart, "The 483 Years in the Jewish and Gregorian Calendars" (near Dan. 9:26a). Since the events in the 69 sevens (vv. 24-26) were fulfilled literally, the 70th "seven," yet unfulfilled, must likewise be fulfilled literally. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 60)

Scripture: Mark 13:24-27

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: July 30th, 2006

When the Word "Awesome" Gets a New Definition

Mark 13:24-27 (NASB)

²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, ²⁵ AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ "And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. ²⁷ "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.

Introduction We are talking about the second coming of Jesus Christ. I don't know if you have noticed it or not, but in our time there has arisen a great industry and commercial environment associated with the evangelical belief that Jesus will actually come again to earth, literally, and the suspicion that this could possibly occur in our time. We have lots of books, non-fiction and fiction, videos, movies, websites, songs and CDs, conferences, bumper stickers and some media heroes who do nothing but teach and speak on this subject alone. We have a wealth of resources and publicity on this subject.

But I want to take you back to Olivet, just to Jesus and the boys. (Did you know that there is a church in Brockton called Olivet Memorial? That's a neat name for a church). On the Mount of Olives on that day when Jesus was talking to the guys,

there are no churches around the bottom of the hill or on its top, as there are today. There are no conferences for disciples to attend or books written yet about the second coming of Messiah. There is no premillennialism yet and no charts of the calendar of eschatology.

Jesus had just talked about a great and terrible time that I am persuaded He indicated was yet coming to the world—a time that He associated with the six hundred year old prophecy of Daniel; a time we call the Great Tribulation. It would be, apparently, a seven year period of time that COULD go longer and utterly waste the whole planet, but that God in His sovereign control of things,

will shorten TO seven years for the sake of people living in that time who have freshly come to Christ in faith. He is there on the hillside, very somber at this moment I think. No one is laughing. No one is singing. They are listening to Him.

If last week's message was work, to prepare and to listen to, I rejoice at this week's message. For here is the premier place in the Bible where Jesus predicts His second coming. During the final days of His first coming, He now talks to His followers about His second coming. He says that after this tribulation time, He will come again. He could not be more plain.

For you, I wonder if you think much about this? You might find this prospect frightening. I wouldn't be surprised if you said, "You know, I actually DON'T like to think about that." But Paul calls this topic "the blessed hope." It give me hope too. I hope it does, or will.

- I wonder if you daydream about it, imagine it, if it comes to mind when you are struggling with various things.
- If you get a little depressed, do you turn in your Bible to First Thessalonians? It is there that Paul wrote, **comfort one another with these words.** (1 Thess. 4:18)
- If you are sick or ill, do you open your Scriptures to the Book of Revelation and read the ending chapters? It is there that John predicts that **and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes and there shall no longer be any death, there shall no longer be any mourning or crying or pain** (Rev. 21:4).
- If you find yourself entangled with the briars and thorny vines of life in this world, relationships, money, busyness, disappointments, do you open to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark or Luke which record Jesus' predictions about a time when He will shake the whole creation with His return? It is from Luke, that we get Jesus' own words, **When you see these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift your heads, because your redemption is drawing near** (Luke 21:28). Now, what things will signal Jesus' imminent return?

Verses 24 & 25 are dramatic and cosmic, and you will notice first of all that Jesus says these things will take place after "that tribulation." WHICH tribulation? That time which He described in verses 14-23 and which, I believe, all of Revelation 6-19 describe in great detail... Now, He said **But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.** These are incredible words, if taken in any sense literally. In fact, they are so incredible—these things Jesus was saying to His little band of disciples on that hillside, with the gleaming Temple beyond, and the air thick with the political intrigue of those days—that some have gone to

great lengths to see them merely as symbolic. How could even Jesus' coming again, on some distant future day, actually affect the planets, and the sun and the stars? Surely the planets and the sun and the stars are the most solid and predictable and steady things that exist? Some would even whisper, "they're older than Jesus!" Surely these words Jesus said, **MUST** be taken metaphorically! And there is some sense in that. Things prophets said in the past sometimes **WERE** meant to be symbolic. Solomon described his beloved

- **How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats That have descended from Mount Gilead. ² "Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes Which have come up from their washing, All of which bear twins, And not one among them has lost her young. ³ "Your lips are like a scarlet thread, And your mouth is lovely. Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate Behind your veil. ⁴ "Your neck is like the tower of David Built with rows of stones, On which are hung a thousand shields, All the round shields of the mighty men. ⁵ "Your two breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle, Which feed among the lilies. Song of Solomon 4:1-5**
- In Ezekiel 15 God speaks through the prophet and says Jerusalem is like a vine that was thrown into a fire—useless for anything. The vine was a powerful picture of Jerusalem's condition.
- Jesus Himself, in speaking with Nicodemus, used the symbol of birth to picture what it was like to come into a saving relationship with the Son of God—and so striking a symbol it was, that Nicodemus didn't even get it!

But here, as Jesus is talking to His disciples, He is talking about something more direct. I cannot make myself adjust these words of Jesus to mean something in the first century—or even something now. He isn't saying that Jerusalem's destruction is going to be so complete that it will be **LIKE** the sun and moon being darkened and the stars falling from heaven... I also don't think He was saying that in the 21st century a nuclear winter would block out the sun and moon and make the earth's atmosphere simulate falling stars.

As He looks into Peter's eyes, and into Bartholemew's eyes and into John's eyes—who years later will personally receive the "upgrade download"—and He says, **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.** There will be a variety of cosmic disorders involving **the sun . . . moon, and stars** will immediately precede the Second Advent. Jesus' description is fashioned from Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4 without His quoting exactly from either passage [and other Old Testament places Is. 24:23; Ezek. 32:7–8; Joel 2:10, 30–31; 3:15; Amos 8:9]. This vividly refers to observable celestial changes in the physical universe.¹ This will happen just before Jesus returns.

¹John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2:171 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985).

Note, we are not talking about the rapture of the church, but rather the second coming of Christ.

There is the climax of history -- the appearing of Jesus Christ as Lord, with great power and great glory. (This is not at all touching the question of the "rapture," the departure of the church. That is dealt with in other passages.) Here we have the appearance again of Jesus Christ in great power and glory, preceded, as all the prophets have predicted, by terrible signs in the heavens. Evidently some tremendous cataclysm upsets the whole solar system, of which we are a part, or perhaps even the entire galaxy. It has been interesting to me that astronomers today are commenting upon newly-discovered forces at work in the heavens, and strange, inexplicable heavenly bodies which no one seems to know much about -- mysterious "black holes" in space, and "quasars" which emit tremendous amounts of energy and yet seem to be so far removed from the earth that nobody can be quite sure what they are. From other passages we know that this disruption of heavenly bodies will have an effect upon the earth, as volcanoes erupt and tidal waves arise. Then the Son of man appears, and all his mighty angels with him. He sends those angels out to gather Israel back into the land. This gathering of the elect, I am sure, is the fulfillment of the predictions of the prophets that there will come a time when Israel will be gathered from the four corners of the earth -- not by natural but by supernatural means -- to establish the kingdom of God there in the Land.²

Again Jesus mentions **the elect** and He mentions the presence and role of angels. Angels are God's gatherers—they gather unbelievers for judgment (Matt. 13:41, 49, 50), and they gather the elect for glory. The "elect" will include the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (see Rev. 7:4), their converts (Rev. 7:9), and the converts of the angelic preachers (see Rev. 14:6). They will also include the OT saints, gathered out of their graves and united with their redeemed spirits (Dan. 12:1-3). **from the four winds**. A colloquial expression meaning "from everywhere," and similar to the expression "from the four corners of the world." None of the elect on earth or in heaven will miss entering the kingdom.³

What an awesome thing we are reading! In fact, on that day the word "awesome" itself will find a new definition. All creation changes. The king comes. There will be no ratification of His coming by the peoples of the earth. The enemy will have no vote. And the elect will rejoice with all their senses, with all their mind, and with no brother or sister missing.

² Ray Stedman, from *The Ruler Who Serves*, 2002, pp. 178,179, from a sermon June 1975.

³John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed., Mk 13:27 (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997).

These are the things Jesus told James and Thomas and even Judas on the hillside that day. He would soon die. He would then rise from the dead. And after that, He would initiate a long era when His word would be spread, people enfolded into His church from every country on the planet. And then at the conclusion of that age—and we may in fact be IN the final days of that age—He will come again. I believe He comes first in the rapture, for the church. I believe that will occur before the tribulation. But however it unfolds, His coming is sure. It is just as vital and certain a doctrine as His own existence and atonement for sin.

I know this all sounds fantastic. I am almost embarrassed to describe it for the first time to people BECAUSE it sounds so incredible. But think of this: 200 years ago air travel would have seemed incredible. A man walking on the moon would have seemed preposterous. Heart transplant surgery would have struck people as the weirdest of weird! Do not discount this prediction by Jesus Himself. Take it to heart. It will happen just as He said. And I hope you will find yourself among the elect. You can! Embrace Him by faith. Ask Him to be YOUR Savior and Lord. Believe that you NEED a Savior and invite Him to become yours. You surely need Him. And He will come it. And then when He comes again, you will surely be with Him as one of the great Bride!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 61)

Scripture: Mark 13: 28-37

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: August 20th, 2006

Being Alert to the Ripening of Times

Mark 13:28-37 (NASB)

²⁸ “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ “Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, **recognize** that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁰ “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³² “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*. ³³ “**Take heed, keep on the alert;** for you do not know when the *appointed* time is. ³⁴ “*It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert.* ³⁵ “Therefore, **be on the alert**—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrowing, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ “And what I say to you I say to all, **‘Be on the alert!’**”

Introduction Time is such a weird thing. When you’re little and your Mom or Dad says, “Your birthday will be here in a month,” you think that is an eternity. When you’re in your middle years, there never seems to be *enough* time. When you’re old, it amazes you how fast things have gone by.

- When I was in **high school**, time was marked in my mind by the seasons—football, wrestling, summer. That was pretty much it.
- In **college**, time was marked by semesters (quarters). All things revolved around the beginning or the ending of a semester.
- In the years since I graduated from college time seems marked mostly by the **rhythms of the job** or by our girls’ or Renée’s **school** schedule.
- In 1997 and ’98 and early ’99 I thought time had injected a huge dose of molasses, as we **waited for the construction** of our building here to begin.
- And in ’02 when I was in the **hospital**, time just seemed to stop for those nine days, for me.

We tend to mark time by US, and what *we're* interested in or doing. And we only have 70 or 80 or 90 years to work with. Most people consider that envelope of time—those years when WE are on the planet--the most important in history! We are watchful of our watches for our appointments, our kids' appointments, when they're going to come home, our semesters, our holidays and maybe our aging. But ultimately time is not about US, it is the servant of God, first. He marks the times and the epochs, as Jesus told His disciples just before He ascended.

In the passage in Mark in front of us, it was a different time. Twenty centuries ago, as humans mark time. No one spoke English. None of our relatives were born yet. There was nothing electronic, or powered by fossil fuel. The few inhabitants of the entire North and South American continents were completely disconnected tribes of migrant natives. No colonization of anywhere was happening, only annexation of Europe, the entire Mediterranean and parts of the Middle East and North Africa by Roman legions. Time was measured by the sun and the moon and the stars. Little history was being recorded, yet. But it was into that time that the Son of God came to the world. He *entered* time, which He had in fact created. He *became* a man at just the right time. And now His earthly ministry was in its final days. He had just talked to His followers about time; about the things that will mark the last times. He said that time will end badly, in a great tribulation **such as** had **not occurred since the beginning of creation**, until THEN, nor shall until the end of time. Then, Jesus said, He, the Son of Man—His favorite title for Himself--will come in the clouds. It will change everything. It will be the beginning of a new time.

Now, in his last words in Mark before we turn down the path (the rest of the book) of His passion and resurrection, Jesus gives two pictures about time, about how to deal with the approaching end of time. The FIRST is the parable of the fig tree. You can tell summer is near when its branches and leaves mature. By **these things** probably Jesus meant the abomination of desolation in the Temple area, not the signs in the skies, which will not take place until *after* the tribulation. The second picture is that of a manager, or **doorkeeper** who is in charge of a property-owner and is told to keep watch over the house. He will not know when his master will return, though he might return at any moment. So, Jesus said to His disciples, THEY needed to keep watch and be alert. In fact, in four places in our passage in Mark 13 Jesus told them to be watchful. So, how does this apply to us, now twenty centuries into the waiting?

First, let's ask the question, **are we alert?** Alertness means recognizing that time is part of God's plan and that certain events are significant. Things are not just random or chaotic. Time moves forward with an unfolding of more and more gravity, towards a climax. We know this and we live in view of it. (This is

probably why I have always been interested in church history, and why I majored in it in grad. school.) We do not become intoxicated with the world's *liquor* that time is to be used for pleasure, or time doesn't matter—only the PRESENT matters... We remain convinced that we are part of a great plan of God and He has placed us here, now, for a purpose. We seek to USE the time God gives us, for the most important things. That's part of being alert.

Second, **ARE we intelligently watchful** as to signs that things might be drawing to a conclusion, and that this era of gospel-preaching approaches its end. More and more evangelism and missions become important. More and more we see the need to offer the gospel to people. We know from what Jesus says in verse 32 that we cannot figure out exactly WHEN Jesus will return, but we are watchful around us. Paul wrote to Timothy that ***in the last days difficult times will come***. He details what to watch for men becoming (and I presume women too),

...lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

2 Timothy 3:2-5 (NASB)

Those symptoms sound suspiciously like NOW. In fact, I can think of few things in that list of descriptions that are NOT true about now.

Alertness means we are not deceived easily. Or at all. There are lots and lots of alternative religions and non-religions. Some are just kooky but some are very close to the truth. As time goes on there are more of them. Before 1800 there were virtually no cults at all. By 1900 each of the major cults—Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Christian Science and others had all been launched. By 2,000 one can hardly count all the cults and strange aberrations of Christianity that there are, or the millions of people deceived by them. In "watching" and being alert it means we can tell the difference between the truth and false teaching.

Alertness means that we LIVE in view of the fact that Jesus may come for us at any time and that I am only granted a certain amount of time to do His will for my life. I need to make the most of the time I have. Some of us will have 90 years. Others will have only a fraction of that. Being alert means to be watchful of my OWN investments of time and energy.

Alertness also means for Christians to be discerning about prophecy. This is of great interest to some and I feel it almost becomes an obsession. I feel we

need to watch the world political situation for there plenty of reason to see that in prophecy. The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 woke many people up. I am not sure if THIS Israel we see right now is the Israel of end times or not. But regardless, it bears watching and praying for. I do not see fulfilled prophecy with every news item that we hear about as some do. I take a macro-view of prophecy rather than a micro-view. I prefer to keep my nose to the Scripture. But the one-world tendencies that have mushroomed since World War II have to make us sit up and take notice.

If Jesus' return in the rapture is soon, then a great many things we are so passionately committed to today do not make much difference. Most of life—if His coming is soon—should be connected with relationships. We should be busy and wear ourselves out with getting the Gospel to people or paving the way for that. If the rapture could happen at any moment, then we will be gone in the twinkling of an eye and the remaining witness for Christ will be in printed and electronic form.

So let me ask you, "What can take us off the alert?" What can make us become sleepy, spiritually? I would suggest these things, as a short list:

1. Losing touch with the Word of God.
2. Drifting from meaningful fellowship.
3. Letting the time between prayer grow more and more.
4. Getting too much into television, politics, entertainment, sports and recreation.
5. Letting the world seep into your priorities and convictions.
6. Letting money or the making of money become your master.
7. Allowing yourself or your children to become materialistic.
8. Allowing disappointments or frustrations about church life to dominate your spirit and taking ourselves too seriously.

To BUILD alertness in your life,

1. Be IN the Word of God
2. Develop/enjoy meaningful fellowship
3. Spend much time in prayer
4. Make television, video games, entertainment, politics, sports and recreation in general your LAST priority
5. Accommodate the priorities and convictions and affections bred by the Holy Spirit in your life
6. USE money (or making it) for The Master
7. Give away stuff and be content with what you have
8. Memorize and LIVE Colossians 3:12

If Jesus Came Today...

We would be with Him. We would still be together, somehow, and united with countless other Christians, past and present. We will “know even as we are known.” We will have new bodies. We will see clearly and understand as much as we need to. We will somehow be deployed into the final battle, or at least see it happen. We will see Jesus and hear His voice. We will be surrounded by His glory and want nothing more than to see Him honored. We will be free from sin and from guilt and from illness and war, and poverty and depression. We will be like a bride, on her wedding day. I wish it were to happen today. Nothing that we have not accomplished or experienced yet, can compare to seeing His face.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 62)

Scripture: Mark 14:1-11

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: May 13th , 2007 (Mother's Day)

The Goodness of Pure Worship

Mark 14:1-11 (NASB)

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth, and kill *Him*; ² for they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest there be a riot of the people." ³ And while He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; *and* she broke the vial and poured it over His head. ⁴ But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? ⁵ "For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor." And they were scolding her. ⁶ But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. ⁷ "For the poor you always have with you, and whenever you wish, you can do them good; but you do not always have Me. ⁸ "She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. ⁹ "And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her." ¹⁰ And Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests, in order to betray Him to them. ¹¹ And they were glad when they heard *this*, and promised to give him money. And he *began* seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

Introduction Today is "Mother's Day," honoring mothers and grandmothers. And we have verses like,

- Proverbs 12:4a An excellent wife is the crown of her husband
- Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.
- Proverbs 19:14 House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.
- Proverbs 31:10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.
- And of this woman it is said, "Her children rise up and bless her... (31:28a)

I wish to explore with you today, in honor of godly wives and mothers and grandmothers, a woman we read about in the Gospel of Mark.

Going back to “Holy Week,” which began with Jesus’ heralded entry into Jerusalem during the last week before His crucifixion. If that week was the most dramatic and important week of all time, that week of Passover in ancient Judea (circa 27 A.D. give or take a year or two),

- when God’s Son was nearing the experience of death as a man,
- when some long-dead saints were raised from the dead and walking around Jerusalem¹,
- when He would rise from being completely dead,
- when would commence a new world-wide conspiracy against the “Evil Empire” of the “Prince of the power of the air,”
- when the way people would come to know God would metamorphosize from becoming a Jew of faith to becoming a faithful follower of Jesus, then we could indeed call that week “holy week.”

But sometimes, during a big event, the most memorable things that happen are contrasting little, obscure events: at a **graduation scene** with all the “pomp and circumstance,” you remember a teacher or a professor catching you aside and giving a brief word of encouragement. During the **Battle of Gettysburg**, two opposing commanders, one from the Union army and one from the Confederate army, who were the closest of friends before the war, meet briefly—via message sent by courier—for just a few moments, remembering the bonds of friendship. (For General Armistead, who did not survive the battle, it was one of the most important moments of his life!)

In “holy week” many things happened which have made the front pages of history, climaxing of course with the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. But one quiet little event, which Mark recorded, grabs our attention today. It happens with a woman, in the village of Bethany, two short miles east of Jerusalem. It happens in the home of a fellow called **Simon the leper** which almost certainly meant FORMERLY a leper, and the disciples are there. It is Saturday night, the “eve” of “Holy Week.” Mark tells us the anti-Jesus conspiracy is on. The chief priests and scribes are in on it and John told us that the high priest Himself, Caiaphas—the supposed big-time holy guy, was the architect of the plot. They have come to hate Jesus--the most “spiritual” guys of the day. Hmph. Well, that is what is running in the background... Stedman notes, “As there are only two days left, there is a deep sense of urgency about their malevolent threat. This is always characteristic of hatred. Hatred can never wait. Hatred must act as soon as an opportunity affords.”¹

So Jesus is **reclining at table** in Simon’s home, a relaxed moment, and up comes this woman, unnamed here, but most scholars agree this is **Mary** from

¹ Matthew 27:52,53

John 12, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, whom Jesus had actually raised from the dead. Martha was the one so busy with preparations but Mary was the one sitting at His feet, listening (Luke 10). Here, on this other day, she has a vial—probably not a jug as in the picture—it was an **alabaster vial**, a small bottle probably, of **very costly perfume of pure nard** and she breaks the end off the bottle probably—because such bottles would be sealed up—and pours it over Jesus' head, and John says, His feet too (which makes sense because He is “reclined at table.”

There are three movements in this story: the first is the loving act of sacrifice, the second is the response it got from those watching, and the third is Jesus' own assessment of what she did.

First, is the sacrifice Mary made. Delve into her mind with me. She had watched—literally watched Jesus raise her beloved brother from the dead. She was already a devoted follower of Jesus of Nazareth, but that act of giving a first century working woman BACK her brother put her gratitude off the charts. Her perfume was made of nard oil, from a root native to India, very expensive and perhaps even a family heirloom, passed from generation to generation, from mother to daughter.² The aroma fills the room. Jesus looks knowingly into her misty eyes. Her act was spontaneous and she was alone in it. She just, DID it. She had heard Him say He would be crucified and would rise from the dead. Jesus had said it to His followers throughout the three years. The others did not believe Him. She did... She was giving Him an anointing fit for a royal burial, and I can only imagine that Jesus bore the aroma of this nard for days. She just loved Him. Do you love Jesus? Do you ever find yourself just “doing something spontaneous” just because you love Him?

Second movement: What she did got a response from those watching (vss.4,5): **But some were indignantly remarking to one another, “Why has this perfume been wasted? “For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they were scolding her.** Mark tells us the first response was one of indignation that she should waste this ointment so. John says it was Judas who raised this objection. This is characteristic of Judas -- that he was concerned only about the waste of money. John says he was a thief. He had been appointed treasurer for the disciples -- not because he was a thief, but because he was good at money. Nevertheless he became a thief as a result. There are always people who try to place a monetary value on things. They seem to know the price of everything, but the value of nothing. In this account, Jesus is warning us of the foolishness of that attitude, for if you look at the world only in terms of dollars and cents, you are going to miss three-quarters of life. This is what he wants to teach us here.³

The Chinese Bible teacher Watchman Nee said this on this passage: “One thing some of us have come to learn is that in the divine service the principle of ‘waste’ is the principle of power, whereas the principle of ‘usefulness’ is the very principle of scattering. The *real* usefulness in the hand of the Lord is ‘waste.’ [We can always be “more efficient.”] The more you think you could do, the more you employ your gifts to the very limit--and perhaps beyond the limit--that you will find to be the principle of the world, and not the principle of the Lord.⁴

What if our Diaconate used up a whole year’s resources—Diaconate fund, time in helping—with one family who kept coming to them and saying, “Help us.” How can some Christian ministers spend so much time on just a handful of needy people when there’s thousands of other needy ones around?

The third movement is Jesus’ defense of her, and what He said about her act of devotion—what it’s true value was... He called it a **good deed** which can also be translated a **beautiful thing**. He saw what she did, in the moment of spontaneity, looking wasteful to some, as a gesture of love. It was an act of pure worship. And He said that she would be remembered for it as part of the Gospel narrative which would be told for centuries, **wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world**, which is an interesting assurance that it WOULD be preached in the whole world, a thing which He doesn’t even tell them to do yet until His ascension!

There will always be poor people to help—and help them you and I should. But Jesus’ days were numbered—Mary alone seemed to know it. And this humble woman of Bethany, using up an almost priceless commodity on nothing more than a symbolic act, will be memorialized and remembered. High praise indeed, from the King of the Universe!

As “Mother’s Day” is here and we wonder, What makes a woman honorable? We remember the words, **a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised**. A woman who just loves Jesus Christ, who does random acts of pure worship and love for Him, this is praiseworthy. This is a thing to be admired and copied.

As we are involved in the getting of the Gospel to the whole world and we just came out of a week of missions emphasis--as we ponder the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, as we count again the benefits we shall have and indeed ALREADY have because of His slaying, what spontaneous acts of love for Him might come from your life?

One little event in the catalog of great events from “Holy Week” stands out in huge contrast to the disciples’ calculations of value, to the priests’ and scribes’ and even Judas’ plotting. Mary just loves Jesus Christ of Nazareth. She

“heard” His predictions of His death and she wanted one last chance to show how she loved Him. What are we doing or what might we do, just because we love Him. I cannot legislate that for you. It’s between you and Him. How much do you love Him? Where do you love Him? What expression of how you feel about Him bursts from your heart in the random act of love and sacrifice for Him? I cannot tell, but when I see them, in the lives of the saints, they testify that Jesus is not dead... He is alive!

² <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/3326.html> 1975

³ William Lane, NICNT, 1974., p.492

⁴ Stedman, *Ibid*

⁵ http://www.dimensionsoftruth.org/watchman_nee/watchman1.html

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 62)

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: April 8th, 2007 *Resurrection Sunday*

Three Women and a Young Man

Mark 16:1-8 (NASB)

AND when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, they *came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they *saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. ⁶ And he *said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here* is the place where they laid Him. ⁷ "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.'" ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Introduction Today, Resurrection Sunday, we have often offered up some review of the various evidences that Jesus came back to life. Today I'm just going to refer you to a web site with a nice review of some of those points:

(<http://www.probe.org/reasons-to-believe/the-answer-is-the-resurrection.html>.) Or

<http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/easter/articles/josh2.html> .

And there's the song by Don Francisco too, which is probably the best Easter song written in the last 40 years, *He's Alive* (which can be heard at

http://www.greeting-cards-4u.com/music/Videos/Easter/He_s_Alive.exe)

Today I would like to go back to the end of Mark's Gospel and consider those words which some scholars think were the first record written of Jesus' life, as early as 55 A.D., or even in outline form before that! In this Gospel, chapter 16, we turn from the burial scene, with its sad atmosphere and strange benefactor (Joseph of Arimathea.) After that Saturday (Sabbath Day), we now see three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary—Mom of James, whose brother was

John, and another woman named Salome. Merging this with the other Gospels we know there were other women around too, including someone named Joanna, Jesus' mother Mary and "others." But let's look at the three that Mark mentions.

Can you feel the air of sadness? These women had watched Jesus die on the cross. And STILL they loved Him. And as morning breaks, their little fellowship makes its way to anoint Jesus' corpse with spices. The Jews did not practice embalming. These women simply wanted to honor Jesus by making His corpse as pleasant smelling as possible. Perhaps Mary of Bethany's example had encouraged them to make this sacrifice for Him (cf. 14:3-9). Obviously they did not understand that Jesus would rise from the dead.¹ But, only half-rationally, they wanted to express their love to Him one last time. It did occur to them though, that the tomb's rolling stone would be too big for them to budge and they wondered how they would get into the tomb. Nonetheless, they HAD to go--and figure that out when they arrived...

But when they get there, they see the tomb is open. What would YOU think? They were very surprised—they had watched Jesus' body be prepared by Joseph of Arimathea and laid in the tomb, and no doubt saw the stone rolled over the mouth of the tomb. There should have been no disturbing it on the Sabbath. Who would *want* to? But the stone is rolled back...

So they go into the tomb. The one in Jerusalem today that you can visit is called the "Garden Tomb." There seems little evidence that this site is the *actual* tomb we are reading about, but it has been shown to be an actual *first century* tomb so what we are reading about is something LIKE the Garden Tomb. The Garden Tomb can be gotten into. It is the size, I would say, of a small bathroom today. Two or three people can stand in it. But the Marys do not see what they expect, which would be Jesus' corpse lying there. Instead they see **a young man sitting at the right wearing a white robe**. This, I think, is a great and wonderful understatement. Mark is an early Gospel, he is not inclined to call this an angel. He simply reports what Peter told him. To the women this looked like a young man, but was clearly implied to be an angel. We understand it to be an angel who looks like a young man. And the angel, having rolled away the stone (Matt. 28:2), had then entered the burial chamber. Luke records that there were two angels in the tomb; Matthew and Mark focus on the one who spoke².

Did this young man glow, or did his robes glow as Mark described Jesus' garments on the mountain of transfiguration earlier in Mark (9:2)--**radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them**? I don't know exactly how he appeared. Did he speak with some kind of cool angelic

¹Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003)

²John MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997)

accent? I don't know. Was he tall or short and was he good-looking? I don't know. The Marys' demeanor was evident. **They were amazed.** This was not someone they knew, at least. When was the last time you were amazed? Can you relate to that emotion? Astounded. Overwhelmed. In wonderment. Alarmed. Even afraid. When was the last time you felt that feeling? Think about that for a minute.

Well, the silence is brief. They hear the young man say, **Do not be amazed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here. Behold, here is the place where they laid Him.**

1 First, pardon my impudence, but how can he say, "**Do not be amazed?**" They're already amazed! As would you or I be. An amazement at an angel, and at the absence of Jesus' body. But he means, "Don't stay amazed. This is as He said it would be." Human eyes were not permitted to see the event of the Resurrection itself. But the angels as the constant witnesses of God's action, saw it.³ This angel had seen it. He tells them what happened. Death could not keep Him.

2 Second, isn't it interesting that the angel designates Jesus as Jesus "**the Nazarene?**" Calling someone a Nazarene in that culture—and perhaps this angel was "IDing" Jesus one last time with this flavor—was a synonym for someone who is despised or detestable. It is how people from the area of Nazareth were often characterized. It would be a final identification of Jesus as the cursed one, despised and rejected.

3 Third, the angel sees the need to remind them that He was crucified—executed. Not just **died** or "who has passed away." He was terminated.

4 And fourth, **He has risen**, which is to say, **He is not here.** It was popular and in vogue at certain times in some European and American theological circles to suggest that Jesus didn't LITERALLY come back from the dead. They said—and tried to sell—that the Gospel narrative meant that Jesus' *teaching* and *example* would enjoy a resurgence; a marvelous re-discovery and a renewed popularity... No, this angel says, **He is risen—He is not here.** Couldn't be more plain. "He was dead. Now He's not. Check it out."

5 Fifth, evidence. **Here is the place where they laid Him.** They could see that it was empty. There's nothing wrong with seeing for ourselves. Check out the evidence. This is the line of thinking that actually brought me to faith in Christ, back in 1972. I was invited to come see. Consider the evidence. See the empty tomb.

³ Cranfield, in Constable, *Ibid.*

9 Then the angel tells them to go tell **His disciples and Peter**. You have to wonder why he spelled out Peter specifically. Peter was still smarting I am sure, from his denial. You can imagine Peter pacing up and down the floor, muttering to himself, “Why did I do it? He said I would do it and did I listen, Nooooo, I had to boast about following Him to death. And then I cave. What an idiot. What a fool. Man...” The angel tells the women to make sure Peter hears that Jesus has risen.

7 Designation of first post-resurrection destination? (And then he tells them where Jesus will show up.) In **Galilee**! Interesting. Why there? If you or I were arranging the scene we might place Him appearing at the Temple; or at Caiaphas’ house; or in Rome!!! But Galilee takes them back to where they began and it points to the Gentiles, to whom the Gospel would go soon enough. (By the way. Ever wonder, how did the angel know that?)

You have to love verse 8, where some very old manuscripts have this Gospel ending. (We will address that in a future message). **And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.** Fear completely captivated these women. We get so “Easterized” about the story. Joy Joy Joy with no time given for fear. But these women didn’t go to CVS and pick up some 50% candy! They **fled**. Trembling and trauma. They were speechless at first out of fear.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ OUGHT to have that affect. Coming back to life is no small thing. This is so INhuman a thing to do. It shakes UP our humanity—but of course, we’re not talking about a mere human. We’re talking about the God-man here. I wonder if we have become a little desensitized about this by watching movies that depict dead people coming back to life so easily and routinely and usually in the macabre sense of it. But remember that no one has come back to life apart from Jesus making it happen, or His apostles. It is the most awesome event in history. It ought to freak you out! It is incredible!

The account ends there. Matthew, Luke and John would give more details in years to come. Mark ends the resurrection morning story there. Jesus is not dead. He still isn’t dead. And what have you done with Him? Do you love Him? Are you as in amazement today about this as you were the first time you heard of it? Where does it leave you with Him, if He’s STILL alive? Which He is.

To close, notice please one last little phrase from the angel’s words: **Just as He told you.** Jesus always told the truth. Everything He ever said would happen, has, or will. What ELSE has He promised would happen? That is enough to last us until we are with Him. You can count on what Jesus Christ has promised. That makes His actual words, written down and recorded for us to know, learn, study and even memorize, worth knowing!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 62)

Scripture: Mark 14:12-21

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: May 27th, 2007

End of the Old

Mark 14:12-21 (NASB)

¹² And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover *lamb* was being sacrificed, His disciples *said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹³ And He *sent two of His disciples, and *said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” ¹⁵ “And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; and prepare for us there.” ¹⁶ And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found *it* just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷ And when it was evening He *came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they were reclining *at the table* and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me.” ¹⁹ They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?” ²⁰ And He said to them, “*It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.*” ²¹ “For the Son of Man *is to go*, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*”

Introduction I wonder if the disciples ever got bored with the old Jewish feasts and holidays—Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, etc. etc. Every year, the same old holidays. I wonder if young John or one of the other young ones maybe thought, how is this relevant to me except I get a good meal?

Here is what our basic philosophy is: JESUS CHRIST IS ALWAYS RELEVANT.

- If you are a teenager or an old person, Jesus is relevant.
- If you are a 20Something or middle aged, Jesus is relevant.
- If you are an American, He is relevant.
- If you are from Ghana, China, Canada or Sri Lanka, He is relevant.
- If you are poor or rich, living in the 13th or the 21st century, Jesus Christ is relevant.
- Whether you are in the forest some place on a Sunday morning, or at a coffee shop, up in an airplane or out at sea, or in some church—Jesus is relevant.

It is this world-view that penetrates every part of our lives, and everyone's existence--Jesus Christ is relevant. There is no time when He is *IRRELEVANT* and nothing and no one is *more* relevant at any time. I share this with you today, because although most of us would "sign off" on this pretty quickly, I think we might be secretly tempted to say, "Well sure, but after we praise Him for a little while, let's talk about us. Better yet, let's talk about me. Because I am actually the most relevant thing in my life."

I am convinced we do well to think *about Him*.

- We do well to study the four Gospels and to search them for more about Jesus.
- It does us well to think deeply about even the little events recorded there—and to use our imaginations to picture them.
 - If Jesus was sitting under a tree, talking about the clouds, I would want to know what He said.
 - If He got in a boat and went out and fished for an afternoon, I would want to hear Him talk, watch His fingers manipulate the line, his arms haul the nets.
 - If He went up to the Temple, as He did, I would want to tag along and listen to what He pointed out—how He participated on the Temple mount.

Anything He did was relevant. CALL ME A DREAMER BUT THAT'S MY WORLD-VIEW. That's really our basic philosophy around here. And so we return to the Gospel of Mark today, to a place not often traveled by Bible students: to Mark 14:12-21.

We are in the last week of Jesus' earthly life. He knows what's about to happen and Mary of Bethany did too. But all the other disciples are kind of in a cloud. They're thinking about things like, who gets to be first in the kingdom when Jesus kicks the Romans out? And things like, "Where are going to get Passover supper and do the ceremony?"

So we have in Mark 14:12-16 ***And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples *said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?"*** ¹³ ***And He *sent two of His disciples, and *said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him;*** ¹⁴ ***and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'*** ¹⁵ ***"And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; and prepare for us there."*** ¹⁶ ***And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.***

Perhaps it might seem like this is a “magical mystery tour” kind of event. Jesus somehow mysteriously knows who’s going to host them in Jerusalem. But it is probably much more normal than that. The Passover Feast HAD to be celebrated in Jerusalem—the city may have swelled to as many as three million people for that reason—and I think He had made arrangements with a certain man, and pre-arranged the signal. “By this period the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately followed Passover, had been extended in popular parlance to include the Passover itself. Representatives from each family would have the priests slaughter a lamb for them in the temple, then return with it to feed the whole family that night.¹” He will be carrying a water jar—men didn’t normally do that; mainly women did that. So this man would be obvious. In essence, Jesus has made reservations in advance. So the two disciples get it set up. “The whole record shows Jesus’ sovereign control over the destinies of Himself and His disciples. Even as He approached the Cross Jesus was aware of and caring for His disciples...²”

It is hard sometimes, to see the hand of Jesus working around and underneath and through our lives. But it is there. He is in control of everything that happens and He is providing for us—even when our bellies start growling.

In vs. 18 Jesus indicates a terrible thing: One of THEM, the very people who had said they would follow Him, would betray Him. What a bummer thing to say! And yet, it was a reality and the other disciples wonder who this could be. Could it be big-mouthed Peter? Could it be Thomas who always seems so skeptical? Could it be young John, he is so young. Stedman notes well, “Every one of us recognizes the feeling that there is something evil in us, something we do not trust, something we are not sure will not break out sometime and carry us into acts that appall us, deeds we are aghast at the thought of doing. Something of that self-distrust gripped these men at that moment, and they said, “Is it I?” But Jesus reassured them, said, **“It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.** What do you make of this? All the while Jesus KNOWS who is going to betray Him—the one who kind of does the *FON DU* thing with Him. I think He has known from the beginning. So much of Jesus’ life has been pre-planning, to put it more biblically, “predestined.” His birthplace, what kind of mom He would have, His entry into Jerusalem, and even His betrayal. That evening, lying down together around the Passover table, He knows what is coming. And then He says what are probably some of the saddest words ever uttered by anyone: as to the person who betrays Jesus, ***woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*** What an incredible thing for Him to declare.

¹Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mk 14:12). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

²Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003).

The evil of man **is** part of the divine purpose, part of God's sovereign plan—that is, it is factored INTO God's sovereign plan. It does not catch the Lord by surprise at all. But man is also responsible for himself. "The fact that God turns the wrath of man to his praise does not excuse the wrath of man."³

Are there not a few questions you would like to ask Jesus about these verses in Mark?

- How could you look Judas in the eye, knowing what he was going to do?
- If it would have been better for him to NOT be born at all, why was he born?
- Why was Judas' action so final, when Peter's denial—a thing done three times and also predicted by Jesus—was forgivable?

This passage records for us the very end of the Old covenant era. For at least fifteen centuries God's people recognized the calendar events each year of their ancient heritage. They made and found, and re-found meaning in the REMEMBRANCE of the actions of a faithful and compassionate God which had occurred centuries before. With God there is no being bound by time. With Him, His acts of goodness to Israel were as if they had all occurred "yesterday." But with men and women, how quickly they were prone to forget. And so, every year, this feast, and that ceremony; this sacrifice and that symbolic playing-out of their redemption. All intended to be carried out in faith, though He had not been dwelling in the Temple for hundreds of years. Jesus came to conclude all that. He celebrates the Passover for the last time. He went through each step with the disciples, designating the sacrificial lamb, the bitter herbs, the sweet mash of fruit and nuts of redemption. And then, HE would become all of that, bound up in one man, for all people, for all time.

The end of the "Old" ushers in the beginning of the New. You and I are still living in the times of the "New." And if I have any idea at all of how to interpret prophecy, there is a third era coming—a third age. Which will begin when Jesus comes back, literally, but will not end with that event. It will carry on with almost unimaginable wonder and power with Him finishing ALL prophecy and vanquishing once and for all, ALL foes—including death itself.

What do you think of Jesus Christ? Is He relevant? Is He worth seeking out, and serving, and meditating on what we DO know about Him in the

³Cranfield in Constable, *Ibid.*

Gospels? Are His words worth knowing and studying? Is there ANYthing more relevant?

Some applications:

1. Do not betray Jesus. Yes, I know, we do it all the time, but do NOT come to some point in your life, where you decide 30 pieces of silver, your own desires, are more important than serving Him. There is nothing sadder and frankly, nothing scarier than to say "I was once a Christian, but now I am not."
2. Just like the disciples found the water-jar guy, things always come out just as Jesus has said. What else has He said that might help us? Find those things in the Bible, and latch on to them. Know them, and you will find every promise is good.
3. Jesus already knows our inclination to betray Him. He will protect us against ourselves. We must often confess our sins to Him, and often bring ourselves back to the cross. We need this. And He knows that we need Him. He is always ready to make us new, and to make our walk with Him new again. Always.
4. Remember, Jesus Christ is ALWAYS relevant in your life. There is no moment when He is not relevant.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 65)

Scripture: Mark 14:22-31

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: June 3rd, 2007

Details of the First Lord's Supper

Mark 14:22-31 (NASB)

²² And while they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*; and gave *it* to them, and said, "Take *it*; this is My body." ²³ And when He had taken a cup, *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them; and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ "Truly I say to you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus *said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.'" ²⁸ "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹ But Peter said to Him, "*Even* though all may fall away, yet I will not." ³⁰ And Jesus *said to him, "Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me." ³¹ But *Peter* kept saying insistently, "*Even* if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing, too.

Introduction There are lots of little ceremonies we have that are designed to help us remember things—they're almost too many to count: birthdays, anniversaries, reunions, veterans' gatherings and organizations. The goal is to recover some good feeling from the past or to recalibrate our awareness of the importance of something or someone. There was this episode of M*A*S*H ("Old Soldiers") where the commanding officer had become very quiet and solemn and no one knew why? The character, Col. Potter, was serving now in his third war. And his group of buddies from the First World War had covenanted in a solemn pact back in 1918 that whoever the last one living was, he would drink a toast to the others from a rare bottle of French wine that they was to be kept in safe keeping until the time, in tribute and affection and remembrance to their one-time fellowship from some 34 years before.

We arrive this morning at that place in Mark—maybe the first one to write down a record of this event—where we read about the first Lord’s Supper. Matthew (26:26-30) gives it to us and some think his gospel came before Mark’s. Mark (14:22-32) of course and later Luke (22:19-20) and then Paul gives some corrective discussion (1st Cor. 11:23-25)—and John talks around it (because he give us lots of description of the evening in ch. 13 but completely leaves out the ceremony itself.) Calvin also said that John 6:26-65 should be included in any list of Lord’s Table passages, too. Sometimes this ceremony is called “the **eucharist**,” or “**communion**.” Sometimes it is called “**the Lord’s Table**” or “**the breaking of bread**.” Any of those is fine, really, but I wish there was some way to invigorate, enliven, energize our doing of the Lord’s Supper in a way which would ALWAYS re capture for us the drama, and power that it had on that first evening when Jesus did it with the disciples. *Not that those first disciples really GOT it*, with what Jesus was doing that night. It was radical, fresh, new, unexpected and powerful. I long for that feeling when we do something as a whole body. It should be CLEAR every time we do this, WHY we’re doing it.

Basically there are four views of the Lord’s Supper and what it means. The first is by far the view held by the most people over the centuries, or at least held up TO the most people:

1. It is called “transubstantiation” and it is the view that the bread and wine actually BECOME the body and blood of Jesus Christ by a miracle.
2. Then there is the view put out there by Martin Luther, called “consubstantiation,” and held by most Lutherans. Luther said that the bread and wine do not actually *become* the body and blood of Christ but that the body and blood of Christ are *alongside* the bread and wine. Some would modify this to say that the bread and wine become the blood and wine of Christ once they are injected by a worthy communicant.
3. Calvin offered a third option. The Lord’s Supper, he says, is of course a great mystery but the main point is the presence of Christ at those times when believers specially remember Him. In other words, put very simply, He shows up. Not visibly, but spiritually, and true believers can sense the presence of the Bread of Life, and feel filled and nourished by His presence at the Table.
4. The Swiss reformer Zwingli then came along and said, “Nah, you’re all nuts and way too superstitious. The Lord’s Supper is a remembering ceremony where we deliberately recall what Jesus did for us. It is Memorial Day—the heroes don’t actually show up, but we respectfully and gratefully *remember* what they did for us. And most Christians in our circles hold to this fourth, this very

unmystical “memorial” view, whether they are aware of the other views or not.

In addition to WHAT they think the Lord’s Table is, Christians sometimes have lots of strict rules and expectations for the Lord’s Table today... These include the fact that some Christians feel

- A. Strict enforcement of “only-Christians” participating.
- B. No children allowed to participate until they clearly demonstrate that they are born-again and fully understand *and appreciate* what we are doing and saying in the Lord’s Supper.
- C. The Lord’s Table must be celebrated every Lord’s Day.
- D. Only unleavened bread and only wine should be used.
- E. Only the elders of the church should *serve* the elements and/**or** only an ordained minister can “officiate” the Lord’s Supper.
- F. The same Bible passages should be read every time the ordinance is done—that there is something “sacramental” about using the same Bible passages every time...

It is important with all these strong convictions, that we know precisely what the New Testament DOES say? So we have an opportunity today to pay close attention to this first record of the ordinance.

As we say, the disciples didn’t necessarily get it all at first, and we will pray and think for the rest of our lives as they did, to make it as meaningful as possible. Let me say it this way—if you are a good Christian, you will think about the things you do in your faith, the spiritual things. If you just “go on automatic” and run yourself robotically through the motions, do you think God is impressed with that? No, we need to be thinkers about our faith. Baptism should be clear to us. The Lord’s Supper should be clear and we should know what and why we think the way we do about it. Marriage ought to be deliberate and carefully thought-through. Any missions endeavors we do, should be done with careful thought, much prayer and intentionality—not just “on automatic” or in an emotional blast of energy.

So let’s START to notice some things about this little ceremony that

WHILE THEY WERE EATING... This was part of the Passover meal. Already we see a difference with how we celebrate this ordinance! There was a meal-time relaxation going on, and Jesus tacked this new lesson on to the Passover meal, which had its own high symbolism and seriousness. In the midst of the old, ancient Jewish ceremony He invents a new one—one for the new age that was just then dawning.

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread and BROKE it and gave it to them. It was some of the ceremonial bread of the Passover—unleavened to be sure, but normal enough bread for them. Why did He break it? Two reasons, I think: **1)** so it could be distributed for each person to have some; **2)** to illustrate in a visible picture what would happen to Him, the Bread of Life Himself. He would be broken—*the next day!* He would offer Himself a sacrifice for them. In the process His body—a body that had never sinned—would become all busted up. It would be torn and lacerated and stripped. It would be lashed and spit upon and punctured and torn up. It would endure terrible pain and damage. And finally, the broken Bread of Life would be used up and would die. Then it would be pierced and hauled down, and though lifeless, cared for by a small handful of loving disciples. Then it would be buried. And it would be silent. Then it would come back to life—or some theologians think it would become a wholly new body—I think it was the same body that came back to life, infused with resurrection power. All of that OF that body, symbolized in that tearing of the bread by He, Himself. They didn't see all of that of course, and I'm not suggesting that He was even thinking all of that at that moment.

We close today, only having opened the consideration of Mark's record of the first Lord's Table... We will do more, Lord willing.

I close with the words to an old song. It has only been sung in English since 1830 when it was translated from Latin to English by James Alexander. It is the song "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" and we don't sing it very often because it is such a sad tune. It was written by Bernard of Clairvaux in 1153 and was sung in Latin only for 500 years (until 1656) when Paul Gerhardt translated it into German—then only in Latin and German for another 180 years!

1. O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.

2. What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered, was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor, vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

3. Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee, Thou noble countenance,
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee and flee before Thy glance.
How art thou pale with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy visage languish that once was bright as morn!

4. Now from Thy cheeks has vanished their color once so fair;
From Thy red lips is banished the splendor that was there.

Grim death, with cruel rigor, hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
Thus Thou hast lost Thy vigor, Thy strength in this sad strife.

5. My burden in Thy Passion, Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression which brought this woe on Thee.
I cast me down before Thee, wrath were my rightful lot;
Have mercy, I implore Thee; Redeemer, spurn me not!

6. What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.

7. My Shepherd, now receive me; my Guardian, own me Thine.
Great blessings Thou didst give me, O source of gifts divine.
Thy lips have often fed me with words of truth and love;
Thy Spirit oft hath led me to heavenly joys above.

8. Here I will stand beside Thee, from Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me! When breaks Thy loving heart,
When soul and body languish in death's cold, cruel grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish, Thee in mine arms I'll clasp.

9. The joy can never be spoken, above all joys beside,
When in Thy body broken I thus with safety hide.
O Lord of Life, desiring Thy glory now to see,
Beside Thy cross expiring, I'd breathe my soul to Thee.

10. My Savior, be Thou near me when death is at my door;
Then let Thy presence cheer me, forsake me nevermore!
When soul and body languish, oh, leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish by virtue of Thine own!

11. Be Thou my consolation, my shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy passion when my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee, upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfolds Thee. Who dieth thus dies well.

JESUS SAID TAKE IT —THIS IS MY BODY
THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE COVENANT,
POURED OUT FOR MANY
LAST TIME HE DRINKS IT
UNTIL “THE KINGDOM”
SANG A **HYMN** probably one of Psalms 113-118
JESUS PREDICTS THEY WILL BE SCATTERED
PREDICTS WILL RISE AGAIN
THEN WILL GO FIRST TO GALILEE
PETER’S PROMISE OF LOYALTY
JESUS’ PREDICTION ABOUT PETER
ALL THE DISCIPLES PROMISE OF LOYALTY...

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 66)

Scripture: Mark 14:23-26

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: July 1st, 2007

Details of the First Lord's Supper (Part 2)

Mark 14:22-31 (NASB)

²² And while they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*; and gave *it* to them, and said, "Take *it*; this is My body." ²³ And when He had taken a cup, *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them; and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ "Truly I say to you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Introduction What things do you keep in your life to remind you that you are a Christian? I'm sure there is something there in your life that you go back to for the PURPOSE OF REMEMBERING YOUR BASIC IDENTITY AS A BELIEVER. Some people wear *a cross* around their neck or get a *cross tattoo*. Others listen to Christian music. Others make a commitment to go to at least *one church service a week*—then they know they're Christians. I think Jesus knew the disciples would struggle in months and years to come to remember their own faith. It was strong the evening of Maundy Thursday. It would be strong again a week later. But at other times it would drift...

The good thing about studying the Scripture verse by verse is that in doing so, you cover *all* that a book has in it, and you encounter ideas and issues you normally not think of, or be interested in. So when we come to this passage on Jesus' last evening before His crucifixion, we pay careful attention to the details. He had distributed some bread and told them it was representative of His body which was ***given for you***. I understand this was mainly to illustrate that His death would be atoning and that the ceremony of the Lord's Table was memorial to that point, but also that there seems to be something spiritual going on when believers do this together. His presence seems to be somehow more sensed.

1. Then Mark tells us **Jesus took A cup**. It was perhaps a normal cup unless it was a special ceremonial Passover cup. He did not pour out of it into little cups. He just passed one cup around. The picture of this for us is that we all drink from the same “cup” of salvation. There are not multiple means of salvation in the world. There is one cup, the one Jesus bids us drink from. That may seem obvious to you but I am meeting people these days who are very nice people, and quite religious too. They think there’s lots of “cups” of salvation around. Not so. Only one.
2. **He gave thanks**. For what? Well it was His custom, and any spiritual person, to give thanks for what they had. And in this case, He was probably giving thanks for the great thing He was facing the next day when He would be poured out like a drink offering! He gave thanks. Why do we not do that, or do it so rarely? Are we so smug that we presume we don’t need to do that? I know, we’re not supposed to parade our piety in front of people to get their respect or admiration. Do you think that’s what Jesus did? I don’t think so. But He did give thanks. We should follow His example, I think. Especially since we know as He did, what He was going to accomplish the next day.
3. **They all drank from it**. There was something deliberately family-like in all drinking from the same cup. Did Peter catch Andrew’s disease? Did James contract something from Simon the Zealot? I don’t know. They didn’t seem to be worrying about that though, and isn’t that interesting because around Jerusalem there were plenty of ceremonial baths that you had to bathe in lots to be “clean.” Nonetheless, at that moment, they all drank from the cup Jesus offered.
4. He then commented that **This is My blood of the covenant, poured out for many**. Many people assume He meant that the juice or wine would become the actually blood that He would shed the next day, over and over again. Constable notes, “The Greek word translated “covenant” is *diatheke*, a word that describes an agreement made by one person *for others*. A different word, *syntheke*, describes an agreement that two parties made in which both had obligations to each other...¹” Do you see the point of this? Jesus transacts redemption FOR OTHERS. He does not jointly contract to add his part to man’s part for redemption. He does it FOR us. He looked into Peter’s eyes and Judas son of James, and Mary Magdalene’s if she was there, and says, “This wine—my blood tomorrow—will be your

¹Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mk 14:23.

admission into heaven; your **get-out-of-hell-free card**. I'm buying it for you."

5. Notice please one little detail here too: He says His blood is **poured out for many**. Why didn't He say **for all**? You might say,
 - "well, many IS all."
 - You might try to make a case that *pollon* ("many") in Greek is equivalent to *pantes* ("all") which is used in vs. 23.
 - Or you might say, "He meant to say 'all'."
 - Or, you might say, "Why do you have to be so nitpicky with the text, Pastor Neil?" Well, this is one reason some scholars say Jesus' atonement is particular in its focus and in its "efficiency." J.I. Packer always asks us to consider "what does the cross actually accomplish?" Would it make any sense at all for Jesus to pay for the sins, make a covenant, bind an agreement, transact a complete and total payment for someone—for anyone—even for ONE person, for whom it would ultimately do no good and who would end up in hell?" Five-point Calvinists distinguish themselves by believing in "particular redemption," that is, that Jesus died for the elect. And that is indeed a great many people. He states it so to the disciples that His blood is poured out for many, though not for all. Of course, this offends many *other* Christians who are convinced that Jesus forensically and judicially paid for and completed the legal jurisprudence on behalf of every soul that ever lived, and that the only reason they go to an eternal hell is for *not believing* that the certificates of debt have already been wiped out, though in fact, every sin is paid for already, including unbelief.

A main thing you should get about the Lord's Table is that it is not an end in itself. I think many think that it IS. But it is not. Jesus wasn't saying, "Do this often and then you will benefit from My body and blood broken for you." I think He was in fundamentally saying, "My body and blood are broken and poured out for you. Do whatever you have to, to never lose sight of that. Be impressed with it. Consider it precious. Depend on THAT to get you to heaven, MY body and blood, for you. As a gift. Embraced and held on to by faith. And here's a device, a little ceremony, a tool with which you can envision what I've done for you."

If you do not love the cross, and depend on the cross, don't think the ordinance will somehow make it real or make it count for you. You need to believe in the cross and love it first.

Then Mark tells us that Jesus said, **Truly I say to you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God**. It is a future gaze that Jesus makes—He is looking off

into the future when there will be a great feast. Jesus was anticipating the messianic banquet at the beginning of His kingdom.² Evidently there will be a raising of a cup again at that hour, we shall all be there if we are Christians. It will be dramatic. We will all be redeemed and sinless, if we are there. And we will remember the text of the Gospels and the apostles will remember it powerfully. They will be around Him I believe, and we will all drain a glass in tribute! He is risen. He is risen indeed! It will be pure, undiluted joy!

Then Mark says ***After singing a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives.*** When you go there, think of them on that hillside. You will be able to picture it. The whole hillside is a graveyard today. Imagine them walking around there with Him after they sang one of the hymns which was probably the second part of the *Hallel* (lit. praise, Ps. 115–118) that the Jews sang antiphonally at the end of the Passover.³

This is the day; this is the day that the Lord hath made
That the Lord hath made,
We will rejoice, we will rejoice and be glad in it
And be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord hath made
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day; this is the day
That the Lord, hath made.

Psalm 118:24

The Lord's Table should also remind us—in the one cup and all drinking from it together, that Lord Jesus always is moving in us to remind us that life is not just about us. Not really. And this is a countercultural message for us because everything in our culture is screaming at us that life is about YOU and your pleasure and your rights and your convenience and your needs. He calls us to celebrate Him and all that He did for us. Whether its in our families or in our church family or among our neighbors and even at work, we are called to look out for others' best interests. This is a hard battle because so easily our **gaze** drifts back to us, and we become self-centered all over again. But we praise Him for His relentless work at taking our attention off ourselves and placing it on others...

²Constable, *Ibid*

³Constable, *Ibid*

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 67)

Scripture: Mark 14:27-31

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: July 1st, 2007

Being Loved Despite Cowardice

Mark 14:27-31 (NASB)

²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.'" ²⁸ "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹ But Peter said to Him, "*Even* though all may fall away, yet I will not." ³⁰ And Jesus *said to him, "Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me." ³¹ But *Peter* kept saying insistently, "*Even* if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing, too.

Introduction What do you think is the greatest sin? Red Sox fans would suggest, "The greatest sin is to be a Yankees fan." Many Christians would say it is to reject God's offer of eternal life in Christ. One Jewish website suggests that the greatest sin is to commit evil in the name of God. I think lots of people would say that participating in genocide, like the Holocaust, or committing a crime on a child or just simply murdering someone in the first degree—any one of those would be a good candidate. On a second level, and pretty close to the first we might list adultery, homosexuality, hatred and grand larceny. So what IS the baddest of the bad? It's the kind of thing you can imagine Peter and James and John and Philip sitting around, discussing. But we've got one real big one right in front of us in the passage today. I think we would NOT put this one on our list of Top Five Sins, even... To abandon Jesus, in the face of criticism or persecution would be a big sin, I think.

Have you ever been abandoned due to cowardice? Someone you're depending on, splits because they got afraid. It is one of the deepest feelings of ALONENESS that there is. You feel your very heart sink. The air turns gray around you. You are stuck in a twilight zone of unbelief and confusion ("How could they DO this to me?") and anger. Jesus knew this was going to be His experience, very soon, and despite the sincere enough protestations of His disciples, especially Peter.

But here is a harder question, one which I am pretty certain most of us would be hesitant to answer: *have YOU ever abandoned someone else?* Most of us would reply, “Of course not! I am a better person than that.” A few of us, might mumble to ourselves, “maybe...” It is you who MIGHT have abandoned or even betrayed someone at some point, that I appeal to how you felt... SO here the disciples are, hearing Jesus describe what’s going to happen. All 11 disciples would take offense at His sufferings and death. To avoid the same treatment they would “fall away,” denying association with Him (cf. 14:30) and desert Him (cf. v. 50). Their loyalty would temporarily collapse.¹

I don’t know, I think we would tend to cut the disciples some slack here. I think we might excuse them with something like, “Hey, they were tired. They had no backup. It was dangerous.” They had just had supper, and then they had the LAST supper. And then Jesus comes out with, ***You will all fall away because it is written I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP WILL BE SCATTERED*** which is His using a prophecy from Zechariah (13:7) to indicate that the sheep would flee from the shepherd because someone was attacking him. Jesus looked at Himself as God’s suffering servant, as Isaiah also foresaw:

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. Isaiah 53:4-6

I think its always amazing how Jesus knew the Scripture, and when He would pull out a verse, you paid attention! It would be flawlessly applied, sometimes DUALY applied—having an application back when it was written and then having a new application with the Messiah. Zechariah prophesied five hundred years before and Jesus takes one line and says to Peter and Andrew and the rest, “this is about Me, and you.”

Verse 28 again predicts His resurrection. Jesus never once spoke of the cross to His disciples without setting it against the light of His resurrection (Stedman.) And yet none of them seem to grasp it—they didn’t REALLY think He would come back from the dead. And His destination AFTER He arises from the dead, He tells them this specific detail too. How did He know? Because He’s

¹John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2:178 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985).

Jesus! Do you ever get tired of hearing about the resurrection? I don't. It is the keystone of our whole faith. So enjoy it again today, dear ones! He said He would go in front of them, in advance of them, back to Galilee. They started there. It was Gentile country. It was a good place to launch the Good News that He had defeated death!

Peter seems to miss that little plan, though. He can't get off the "You all are going ALL going to desert Me" prediction. "Not ME," he says. "MY loyalty is solid, Rabbi," he is saying. "Even if James and John split, I won't!" Good old Peter—this is one reason why we love him. He was real. He was fallible. He was at times full of himself. Just like some of us. We get all enamored with our OWN discipleship, that we stop listening to Jesus. We think this Christian life thing is about US! It's about Him. We're not following ourselves with a Christian banner. We're following Him. When you sign up to be a Christian, you sign up to begin a lifelong following of Jesus. How He leads, I will follow, as the song says.

Peter had every intention at that moment of dying for Jesus. But the Lord Jesus knew Peter's heart, right down to the smallest most secret part. He knew Peter would deny Him and He knew Peter would do it three times before old Mr. Rooster goes "cockadoodle doo" TWICE. That same night before the rooster crows twice, before dawn, Peter would not only desert Jesus but actually disown (aparnēsē, "deny"; cf. 8:34) Him three times... Only Mark mentioned the rooster crowing twice, a detail probably due to Peter's clear recollection of the incident. (The major Gr. ms. evidence is split over including the word "twice" but the more strongly attested words "the second time" in 14:72 provide confirmation that Mark wrote "twice" here.)²

Mark tells us also that the others were claiming the same kind of intentions to defend Him. All would flee and hide. Fear would rule them and Jesus would be standing alone, enduring the whole next day by Himself.

So what does all of this have to do with my Christian life on a Monday or a Thursday or a Saturday here in 2007?

The Christian life is not lived on our determination. We run out of that pretty quickly, especially if there's any real risk involved. Stedman said this (in 1975): "Have you ever felt that way? I have. I have been so sure that something the Word says could not happen. I have been sure that by sheer determination and force of will I could work it out on my own. I have said the same thing Peter

² *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Ibid.

did, and so have you. Jesus says the next time you think like this, just remember that cocky little rooster you saw strutting around in the barnyard. That's the same rooster you had for dinner last week!"³

The Christian life is the continual discovery, rediscovery, re-rediscovery that He forgives us and loves us even when we flee in cowardice. Even when we abandon Him, we go back. Now, Peter DID go back. Peter winds up being a key apostle and who apparently makes it all the way to Rome with the Gospel, and is crucified there, upside down, after a terrible interment in the Mamertine Prison.

This is a thing in Christianity that I think we can do with reminders of a lot. He is gracious to us and patient with our inconsistencies. In fact, I think He is more patient with us than we are with ourselves. We drive and fail, drive and fail, and we need to depend more on GRACE and mercy than we do. We treat Jesus in our faith-walk as though He was someone different than who He really is. I'm not excusing our cowardice. I'm not saying its OK to deny Him. It is not. Don't do it. But when you do, know that He died for that sin too.

Are you sure you know Him? We might feel quick to sign on, when its comfortable in an air conditioned room, with friends all around and good music.

- But what if someone criticized you for being a Christian?
- What if someone said, "You're bigoted and you're a hatemonger because you believe what you believe!" Would you stay with Him?
- They even called some first century Christians "atheists" because they wouldn't acknowledge the supposed deity of Caesar. And they burned them on stakes in arenas, for the viewing pleasure. Would you still follow Him if things got dangerous?

Oh how He loves you and me, oh how He loves you and me!
He gave His life, what more could He give?
Oh how He loves you, oh how He loves me,
Oh how He loves you and me.

³ Ray Stedman, <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/3327.html> Sept.14, 1975 Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, CA

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 68)

Scripture: Mark 14:32-42

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: July 8th, 2007

When God's Will Hurts

Mark 14:32-42 (NASB)

³² And they *came to a place named Gethsemane; and He *said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." ³³ And He *took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And He *said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." ³⁵ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground, and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. ³⁶ And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt." ³⁷ And He *came and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ "Keep watching and praying, that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. ⁴¹ And He *came the third time, and *said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² "Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

Introduction I think it is a toss-up, as to what was the world's darkest night? Many might identify one of these as the best candidate:

- Some dark night during the Black Death in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries during which as much as half of Europe's population died?
- To be stumbling about the evening of August 6th, 1945 in what was left of the streets Hiroshima, Japan?
- The night of November 22nd, 1963 when President John F. Kennedy was dead?
- To be a citizen of Cambodia pretty much any night in 1976 as the Khmer Rouge ravaged their own countrymen?

But in my opinion it would have to be either Maundy Thursday Night, late—about which we read in today's passage. Or, it was the next evening, Good Friday evening, when Jesus had died and going by how we imagine the disciples and Mary felt. One of those two nights must be the world's darkest night. And

in the late night gloom of Maundy Thursday, in Jerusalem still, is where we have come in our consideration of Mark's Gospel.

Even though these scenes that lead to the cross are so familiar to some of us, they are still new to others—particularly our young people and new Christians. And so it is always beneficial to review, and go over again the details of our Savior's sufferings. These hours in the Garden of Gethsemane, are so very dark and sad. The gloom oozes off the page to us and it is hard maybe even to get motivated to look at that evening.

Jesus took with Him at this time just His closest three disciples—Peter, James and John; two brothers and their fellow colleague fisherman. But they cannot stay awake. A combination of their own tiredness and perhaps Satan's sandman-effects too. They could not **watch**. Alertness is a large part of the Christian life. I'm not going to allegorize this too much *into* what the disciples were supposed to be doing but this does stand before us as a great failing of the disciples on that evening. "Watching"—or BEING WATCHFUL, ALERT, MINDFUL of what is happening around us spiritually, is a thing we do when we're on top of it. We watch the spiritual condition of our own lives. We watch what's going on in our families, spiritually. We watch the spiritual growth or decay of our town and even our country. We pray and we watch. We are either alert or we are not. Shepherds in a church are to be watchful lots. That's their main job. We watch things for the spiritual health of the body. We watch things doctrinally and philosophically. We watch our priorities and our sense of God's purpose for THIS church. We watch out for each other. In watchfulness, we are often praying. We are asking God to give us wisdom and light and understanding.

As for prayer... It is talking to God. I recently was reminded that not all people who believe themselves Christians pray *as we do*, spontaneously, conversationally. Some believe that prayer is something you "say," as in "saying your prayers" or "THE saying of certain pre-designed prayers."

- In this way, many subjects are faithfully and systematically covered.
- Scriptural truths are reviewed and a more formal kind of language is used.
- "Saying" prayers was certainly a thing first century Jews did, as they recited back to God in prayer passages of the Old Testament.

But we might wonder if Jesus "said" prayers in the Garden that night? Rather, we think He just talked to God, very honestly, painfully sincere and genuine. He told God just what He felt, and He did it repeatedly. ***Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.***

There is so much in these few words. The Son of God, crying out to the Father from within the timeless godhead-relationship... He calls out **Abba** which is like our "Poppa" or "Daddy." He didn't want, as a man, to go through what He was about to go through. We say this carefully, but it is the first time, and the last time, where the Son doesn't want to do what the Father wants Him to do. He is son of Man here, and it is not hard to understand why. The cross is upon Him. I can imagine all the snarling dogs of hell spitting, and cursing and mocking Him at this point in Jerusalem. They are about to have their way!

It is going to HURT to do the will of God! People talk about "hell" as a casual curse word... Hollywood fevers itself with movies about dark things and about demons and ghosts and blood-thirsty creatures. Puffy little theologians in Ivy League graduate schools snort at the "myth" of hell and write books about the quaint old belief that such a place existed in the minds of colonial aristocracy or in slave-society folklore, not believing a word of it today... Marketers use it to name cheese... But the place is real. Jesus would endure ALL HELL's FLAMES somehow, and He knew it was coming. He uttered, **remove this cup from Me...**

It should not surprise us, that since it was Jesus' experience to hurt while fulfilling the greater purpose of God's will that sometimes it will hurt us a bit to do God's will. I don't know where the evangelical movement went off the path and bought into the idea that Christianity guarantees pleasure and ease and nothing by happiness in THIS life. Somehow that seems to have become the message we want to hear. But in reality, sometimes following God, following Jesus will involve some pain.

Peter and James and John couldn't stay awake. And as they dozed, the words of Hebrews 5:7,8 were being lived out...

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

He was praying and telling God what He thought and felt, and His fears. And He was praying FOR His disciples whom He knew would be scattered. To do what needed to be done in this fallen world, it was going to cost some pain and sorrow. He would have to be alone. He would have to endure.

Sometimes I think the Christian life is about endurance. Some days, or in some crises it is that simple. You have to get through it. You have the confidence that ANYTHING you have to face, Jesus has faced that. Anything

pain you must deal with, Jesus knows what that feels like. Anything! He is thoroughly acquainted with what you are called to face, and He is thoroughly EQUIPPED to give you power and patience and courage to face it, even when it hurts.

In this culture, I think a thing we seem to struggle with temptation a lot over is in relationships. We want to quit them before the time of temptation and trial is over. We want to give up.

From time to time I have met couples who have had hard marriages. Sometimes those couples have become separated but then in time got back together. They felt the Holy Spirit telling them to wait out the pain, to DO God's will and to endure and to cry out to Him, **Abba Father!** And they did. And God heard them and restored their marriages. But they had to endure the pain in order to do God's will. Sometimes parents struggle with their kids or kids struggle with parents who are arbitrary and crushing. To do God's will, however that spins out is hard. But God takes them through it.

When bad illness strikes it is easy to give up in despair and fear. It would be easy to just cave in to believing that God must NOT really love you because He allowed this to happen. And to MAINTAIN your faith and your testimony and a willingness to talk about the good things of the Gospel and the Christian life, rather than just talk about nothing but the illness all the time, HURTS. But if you hang on to your faith, He will come through.

Luke adds a detail to Jesus' suffering in the Garden...

An angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. (Luke 22:43) That is a comforting thought. When we hang in there and press on in God's will, He notices. I don't know if He dispatches angels from heaven to help us in unseen ways, but I wouldn't be surprised.

We need to carry on in God's will no matter what the difficulty or pain. That is the simple application today. I don't know what you're dealing with these days but don't give up on your faith to see you through. He knows what you're feeling. No one ELSE might! But He does. He endured the darkest night the world had ever seen by prayer. Strength is what prayer provides! His flesh was weak but His spirit was willing. He sought out the Lord in prayer. He wants US to seek Him out in prayer now, and especially when we are struggling. Seek Him out. Make prayer a hallmark of your life.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 69)

Scripture: Mark 14:41-52

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: July 29th, 2007

The Night the Cops Collared the God-Man

Mark 14:41-52 (NASB)

⁴¹ And He *came the third time, and *said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² “Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!” ⁴³ And immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, *came up, accompanied by a multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him, and lead Him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ And after coming, he immediately went to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁴⁶ And they laid hands on Him, and seized Him. ⁴⁷ But a certain one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ And Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as against a robber? ⁴⁹ “Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but *this has happened* that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” ⁵⁰ And they all left Him and fled. ⁵¹ And a certain young man was following Him, wearing *nothing but* a linen sheet over *his* naked *body*; and they *seized him. ⁵² But he left the linen sheet behind, and escaped naked.

Introduction I don’t know if you’ve ever been arrested? I have not (yet, anyway) but I’ve been stopped a couple of times, and as a kid I had an encounter or two with police officers. It shakes you up. The idea of an authority pulling you over, he’s got a gun. He’s got that tone-of-voice. Today we have the Son of God, the creator Himself being “pulled over” and arrested by the Temple guard. It is the height of absurdity.

We come back into the Gospel of Mark (**and the reason, once again, why we’re doing this exposition is because it is just a good thing to do**) with the disciples again asleep in the garden, all except one of them—Judas Iscariot, who has had a busy evening. In that evening he betrayed Jesus. For that conspiracy he received 30 pieces of silver, which in fact was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (see Zechariah 11:12). It is the average Old Testament compensation for the death of

a slave if he had been gored by another man's ox (Ex 21:32); basically, Judas sells his master pretty cheaply.¹ His deception, subterfuge, stealth and hypocrisy all testify to his being essentially an evil man. Jesus called him, cryptically, **the son of perdition**--the "one doomed to destruction" (John 17:12.) Judas was never a sheep and his true character was finally manifested (13:11; 1 John 2:19). He was a "dead branch." Judas did what he wanted (he sold Jesus). Yet he was an unwitting tool of Satan (13:2, 27). Even people's volitionally free acts fit into God's sovereign plan (Acts 2:23; 4:28). Thus Judas' betrayal of Jesus **fulfilled** the words in Psalm 41:9 about David's betrayal by his friend.² Even though he regrets in a bitter way what he has done, and commits suicide, he is nonetheless evil.

It is not so hard for us to grudgingly accept this status for Judas. At most, we are a little perplexed at how someone so close to Jesus Christ could so completely masquerade as a true child of God and yet so completely not be one. But what if evil becomes evident in a loved one of ours. Here is where the real disbelief would come. We would not want to believe it possible in somebody WE love and we think we know. We would desperately search for some *other* explanation. And yet evil impostership does still crop up in human hearts, and sometimes in church-going people. Scott Peck published an important book 24 years ago, entitled *People of the Lie*. In that book Peck said that "people of the lie" have no regard for the truth; they lie and live in a world of lies. They are masters of disguise and cloak themselves with masks of respectability, goodness and often piety. **Their evil is in their utter inability to see and to look at themselves in reality.**³

You and I need to find the courage to look at ourselves in the mirror. We need to face up to who we are, and to have a life-long and deep-seated commitment to keep doing that. God matches that with much grace and kindness. He meets us at the mirror and then shows us the cross and says, "Yes, you're that broken. Yes, you're hopelessly imprisoned in your own tendency to rebel. Yes, you're hooked on You. That is the tragedy of your sin. But I have sent my Son to the cross for you. He knew all that about you and went there anyway!"

Without the help of Judas, the priests would never have been able to find Jesus among the many groups camped around Jerusalem that night. Those who have seen the crowds of pilgrims camped around temples at a Hindu festival will understand. Even if they had found the place, they would never have been able to find Jesus himself in the darkness, and Judas knew well that his fellow-Galileans might fight. That is why the well-armed temple police were there (not a

¹Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament* (Mt 26:14). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

²John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:332.

³ See excerpts from *People of the Lie* at the end of this message.

city mob, as is sometimes suggested). Night arrests of suspects are not unusual; the suspects are off guard, and there is less danger of a rescue by friends or neighbours. As it was, Peter (not named here; see Jn. 18:10) drew his sword in vain, for Jesus refused such help. We may be used to police spies and paid informers, but the treachery of Judas still staggers us. Stedman notes

Peter is still trying to make a show of carrying out what he resolved. He grabs the sword and, as the priests and soldiers move in on Jesus, he slashes away. But so poor is his aim that all he does is lop off the ear of the high priest's servant. That is such a beautiful example of the flesh at work! We may strike out in our attempts to carry out our purposes, but all we accomplish is the lopping-off of somebody's ear. I look back this morning on twenty-five years of pastoral ministry and I am sure that if the symbols of my actions were visibly apparent, you could look back and find lopped-off ears lying all over the place! They are symbols of my attempts to do what I thought was right -- but it was not of the Lord. We have all done this. The glorious thing, Luke tells us, is that Jesus reached out and touched that servant and healed his ear. I am so grateful for the Lord's healing touch on the lopped-off ears that I have been responsible for during my lifetime.⁴

The kiss on the cheek was the salute demanded by local culture, and the greeting was that of a disciple to his master, but both were only signs arranged in advance. What amazed all was the calm response of Jesus. There was, he said, no need for all this drama. They could have arrested him any day in the temple, if they had not been afraid of the people's reaction. Then the secret of his quiet acceptance came out: he knew that all of this had its place in the plan and purpose of God.⁵

Mark's verse 50 is devastating: ***and they all left him and fled.*** Peter ran away. John and James ran away. Mary and Mary and Mary... ran away. Andrew and Simon the Zealot—a feisty, warlike guy probably, ran away. They all ran away. Jesus was dragged off alone. I am often skeptical of all the high energy talk we do as evangelical, fundamental Bible-believing Christians. But men often don't *really* know how they will react until they are tested. Would you and I run away or would we stand our ground? Matthew Henry wrote,

Let not those that suffer for Christ, think it strange, if they be thus deserted, and if all the herd shun the wounded deer; they are not better than their Master, nor

⁴ Ray Stedman, *Smite the Shepherd* sermon <http://www.pbc.org/library/files/html/3327.html>

⁵ D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition*, Rev. Ed. of: *The New Bible Commentary*. 3rd Ed. / Edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Mk 14:43.

can expect to be better used either by their enemies or by their friends. (When St. Paul was in peril, none *stood by him*, but *all men forsook him*, 2 Tim. 4:16.)⁶

Verses 51 and 52 are interesting, in that Mark is the only one to give us this detail... Since this incident makes no unique contribution to the story of Jesus' arrest, most of the commentators have concluded that the young man was Mark, [though] there is no solid evidence for this. Mark described the young man (Gr. *neaniskos*, between 24 and 40 years old) as one who was following Jesus. This description could mean he was one of the Twelve or simply someone who was sympathetic with Jesus. He was wearing a rather costly linen outer garment (Gr. *sindon*) without an undergarment (Gr. *chiton*). It may have been his sleeping garment. Perhaps he had been in bed in Jerusalem when he heard the mob leaving the city talking about arresting Jesus and decided to go along. When one of the soldiers seized him, he was so intent on abandoning Jesus that he was willing to run through the crowd naked rather than staying with Jesus. This man's action further illustrates how eager Jesus' followers were to save their own skins at the cost of Jesus' safety and companionship. His naked condition highlights his fear and embarrassment.⁷

Our Christian world-view says this:

In eternity past, the Father and the Son and the Spirit arranged that at the right point in time, the Son would come to planet Earth and live, and die an earthly and a human death at the hands of the very creatures whom He, Himself, had created. The Father, the Son and the Spirit agreed to this plan because God loved the world so much, and by doing this people would not have to perish in their sins but instead, any person COULD have everlasting life. It is that simple. You either embrace that and believe it, and keep believing it until you die—or you do not. Your dying may not be in exactly the time or way you might prefer. It might even be a little scary as was that of Peter and James and John eventually were--But after that, you will have everlasting life, Jesus says. And we will receive new bodies. And we will be WITH Jesus and all our loved ones who loved Him. All of this is real, and we shall SEE how real it is, soon enough.

⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, Mk 14:50 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).

⁷ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 14:51 (Galaxie Software, 2003).

EXCERPTS FROM
"PEOPLE OF THE LIE"

by M. Scott Peck MD

Page 69: "The central defect of 'the evil' is not the sin but the refusal to acknowledge it. More often than not these people will be looked at as solid citizens. How can that be? How can they be evil and not designated as criminals? The key word is "designated". They are criminals in that they commit "crimes" against life and liveliness. But except in rare instances- such as in the case of Hitler when they might achieve extraordinary degrees of political power that remove them from ordinary restraints, their "crimes are so subtle and covert that they cannot clearly be designated as crimes. The theme of **hiding and covertness** will occur again and again throughout the rest of this book. It is the basis for the title "People of the Lie"."

Page 70 "Evil deeds do not make an evil person. Otherwise we would all be evil. If evil people cannot be defined by the illegality of their deeds or the magnitude of their sins, then how are we to define them? The answer is by the consistency of their sins. While usually subtle, their destructiveness is remarkably consistent. This is because those who have "crossed over the line" are characterized by their absolute refusal to tolerate the sense of their own sinfulness."

Page 72 "The poor in spirit do not commit evil. Evil is not committed by people who feel uncertain about their righteousness, who question their own motives, who worry about betraying themselves. The evil of this world is committed by the spiritual fat cats, by the Pharisee's of our own day, the self-righteous who think they are without sin because they are unwilling to suffer the discomfort of significant self-examination. It is out of their failure to put themselves on trial that their evil arises. They are, in my experience remarkably greedy people."

Page 73 "A predominant characteristic of the behavior that I call evil is scape-goating. Because in their hearts they consider themselves above reproach, they must lash out at anyone who does reproach them. They sacrifice others to preserve their self-image of perfection."

Page 74 "Since they must deny their own badness, they must perceive others as bad. They project their own evil onto the world. The evil attack others instead of facing their own failures. Spiritual growth requires the acknowledgment of one's own need to grow. If we cannot make that acknowledgment, we have no option except to attempt to eradicate the evidence of our imperfection. Strangely enough, evil people are often destructive because they are attempting to destroy evil. The problem is that they misplace the locus of the evil. Instead of destroying others they should be destroying the sickness within themselves."

Page 75 "Utterly dedicated to preserving their self-image of perfection, they are unceasingly engaged in the effort to maintain the appearance of moral purity. They are acutely sensitive to social norms and what others might think of them. They seem to

live lives that are above reproach. The words "image", "appearance" and "outwardly" are crucial to understanding the morality of 'the evil'. While they lack any motivation to **be** good, they intensely desire to **appear** good. Their goodness is all on a level of pretense. It is in effect a lie. Actually the lie is designed not so much to deceive others as to deceive themselves. We lie only when we are attempting to cover up something we know to be illicit. At one and the same time 'the evil' are aware of their evil and desperately trying to avoid the awareness. We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves. The wickedness of 'the evil' is not committed directly, but indirectly as a part of this cover-up process. Evil originates not in the absence of guilt but in the effort to escape it.

It often happens then that 'the evil' may be recognized by its very disguise. Because they are such experts at disguise, it is seldom possible to pinpoint the maliciousness of 'the evil'. The disguise is usually impenetrable."

Page 77 "They are not pain avoiders or lazy people in general. To the contrary, they are likely to exert themselves more than most in their continuing effort to obtain and maintain an image of respectability. They may willingly, even eagerly, undergo great hardships in their search for status. It is only one particular pain they cannot tolerate: the pain of their own conscience, the pain of realization of their own sinfulness and imperfection.

The evil are the last people to ever go to a psychotherapist. The evil hate the light- the light of goodness that shows them up, the light of scrutiny that exposes them, the light of truth that penetrates their deception. "

Page 78 "They are men and women of obviously strong will, determined to have their own way. There is a remarkable power in the manner in which they attempt to control others."

Page 104 "Those who are evil are masters of disguise; they are not apt to wittingly disclose their true colors - either to others or to themselves. It is not without reason that the serpent is renowned for his subtlety. We therefore cannot pass judgment on a person for a single act. Instead judgment must be made on the basis of a whole pattern of acts as well as their manner and style."

Page 121 "We are accustomed to feel pity and sympathy for those who are ill, but **the emotions that 'the evil' invoke in us are anger and disgust, if not actual hate**. It is the unwillingness to suffer emotional pain that usually lies at the very root of emotional illness. Those who fully experience depression, doubt, confusion and despair may be infinitely more healthy than those who are generally certain, complacent, and self-satisfied."

Page 124 "Think of the psychic energy required for the continued maintenance of the pretense so characteristic of 'the evil'! They perhaps direct at least as much energy into their devious rationalizations and destructive compensations as the healthies do into loving behavior. Why? What possesses them, drives them? Basically, it is fear. They are terrified that the pretense will break down and they will be exposed to the world and to

themselves. They are continually frightened that they will come face to face with their own evil. Of all emotions, fear is the most painful. Regardless of how well they attempt to appear calm and collected in their daily dealings, 'the evil' live their lives in fear."

Page 129 "**Evil people would be distinguished by these traits:**

- a) Consistent destructive, scape-goating behavior, which may often be quite subtle
- b) Excessive, albeit usually covert, intolerance to criticism and other forms of narcissistic injury
- c) Pronounced concern with a public image and self-image of respectability, contributing to a stability of lifestyle but also to pretentiousness and denial of hateful feelings or vengeful motives.
- D) intellectual deviousness, with an increased likelihood of a mild schizophrenic-like disturbance of thinking at times of stress."

Page 130 "But there is another vital reason to correctly name evil: **the healing of its victims**. The fact of the matter is that **evil is one of the most difficult things to cope with**."

Page 255 "How are we to take Christ's admonition to " judge not lest you be judged" and still label someone as evil? If you see something wrong don't you try to correct it? Was Hitler OK? Was Jim Jones OK? Were the medical experiments on Jews OK? There is such a thing as an **excess of sympathy**, an **excess of tolerance**, an **excess of permissiveness**. The fact of the matter is that we cannot lead decent lives without making judgments; general and moral judgments in particular. Christ did not enjoin us to refrain from ever judging. What he went on to say in the next four verses is that we should judge ourselves before we judge others, not that we should not judge at all. We are to purify ourselves before judging others.

This is where 'the evil' fail. **It is the self-criticism they avoid**."

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 70)

Scripture: Mark 14:53-65

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: January 27th, 2007

When the High Priest Met the Great High Priest

Mark 14:53-65 (NASB)

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. **54** And Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself at the fire. **55** Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death; and they were not finding any. **56** For many were giving false testimony against Him, and *yet* their testimony was not consistent. **57** And some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying, **58** "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" **59** And not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. **60** And the high priest stood up *and came* forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" **61** But He kept silent, and made no answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?" **62** And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." **63** And tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? **64** "You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. **65** And some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps *in* the face.

Introduction I hate being alone. Most of the time I want other people around me. I don't think this is weird. I think most people like company and companionship. Have you ever been utterly alone or felt abandoned? Left all alone? One day you're surrounded by good friends, the weather is good, you feel the sun on your face and smell the fresh breeze. Life is fine. The next day you're alone, in a courtroom, cold iron shackles on your wrists; a determined prosecutor fully concentrated on proving your guilt; a mean judge glaring at you. Alone. Utterly, alone. I can imagine this is something how Jesus felt on the night of His betrayal and arrest. We can be assured that our Savior knows what it is to

be alone. As we return to his gospel, Mark gives us details of Jesus' situation... It is a criminal situation! Have you noticed the great interest that exists in CRIMINOLOGY today. People love almost countless television shows about solving crimes, trials and the carrying out of sentences. Jesus' trial, recorded for us by Mark—and you will remember that many scholars surmise that the **young man** mentioned by Mark in vss.51,52 is in fact Mark!

Now we find Jesus under arrest and enduring a trial that was in fact grossly illegal and for many reasons:

- ♦ Held at night – Jewish law prescribed all trials of criminals before priests to be held during the day
- ♦ Location illegal – Sanhedrin meetings only to be in their official hall (this trial held in home of the high priest)
- ♦ Verdict delay ignored – Sanhedrin not supposed to reach a verdict on the same day as the trial itself
- ♦ Great discrepancies in testimonies of witnesses
- ♦ Death sentence illegal – only a Roman could pass a death sentence
- ♦ Unanimous verdict illegal – since this indicates only one side of the case
- ♦ Dual sentences - Roman law forbade two sentences of punishment in the same case (flogging or crucifixion, not both)

So much is going on in this reading! The son of God who likes to call Himself the **son of man**, is bringing centuries together in one night! He is fulfilling prophecy, being the sacrifice, heading toward the cross and WHY He came at all, being abandoned though Peter is watching, horrified, from nearby, and what is most ironic and tragic, He, the Great High Priest (called that by the writer to the Hebrews) is being interrogated by the supposed High Priest of Israel, Caiaphas. For those of you who are so familiar with this story, hear it again! And know that there are millions of people who do not KNOW these details!

In verse 58 the accusation is that it was being quoted that Jesus had claimed that HE would destroy Herod's great temple and then build it again in three days. Of course Jesus had in fact referred to His own body, and had given His own prediction that He would rise from the dead on the third day. But consistent testimonies could not be found. People just didn't get His actual intent.

Jesus keeps silent at first. Isaiah 53:7 kicks in: **He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.** Then in verse 61 Caiaphas plainly asks Him (we love it in a story when it gets to the point!),

Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed One? Jesus responds plainly, ***I Am.*** There are many critics of the New Testament and liberal scholars who insist that at no time did Jesus ever claim to be Israel's Messiah or the Son of God. They tell us that these claims were made ABOUT Him by His disciples, that these claims were words put into Jesus' mouth by history or by the church. If you ever hear someone say that just turn to this passage in Mark. And there are other places in the New Testament too, but this one is pretty obvious.

Jesus adds, ***and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN***

- ***I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. Daniel 7:13***

Jesus is informing Caiaphas of his OWN destiny! Both believers and unbelievers will step out of time some day, and into eternity. For believers and followers of Jesus Christ, events that are long distant yet in time are suddenly present in eternity.¹ Jesus sits at the right hand of God now, and will also come again ***with the clouds of heaven.*** Back in Mark 13:26 we had read, ***And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory.*** Jesus will return to earth in the same manner in which He left it (cf. Acts 1:9–11; cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 1:7). The psalmist said that God uses “clouds” as His chariot (Ps. 104:3), and Is. 19:1 pictures the Lord riding on a cloud. Although these “clouds” could be natural, they more likely describe the supernatural “glory cloud” that represented God's presence in OT Israel. While Christ possesses “great power and glory,” His return will be accompanied with visible manifestations of that power and glory (cf. Rev. 6:15–17; 11:15–19; 16:17–21; 19:11–16)—He will redeem the elect, restore the devastated earth, and establish His rule on earth.²

I don't know how you feel when you hear talk like that? I get chills down my spine. I am warmed by talk like this. It transports me and makes me feel just a little bit euphoric. That was NOT the reaction though, of Caiaphas. He is enraged and whatever forces of restraint that had been upon these priests and scribes and elders seems to be lifted. All hell breaks loose. They started to spit on Him, the ultimate insult. They blindfolded him and slapped Him, all the while Jesus probably thinking what had been written 750 years before by Isaiah (50:6), ***I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.***

¹ Ray Stedman, sermon *Jesus and the Priests*, given Sept.21, 1975 Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, CA

² John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed., Mk 13:26 (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997).

Outside Peter was watching this, and he never forgot it. In his first letter, he tells us that we are to remember that scene and let it sink into US, for Christ was our example: ***and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;*** (1st Peter 2:23.)³ This is how Christians should respond if they are falsely accused. Instead of retorting and trying to justify ourselves, Peter says we are to return good for evil, revile not in return, but commit ourselves to HIM who is able to judge things justly. We run so quickly to law and court. And sometimes even go in stealth and do NOT admit our own mistakes, trying hard to avoid justice, all the while claiming to love Jesus. His example to us here is striking.

Do you see this application for us? We are to be a people, as Christians, who have this deep-seated confidence that our case ultimately is in the hands of a just God. We can trust Him. Even when we're being falsely accused of something. We don't have to use up our life-resources defending ourselves.

You might say, "Well, yes but that was Jesus. He was perfect." Or, "But I don't like pain." A Christian sees beyond the now. When Jesus utters these words to Caiaphas, a judgment prediction for him, it is a comfort to millions of Christians that this world is not all there is. A time is coming when we will all see ***the son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.*** It is what Paul calls "the blessed hope." And it transforms how we LOOK AT THINGS NOW. It transforms how we look at our own lives NOW and how we interpret our circumstances.

People might think we're nuts. So be it. This is what makes Christians "Christians." We know this isn't all there is. We don't have to scrape in a frenzy to scratch out all the satisfaction and pleasure we can find NOW. Now isn't all there is for us. THEN, is coming. And when we get there, it will seem soon enough I am sure.

Have you found the Lord Jesus Christ, here and now? He is willing to come into your life, at any time. You have to come to Him on HIS terms and surrender to Him. Not some superhuman kind of total surrender where you make all kinds of outlandish promises—just a simple surrender to Him, seeing Him for who He is. And then He will come into your life and take control. It is a gradual taking of control, but a real one. You will love Him for enduring the cross FOR YOU. And you will want to make Him Lord of your life over and over again!

³ Stedman, *ibid.*

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 71)

Scripture: Mark 14:66-72

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: February 17th, 2007

The Complete Humanity of St. Peter

Mark 14:66-72 (NASB)

⁶⁶ And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest *came, ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and *said, "You, too, were with Jesus the Nazarene." ⁶⁸ But he denied *it*, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. ⁶⁹ And the maid saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is *one of them!*" ⁷⁰ But again he was denying it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are *one of them*, for you are a Galilean too." ⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" ⁷² And immediately a cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

Introduction I'm not sure I like what they've done with Peter¹, the Apostle. First of all lots of people call him "Saint Peter," thinking that he was such an important hero and in tradition died for Christ as a martyr, that he should be greatly respected and even can be prayed to. In almost none of the religious artwork do we have a fellow you could relate to... Perhaps in *The Passion* film Peter becomes a little more real to us. But Peter was a real guy, a fisherman from the north side of the Sea of Galilee. He's one of the first people Jesus calls to follow Him, and He has been with Jesus the whole three years of His incarnate ministry.. It was Peter who led the way in pledging his undying loyalty to Jesus.

²⁹ ***But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not."***

Mark 14:29

³¹ ***But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing, too.*** Mark 14:31

¹ Shimon "Keipha" Ben-Yonah/Bar-Yonah, Simon Peter, Cephas and Keipha—original name Shimon or Simeon (Hebrew: שִׁמְעוֹן) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter

And he had a certain bravado at least as long as he had a sword at his side. Peter was there when Jesus was transfigured before them and Moses and Elijah showed up on the mountain. He was there when Jesus spoke to the storm and it obeyed Him. He had seen many healings, Jesus command the underworld and cast out demons, the feeding of the 4,000 and then the 5,000. Just a few days before he had seen Lazarus come right out of the grave, alive! In fact, it is hard to imagine Peter NOT seeing ANY of the miracles that Jesus had done. He had no shortage of information about Jesus. He also had heard Jesus predict His own death and that He would come back to life. He is A MAIN GUY in the New Testament, receiving mention about 145 times. Later he would write two letters to Christians in general which would become part of the New Testament of the Bible. He would think high thoughts, and write such words as ³ ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*** ⁴ ***to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*** ⁵ ***who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*** ⁶ ***In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.*** 1 Peter 1:3-6

But he could cave to fear—one incident (the classic one) we have recorded for us in today's passage, for we are looking at the famous prediction by Jesus, coming true—that Peter would deny knowing Jesus three times by the time the rooster had crowed twice on that fateful morning. This may be the thing for which Peter was best known. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John ALL record this event.

In the events of that night Judas has regrets—so badly that he goes out and hangs himself. The other disciples perhaps had some regrets for all had really fled for fear. Pontius Pilate might even have had some regrets. But Peter has more than just regret, he has tears. Fear, then shame and sadness that he had betrayed the One who had said to him three years earlier, ***Follow Me and I will make you a fisher of men.*** Later he would write ***love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king*** but that night he was fearing the king and vehemently denying that he even KNEW the real King.

You wonder why all four Gospel writers would feel led to include this story in the account. It contributes nothing of substance. It contains no doctrinal value. It doesn't have any bearing on the veracity of whether Jesus really died and rose or not. What it does, is reveal to us the COMPLETE HUMANITY of Peter, which is why I don't much like how history and the church have canonized the man.

Peter denied the Lord Jesus in the most famous example of tail-between-the-legs cowardice in maybe all of history! **AND HE IS JUST LIKE YOU AND ME!** This in fact is a tremendous encouragement to me, *not* that he failed the Lord Jesus but that he could recover from that and wind up being used by God for another thirty-plus years and become, along with James and John and Saul of Tarsus, one of the ***pillars*** of the church (Galatians 2). After this dark night, Peter becomes one of the heroes of the early Christians. He eventually leaves Galilee and Judea and takes his testimony to many places, from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria and even to Rome, it is recorded by Clement of Rome and Eusebius.

Have you ever been tempted to cover up what you know about Jesus? We may go long months even years between being in a place where Christianity is even questioned, let alone be persecuted. But if you were pressed, would you deny that you are a born-again, evangelical, fundamental, Bible-believing follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and that you believe that He is THE Way, THEY truth and THE light and that no man comes to the Father but through Him, and that there is ONE mediator between man and God, and that is the Lord Jesus?

It might be rare that we would be cornered about believing AT ALL in Jesus. In this pluralistic society it's ok to believe IN Jesus. Not too many people get upset if you just believe IN Him. Its pretty much fine to be a "Christian" so long as that belief doesn't exclude anybody or make Jesus into something unique. It is believing what He said about Himself, what the apostles wrote about Him, knowing what that IS, and embracing all that He is—THIS is what might get you into trouble.

It also might require some courage to OBEY the Lord Jesus Christ today. There is much in the world that is really quite hostile, I think, to the person who really wants to take Jesus seriously. The culture and the media like to think of Jesus as a nice, ethical, gentle, mercy-giving teacher of quiet and ancient agrarian wisdom. Here's what Peter's friend John wrote:

¹¹ And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ¹² And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. ¹³ And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:11-16

Well, all *that* lay in the future for Peter. In our passage, he feels hot tears streaming down his cheeks. He weeps hard and deeply. He cannot believe he was

capable of such denial. But those tears give us a real hope. And that may be the real reason why all four Gospel writers include this story about Peter. Remember the resurrection morning when Jesus met the women at the tomb. He said to them, "**Go and tell my disciples and Peter -- and Peter -- that I go before them and will meet them in Galilee,**" (Mark 16:7). After he denies Christ, Peter drops out of the picture; we know nothing more about what happened to him until the women come with the good news of the resurrection. The only difference between the denial of Peter and the hatred of the priests was the tears that Peter shed. Those tears meant there was life that could be restored; his failure could be forgotten and forgiven.²

You will remember that after the resurrection, and only John gives us this story—they're fishing again in Galilee. Jesus fixes breakfast for them, Peter had been swimming, and then Jesus asks him those three times, "Peter do you love Me?" Peter did! And if there is love in our hearts for Jesus Christ, even when we deny Him before men we will come around again.

God's grace is magnificent! That's what our message of the Gospel that we bear to people is all about. A person even so vile as to deny KNOWING Jesus, can be forgiven. Do you love Jesus? How would anyone know? One way is by the frequency with which we are willing to talk about Him and what He means to us. He is full of mercy and compassion. He is a powerful, coming King. He never leaves us or forsakes us, even when things look dark. He is there. And He will always BE there for us. Let's look for someone to testify to about Him, each day this week!

² Ray Stedman, <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/4132/3328.html> Sept. 21, 1975.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 72)

Scripture: Mark 15:1-

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: February 24th, 2007

When the Governor Met the King of Kings

Mark 15:1-21 (NASB)

AND early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate. ² And Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And answering He *said to him, "It is as you say."* ³ And the chief priests *began to accuse Him harshly.* ⁴ And Pilate was questioning Him again, saying, "Do You make no answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer; so that Pilate was amazed. ⁶ Now at *the* feast he used to release for them *any* one prisoner whom they requested. ⁷ And the man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. ⁸ And the multitude went up and began asking him *to do* as he had been accustomed to do for them. ⁹ And Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he was aware that the chief priests had delivered Him up because of envy. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the multitude *to ask* him to release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² And answering again, Pilate was saying to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ And they shouted back, "Crucify Him!" ¹⁴ But Pilate was saying to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" ¹⁵ And wishing to satisfy the multitude, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered *Him* to be crucified. ¹⁶ And the soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they *called* together the whole *Roman* cohort. ¹⁷ And they *dressed* Him up in purple, and after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; ¹⁸ and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ And they kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting at Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. ²⁰ And after they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His garments on Him. And they *led* Him out to crucify Him. ²¹ And they *pressed* into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

Introduction Can you imagine watching a whole football game from the endzone? Sitting there would give you one perspective and with some advantage. But there are other perspectives of the same game, aren't there? There's field level, there's the view from the sidelines and there's aerial too. But they are all different perspectives of the same actual thing. This is what we have with four

Gospels, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew and John were original disciples of course. Mark was nearby and one of the first young protégés of the apostles. Luke is Gentile and comes along a few years later. Each brings his own perspective and each has a specific audience in mind when he writes his record of what Jesus did and said. It is like watching the same football game from four different places.

I tell you this because I think its important now as we enter the most critical stage of Jesus' life and ministry. Each of the four Gospel writers provides a unique telling of the story of the "passion" of the Messiah. Put together, the four accounts give us a wonderfully complete picture, the Holy Spirit crafting all that people would need to know about those hours and days.

The events around the cross are more than simple narratives told by the gospel writers. You can read them that way: the simple tragic story of a man who laid down his life on behalf of a cause. But if you read the gospel accounts carefully you will see that there are very strange and marvelous forces at work behind the scenes. The Apostle Paul says in 1st Corinthians 2:7-8 ***but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*** So there is something going on behind the scenes in this account... The cross has amazing power in our lives.¹

Before us is Mark's account of Jesus' trial and the outcome. His trial is really a pretty complicated affair, with a number of intertwining aspects.²

¹ Ray Stedman, <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/4137/3329.html> Sept. 28, 1975 Sermon: "Jesus and the Rulers."

² *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* summarizes it well:

Though the Sanhedrin could pronounce a death sentence it could not exercise capital punishment. So a condemned prisoner had to be turned over to the Roman authorities for a death sentence to be carried out (cf. John 18:31; TDNT, s.v. "*synedrion*," 1:865-6). The Roman governor could either ratify or rescind the Sanhedrin's death sentence (cf. John 19:10). If rescinded, a new trial had to be conducted before a Roman court in which the Sanhedrin had to prove that the defendant had committed a capital crime under Roman law. Since the charge of blasphemy (cf. Mark 14:64) was not punishable by Roman law it was not mentioned in the following trial. In its place the Sanhedrin substituted a charge of treason, turning Jesus' acknowledgment that He was the Messiah into a traitorous political claim that He is "the King of the Jews" (cf. 15:2; Luke 23:2). The Roman court surely could not ignore that charge.

Jesus' trial before the Roman political authorities also had three hearings:

(a) an initial interrogation by Pilate (cf. Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1b-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38);

(b) an interrogation by Herod Antipas (cf. Luke 23:5-12);

(c) a final arraignment before Pilate, Barabbas' release, and the crucifixion verdict (cf. Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-20; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16).

Before the Sanhedrin Jesus was condemned for blasphemy under Jewish law, but here He was tried for treason under Roman law. On both occasions He was sentenced to die, in conformity with God's will (cf.

You will notice first that Jesus' reply to Pilate's question is, ***It is as you say***, or ***As you say***, which sounds like neither an affirmation nor a denial. Why wasn't Jesus more positive? The answer is perhaps clear from another perspective "on the field": In John 18:36,37 we have,

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Pilate therefore said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

It may be reading between the lines a bit but it seems clear that Jesus was making it clear that He was not there to incite a revolution against Rome. Pilate was no fool and could see through all the empty charges that had brought Jesus to this point. At the end of verse 5 we see that Pilate was amazed that Jesus was keeping generally silent.

That is one of the amazing things that the cross of Jesus does! It takes away all pretense. It rips through the hypocrisy of our lives, lays us bare for all to see, including ourselves. As Jesus remains silent before the priests they are forced to make clear the hatred in their own hearts against Him.³

Then in verses 7-15 we have the drama of the exchange of Barabbas, about whom all four Gospel writers speak. The irony of this exchange is huge. Barabbas was not a good guy. John tells us a robber and Luke describes him as a murderer. He was also apparently a terrorist, part of one or another insurrectionist outfit of the day. He may even have been a team-mate of one of the disciples, Simon the Zealot! In any case, the people would rather have him released than Jesus, so angry and disappointed with Jesus had they become. If you think about it, probably many in this crowd had seen miracles that Jesus had performed. Some may even have been RECIPIENTS of the goodness that those miracles always involved. But they wanted Jesus to deliver them from

Mark 10:33-34). ((1))Pilate's interrogation and Jesus' silence (15:1b-5; Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38). 15:1b. The Sanhedrin had Jesus bound and led through the city from Caiaphas' residence (cf. 14:53) probably to Herod's palace where they handed Him over to Pilate for execution of the death sentence. Pontius Pilate, the fifth Roman prefect (a title later changed to "procurator," i.e., imperial magistrate) of Judea held office A.D. 26-36. He was a harsh governor who despised the Jews (cf. Luke 13:1-2). Normally he resided in Caesarea by the Mediterranean Sea, but he came to Jerusalem on special occasions such as the Passover festival to help maintain order. Presumably he stayed in Herod's palace as was customary for provincial governors rather than in the Antonia Fortress near the temple. If so, Jesus' civil trial was held there John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), Mk 15:2.

³ Stedman, Ibid.

Roman occupation. And He did not do that. Instead, He had come to become a suffering savior.

Verse 15 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. Rather than to release Jesus, Pilate delivers Him over to be crucified. As we have noted before, scouring and crucifixion were two different sentences. Just in itself, condemning Jesus to both was both illegal and unethical. But legalities were not the rule that day. Just getting Jesus dead, and quelling the crowd, was.

Although the **scouring** is just mentioned in Mark, its details are a terrible affair. With a whip (known as a *flagellum*) consisting of a wooden handle to which metal-tipped leather thongs were attached. Being scourged with a *flagellum* was a fearful ordeal, ripping the flesh down to the bone, causing severe bleeding. It was a beating from which prisoners often died.⁴ This, Jesus endured, along with the rest of the details Mark lays out: the casting down of all civilization in essence, mocking, caning, spitting, the crown of thorns, insulting our Savior. We see humanity at its worst, I am sure, egged on from the underworld.

Almost in understatement, verse 21 says, they led Him out to crucify Him. Which is why He came, ultimately. He didn't come to be a good teacher, just to heal from physical diseases, to still the storm, to collect a group of disciples. He came to die. John MacArthur gives a succinct summary of the matter:

Crucifixion was a form of punishment that had been passed down to the Romans from the Persians, Phoenicians, and Carthaginians. Roman crucifixion was a lingering doom—by design. Roman executioners had perfected the art of slow torture while keeping the victim alive. Some victims even lingered until they were eaten alive by birds of prey or wild beasts. Most hung on the cross for days before dying of exhaustion, dehydration, traumatic fever, or—most likely—suffocation. When the legs would no longer support the weight of the body, the diaphragm was constricted in a way that made breathing impossible. That is why breaking the legs would hasten death (John 19:31–33), but this was unnecessary in Jesus' case. The hands were usually nailed through the wrists, and the feet through the instep or the Achilles tendon (sometimes using one nail for both feet). None of these wounds would be fatal, but their pain would become unbearable as the hours dragged on. The most notable feature of crucifixion was the stigma of disgrace that was attached to it (Gal. 3:13; 5:11; Heb. 12:2). One indignity was the humiliation of carrying one's own cross, which might weigh as much as 200 pounds. Normally a quaternion, 4 soldiers, would escort the prisoner through the crowds to the place of crucifixion. A placard bearing the indictment would be hung around the person's neck.⁵

⁴John MacArthur, Jr. *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed., Mk 15:15 (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997).

⁵MacArthur, *ibid*.

If you are with us and the trial and suffering of Jesus is just a tragically interesting story, you have not yet really heard its power. It was substitutionary, and as such, for you. He endured and suffered and absorbed these things, this unspeakable and unjust persecution, for you and for me. We are the ones, who by virtue of our OWN sins, which we can blame no one for other than ourselves, deserve to be blasted by God's holy indignation. But Jesus stepped in the way. Mark wrote it down, as did Matthew, Luke and John for us and millions of others to read. Do you believe it? You can make it YOURS by inviting Him into your heart. I implore you to do so, if you have not yet. He will come in. He will take charge. And the King of Kings will become your own, wonderful friend and savior.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 73)

Scripture: Mark 15:22-32

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 2nd, 2007

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Part 1)

Mark 15:22-32 (NASB)

And they *brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. ²³ And they tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. ²⁴ And they *crucified Him, and *divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them, *to decide* what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified Him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." ²⁷ And they *crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. ²⁸ [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."] ²⁹ And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking *Him* among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. ³² "Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him.

Introduction What would you say is the most important aspect of Christianity?

- Would you say it is the Bible, understood correctly as the inerrant Word of God?
- Would you say it is the resurrection of Jesus? In His coming back to life He defeats our greatest enemy: death.
- Would you say it is probably the second coming of Jesus, a thing which many preachers and Bible students think may be soon? In His coming again, all creation will be changed and everything will be made right.

Everyone will get what he or she's got coming to them...

The apostle Paul wrote these words to the earliest Christians in the ancient Greek city of Corinth: ***For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*** (1 Corinthians 2:2). Our whole faith stands or falls on the significance and indeed the truth or not of the events we read about

in today's section of the Gospel of Mark. If they are anything less than absolutely true, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Interestingly, when and if you go to Jerusalem, you will be taken to what is called "Gordon's Calvary." It is one of two likely spots of where Jesus was crucified. The other one is actually inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which is maybe a quarter mile south of the "north end" Calvary location. I think that as cool as Gordon's Calvary looks, and pretty easy to imagine three crosses standing up there, this history actually better supports the location being in the church. Gordon's Calvary really only dates as a suggested site to the early 1800s. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as a place, dates all the way back in some witnesses to the first century.¹ Actually though none of this matters! The importance is not where was Jesus crucified, but SINCE He was crucified, so what?

Considering Mark's contribution to the Gospels we have twelve details about that day. Let's consider a summary as follows:

	Mark 15	Detail	EXPLANATION	
1	22	Crucifixion location: Golgotha (Aramaic)	Κρανίου Τόπος "place of a skull"	
2	23	Myrrh-wine refused	faces cross in full alertness	
3	24a	"they crucified Him"	method of execution	
4	24b	cast lots for garments	Psalms 22:18	
5	25	3rd hour	9:00 AM	
6	26	the King of the Jews	inscription ²	
7	27	two robbers also, on either side	Roman crucifixions were often multiple	
8	28	counted with criminals	prob. not original to Mark (tho Lk.22:37)	
}	9	29-30	sneering mockers	referencing Temple comment
	10	31	chief priests, scribes mocking - cross	Save yourself!
	11	32	mocking	called "Christ", the King, feigned belief
	12	32	robbers mock Him too	and one repents later

Matthew, Luke and John add various additional details but this is the basic history of Jesus' death. (We will consider the rest of them given by Mark in next week's message.)

Crucifixion was a practice that originated with the Persians and was later passed on to the Carthaginians and the Phoenicians. The Romans perfected it as a method of execution which caused maximal pain and suffering over a period of time. Those crucified included slaves, provincials and the lowest types of

criminals. Roman citizens, except perhaps for soldiers who deserted, were not subjected to this treatment (McDowell).³ The medical details of crucifixion are detailed in many articles which you can study. It was a gruesome procedure, designed as much as much for its terror effect as for punishment, and used commonly enough by ancient societies. But it was NOT UNANTICIPATED by either Jesus or the prophets. About 750 B.C. Isaiah the prophet wrote these words about the coming Messiah:

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. Isaiah 53:4-6

Jesus Himself spoke these words, in anticipation of what was coming:
I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. John 10:11...

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father. John 10:17-18

The crucifixion gets many reactions from people, not all in love.

1. Some people look at it as just historical tripe, dreamed up by the Church in order to justify its own existence. If that were the case, and that it was just political propaganda, why so many early Christians would be willing to die horrible deaths in defense of it, when all they would have to do is disavow it for just a few minutes before the authorities?
2. Others interpret the cross as merely tragic, the story of an unfortunate turn of luck for who was otherwise a nice guy, who also did tricks with fish and bread.
3. Still others would interpret the tale of Jesus' crucifixion as one of the great stories of literature like Homer's Ulysses, or *Beowulf*—indeed, a classic one, full of all the good elements of saga.

The apostle Paul interpreted the death of Christ like this, in his letter to the Roman Christians:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if

while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Romans 5:8-11

And the apostle John interprets the death of Christ like this, near the end of the first century after having thought about it for nearly 60 years:

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10

How do you interpret the story of Jesus' death? Do you care about it? Do you believe the words that are written about it in the Bible? Are you touched by it and moved at all? Is it merely interesting or is it more than that?

Each month when we have the Lord's Table it is a reminder of what the death of Jesus means to us. CHRISTIANS TAKE IT PERSONALLY! We take it to heart. Whether we are in a comfortable church or out in the wilderness on the run, we cling to the cross. We are thrilled by it. We would die to maintain our belief in it and the freedom to tell others about it. We love the cross of Jesus Christ and what He did for us. Are you in that company?

I am burdened this week, and especially after listening to two other preachers' sermons (John MacArthur and John Piper) on what it means to be truly born again, that we have many in our churches who *think* they are born again and yet are probably really not. Just going to church doesn't make you any more of a real Christian than standing in a garage makes you a car. Does the death of Jesus Christ stand for you as the most important fact of all history and the most precious truth in the catalog of Christian beliefs? I hope you never get so used to hearing about the "place of the skull" that your eyes glaze over. I hope you never recover from what the death of Jesus Christ means, or can mean for you.

¹ History of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

The early Christian community of Jerusalem appears to have held liturgical celebrations at Christ's tomb from the time of the resurrection until the city was taken by the Romans in 66 AD. Less than a century later, in 135 AD, Emperor Hadrian filled in the quarry to provide a level foundation for a **temple to Aphrodite**.

The site remained buried beneath the pagan temple until Emperor **Constantine the Great** converted to Christianity in 312 AD. He soon showed an interest in the holy places associated with his new faith, and commissioned numerous churches to be built throughout the Holy Land. The most important of these, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was begun in 326 AD.

Constantine's builders dug away the hillside to leave the rock-hewn tomb of Christ isolated and with enough room to build a church around it. They also cleared away Hadrian's temple and the material with which an old quarry had been filled to provide the temple's foundations. In the process, according to contemporary Christian historians, the Rock of Golgotha was found. The Church was formally dedicated in 335 with an oration by Constantine's biographer, Eusebius of Caesarea.

In the course of the excavations, Constantine's mother St. Helena is believed to have discovered the **True Cross** near the tomb. She actually discovered three - those of the two thieves and that of Christ. To discern the one belonging to Christ, a sick man was brought to touch to each one, and he was miraculously healed by one of them. This is a relatively early legend, but one that Eusebius, the historian and contemporary of Constantine, did not know.

The **Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre** was much larger than the one that stands today, but its layout was simple. It consisted of an atrium (which reused part of Hadrian's temenos wall), a covered basilica, an open courtyard with the stone of Golgotha in the southeast corner, and the tomb of Christ, enshrined in a small, circular edifice. The tomb of Christ was not completed at the dedication because of the immense labor involved in cutting away the rock cliff in order to isolate the tomb; it was completed around 384 AD.

This building was severely damaged by fire in 614 AD when the **Persians** invaded Jerusalem. They also captured the True Cross, but in 630, Emperor Heraclius marched triumphantly into Jerusalem and restored the True Cross to the rebuilt Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The church was reconstructed under the patriarch Modestus with no major changes to the original plan.

In 638, the Christians were forced to surrender Jerusalem to Muslim control under caliph **Omar**. In a remarkable gesture for the time, Omar refused to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, saying, "If I had prayed in the church it would have been lost to you, for the Believers [Muslims] would have taken it saying: Omar prayed here." This act of generosity would have unfortunate consequences, however.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre continued to function as a Christian church under the protection of Omar and the early Muslim rulers, but this changed on October 18, 1009, when the "mad" Fatimid caliph **Hakim** brutally and systematically destroyed the great church.

Ironically, if Omar had turned the church into a mosque, Hakim would have left it alone. But instead, Hakim had wrecking crews knock over the walls and he attacked the tomb of Christ with pricks and hammers, stopping only when the debris covered the remains. The east and west walls were completely destroyed, but the north and south walls were likely protected by the rubble from further damage.

The poor Jerusalem community could not afford repairs, but in 1048 Emperor **Constantine Monomachos** provided money for reconstruction, subject to stringent conditions imposed by the caliphate. The funds were not adequate to completely repair the original church, however, and a large part of it had to be abandoned. The atrium and the basilica were completely lost; only the courtyard and the rotunda remained. The latter was made into a church by the insertion of a large apse into the facade.

This was the church to which the knights of the **First Crusade** arrived to sing their *Te Deum* after capturing Jerusalem on July 15, 1099. The Crusader chief Godfrey of Bouillon, who became the first king of Jerusalem, declared himself *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri*, "Defender of the Holy Sepulchre."

The **Crusaders** were slow to renovate the church, only beginning to make modifications in the Romanesque style in 1112. They first built a monastery where the Constantinian basilica used to be, having first excavated the Crypt of St. Helena. In 1119 the shrine of Christ's tomb was replaced. The coronation of Fulk and Melisende at the church in 1131 necessitated more radical modifications. The Constantinian courtyard was covered with a Romanesque church (dedicated in **1149**), which was connected to the rotunda by a great arched opening resulting from the demolition of the 11th-century apse. A bell tower was added in 1170.

The three primary **custodians** of the church, first appointed when Crusaders held Jerusalem, are the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Apostolic and Roman Catholic churches. In the 19th century, the Coptic Orthodox, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox acquired lesser responsibilities, which include shrines and other structures within and around the building. An agreement regulates times and places of worship for each Church.

Subsequent centuries were not altogether kind to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It suffered from **damage, desecration, and neglect**, and attempts at repair (a significant renovation was conducted by the Franciscans in 1555) often did more damage than good. In recent times, a fire (1808) and an earthquake (1927) did extensive damage.

Not until 1959 did the three major communities (Latins, Greeks, Armenians) agree on a major renovation plan. The guiding principle was that only elements incapable of

fulfilling their structural function would be replaced. Local masons were trained to trim stone in the style of the 11th century for the rotunda, and in the 12th-century style for the church.

The church's chaotic history is evident in what visitors see today. Byzantine, medieval, Crusader, and modern elements mix in an odd mish-mash of styles, and each governing Christian community has decorated its shrines in its own distinctive way. In many ways, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not what one would imagine for the holiest site in all Christendom, and it can easily disappoint. But at the same time, its noble history and immense religious importance is such that a visit can also be very meaningful.

Source: <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-church-of-holy-sepulchre.htm>

² All 4 gospel writers mentioned the inscription, but each reported a slightly different variation. Both Luke and John (19:20) said that the inscription was written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, so the varying reports in the gospels may simply reflect variant ways the inscription was translated on the placard itself. It is even more likely that all 4 evangelists simply reported the substance of the inscription elliptically, with each one omitting different parts of the full inscription. All 4 concurred with Mark that the inscription said THE KING OF THE JEWS (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; John 19:19). Luke added "THIS IS" at the beginning, and Matthew started with "THIS IS JESUS." John's version began, "JESUS OF NAZARETH." Putting them all together, the full inscription would read "THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." *The MacArthur Study Bible* note on Luke 23:38

³ Quoted in the very good on-line article (which follows) by a physician from New York at <http://www.new-life.net/crucify2.htm> entitled "Medical Aspects of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ" Compiled by David Terasaka, M.D. ©1996.

Medical Aspects of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

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Hebrews 12:2 - *"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

In the last few hours of Jesus' life what did He endure, and what shame did He suffer?

EXCRUCIATE: to cause great agony, torment

Latin : ex : out of, from cruciate : cross

"from the cross"

The tone of this presentation can best be summarized in the word *"excruciate"*, (the root of the word *"excruciating"*) which refers to something which causes great agony or torment. The Latin roots of the word are : *"ex"*, meaning from or out of, and *"cruciate"*, meaning cross. The word *"excruciate"* comes from the Latin for *"from, or out of, the cross"* (Webster's).

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Jesus spent the last hours before the crucifixion at several places in Jerusalem. He started the evening in the Upper Room, in southwest Jerusalem. At the Last Supper, He told the disciples that His body and His blood were to be given for them (Matthew 26: 26-29). He went outside of the city to the Garden of Gethsemane. He was then arrested and brought back to the palace of the High Priest, where He was questioned by Annas, a former High Priest, and Caiaphas, Annas' son in law . Afterwards, He was tried by the Sanhedrin, and found to be guilty of blasphemy by proclaiming Himself the Son of God. He was sentenced to the death penalty. Since only the Romans were able to execute criminals, He was sent to Pontius Pilate at the Antonia Fortress. Pilate, not finding anything wrong, sent Him to King Herod , who returned Him back to Pilate. Pilate, submitting to the pressure of the crowd, then ordered that Jesus be flogged and crucified. He was finally led out of the city walls to be crucified at Calvary.

THE HEALTH OF JESUS AND DEMANDS OF THE ORDEAL

It is reasonable to assume that Jesus was in good health prior to the ordeal that He faced in the hours before His death. Having been a carpenter and traveling throughout the land during His ministry would have required that He would be in good physical condition. Before the crucifixion, however, He was forced to walk 2.5 miles over a sleepless night, during which He suffered great anguish through His six trials, was mocked, ridiculed and severely beaten, and was abandoned by His friends and Father. (Edwards)

THE UPPER ROOM OR CENACULUM

The ordeal began in an upper room of a house at what we now call the Last Supper, where Jesus, in giving the first communion, predicted that His body and blood would be given (Matthew 26:17-29). Today in Jerusalem, one can visit the Cenacle or Cenaculum (Latin for dining hall), a room which is built over what is believed to be the site of the Upper Room, (Kollek) which was located on the southwestern aspect of the old city.

GETHSEMANE : oil press

Luke 22:44 *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

"the Spirit of Godcrushed"

From the upper room, Jesus went outside of the city walls where he spent time in prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane. The garden has many ancient olive trees today, some of which may have grown from the roots of the trees that were present in Jesus' time. (All trees in and around Jerusalem were cut down when the Romans conquered the city in 70 A.D. Olive trees can regenerate from their roots and live for thousands of years.) The name "Gethsemane", comes from the Hebrew Gat Shmanim, meaning "oil press" (Kollek). Since "oil" is used in the Bible to symbolize the Holy Spirit, it may be said that the garden is where "the Spirit of God was crushed" (Missler). It was here that Jesus agonized in prayer over what was to occur. It is significant that this is the only place in the KJV where the word "agony" is mentioned (Strong's concordance). The Greek word for agony means to be "engaged in combat" (Pink) Jesus agonizes over what He is to go through, feeling that He is at the point of death.(Mark14:34) Yet He prays, "Not my will, but thine be done."

Of medical significance is that Luke mentions Him as having sweat like blood. The medical term for this, "hemohidrosis" or "hematidrosis" has been seen in patients who have experienced, extreme stress or shock to their systems. (Edwards) The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat. A case history is recorded in which a young girl who had a fear of air raids in WW1 developed the condition after a gas explosion occurred in the house next door (Scott). Another report mentions a nun who, as she was threatened with death by the swords of the enemy soldiers, "was so terrified that she bled from every part of her body and died of hemorrhage in the sight of her assailants" (Grafenberg). As a memorial to Jesus' ordeal, a church which now stands in Gethsemane is known as the Church of the Agony -- also called the Church of the Nations because many nations donated money to its construction (Kollek).

ABANDONED BY MAN

Matthew 26:56: "Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."

Psalms 22:11: "Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help."

While in Gethsemane, Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested by the Jews. His disciples all desert Him, even at the expense of running away naked (Mark 14:51-52). He is bound (John 18:12) then brought back to the city to the court of the High Priest, which is located near the Upper room.

ILLEGAL ASPECTS OF THE TRIAL OF JESUS

Following are some of the illegal aspects of the trial of Jesus:

- Trials could occur only in the regular meeting places of the Sanhedrin (not in the palace of the High Priest)
- Trials could not occur on the eve of the Sabbath or Feast Days or at night
- A sentence of 'guilty' might only be pronounced on the day following the trial

THE ISSUE OF WITNESSES

Deuteronomy 19:15: "One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Deuteronomy 17:6: *"On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness."*

Mark 14:56: *"Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree."*

While in the court of the High Priest, He was questioned by Annas (John 18:13) and struck by a soldier (John 18: 22). He was then brought to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, who sought to put Jesus to death by the false testimony of many witnesses. The witnesses brought against Him did not agree. By the law, no one could be put to death without the agreement of two or three witnesses. Although the witnesses did not agree, He was found guilty of blasphemy when He told them of His identity as the Son of God. He was sentenced to death. Jesus suffered ridicule from the palace guards, who spat on Him, beat Him and slapped Him on the face (Mark 14:65.) During the trial, Peter denies Him three times. The proceedings of Jesus' trial violated many of the laws of His society. Among some of the other broken laws were (Bucklin):

1. Any arrest could not be made at night.
2. The time and date of the trial were illegal because it took place at night and on the eve of the Sabbath. This time precluded any chance for the required adjournment to the next day in the event of a conviction.
3. The Sanhedrin was without authority to instigate charges. It was only supposed to investigate charges brought before it. In Jesus' trial, the court itself formulated the charges.
4. The charges against Jesus were changed during the trial. He was initially charged with blasphemy based upon His statement that He would be able to destroy and rebuild the Temple of God within three days, as well as His claim to be the Son of God. When He was brought before Pilate, the charge was that Jesus was a King and did not advocate paying taxes to the Romans.
5. As stated above, the requirement of two witnesses in agreement to merit the death penalty was not met.
6. The court did not meet in the regular meeting place of the Sanhedrin, as required by Jewish law.
7. Christ was not permitted a defense. Under Jewish law, an exhaustive search into the facts presented by the witnesses should have occurred.
8. The Sanhedrin pronounced the death sentence. Under law, the Sanhedrin were not allowed to convict and put the death sentence into effect. (John 18:31)

Today, one can visit the palace of the High Priest, where one can stand in the midst of the ruins of the courtyard. A model of the structure in Jesus' time is available for viewing.

PILATE'S VERDICT

Mark 15:15 - *"Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified."*

The Sanhedrin met early the next morning and sentenced Him to death. (Matthew 27:1) Because the Jews were not, and the Romans were, able to carry out an execution, Jesus was brought before Pilate. The charge was now changed to an allegation that Jesus claimed to be

King and forbade the nation to pay taxes to Caesar. (Luke 23:5) In spite of all the charges, Pilate finds nothing wrong. He sends Jesus to Herod. Jesus is speechless before Herod, except to affirm that He is King of the Jews. Herod sends Him back to Pilate. Pilate is unable to convince the crowds of Jesus' innocence and orders Jesus to be put to death. Some sources state that it was Roman law that a criminal that was to be crucified had to be flogged first (McDowell). Others believe that Jesus was flogged first by Pilate in the hope of getting Him off with a lighter punishment (Davis). In spite of his efforts, the Jews allow Barabbas to be released and demand that Jesus be crucified, even crying that , "*His blood be on us and on our children!*" (Matthew 27:25) Pilate hands Jesus over to be flogged and crucified.

It is at this point that Jesus suffers a severe physical beating. (Edwards) During a flogging, a victim was tied to a post, leaving his back entirely exposed. The Romans used a whip, called a flagrum or flagellum which consisted of small pieces of bone and metal attached to a number of leather strands. The number of strikes is not recorded in the gospels. The number of blows in Jewish law was set in Deuteronomy 25:3 at forty, but later reduced to 39 to prevent excessive blows by a counting error (Holmans). The victim often died from the beating. (39 hits were believed to bring the criminal to "*one from death*".) Roman law did not put any limits on the number of blows given. (McDowell) During the flogging, the skin was stripped from the back, exposing a bloody mass of muscle and bone ("*hamburger* ": Metherall). Extreme blood loss occurred from this beating, weakening the victim. perhaps to the point of being unconscious.

ROMAN SOLDIERS MOCK AND BEAT JESUS

Matthew 27:28-30 (The soldiers) stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "*Hail, king of the Jews!*" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. Jesus was then beaten by the Roman soldiers. In mockery, they dressed Him in what was probably the cloak of a Roman officer, which was colored dark purple or scarlet .(Amplified Bible) He also wore the crown of thorns. Unlike the traditional crown which is depicted by an open ring, the actual crown of thorns may have covered the entire scalp (Lumpkin). The thorns may have been 1 to 2 inches long. The gospels state that the Roman soldiers continued to beat Jesus on the head. The blows would drive the thorns into the scalp (one of the most vascular areas of the body) and forehead, causing severe bleeding.

THE CROWN OF THORNS AND THE ROBE

Genesis 3:17-18: "*Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.*"

Isaiah 1:18 "*Come now, let us reason together,*" says the LORD. "*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*"

The significance of the scarlet robe and crown of thorns is to emphasize Jesus' taking the sins of the world upon His body. The Bible describes sin by the color of scarlet (Isaiah 1:18) and that thorns first appeared after the fall, as a sign of the curse. Thus, the articles that He wore are symbols to show that Jesus took on the sins (and the curse) of the world upon Himself. It is not clear that He wore the crown of thorns on the cross. Matthew describes that the Romans removed His clothes after the beating, and that they put His own clothes back on Him. (Matthew 27:31)

THE SEVERITY OF THE BEATING

Isaiah 50:6: *"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting."*

Isaiah 52:14: *".... Just as there were many who were appalled at him -- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--"*

The severity of the beating is not detailed in the gospels. However, in the book of Isaiah, it suggests that the Romans pulled out His beard (Isaiah 50:8). It also mentions that Jesus was beaten so severely that His form did not look like that of "a son of a man" i.e. that of a human being. The literal translation of the verse reads, "So marred from the form of man was His aspect, that His appearance was not as that of a son of a man." People were appalled to look at Him (Isaiah 52:13). His disfigurement may explain why He was not easily recognized in His post resurrection appearances (Missler). Today, one can visit a site known as the Lithostrotos, traditionally believed to be the floor of the Antonio Fortress (although recent excavations may cast doubt on this theory (Gonen)). The floor is marked for games once played by the Roman soldiers.

From the beating, Jesus walked on a path, now known as the Via Dolorosa or the "way of suffering", to be crucified at Golgotha. The total distance has been estimated at 650 yards. (Edwards). A narrow street of stone, it was probably surrounded by markets in Jesus' time. He was led through the crowded streets carrying the crossbar of the cross (called a patibulum) across His shoulders. The crossbar probably weighed between 80 to 110 pounds. He was surrounded by a guard of Roman soldiers, one of which carried a titulus, a sign which announced His crime of being "the King of the Jews" in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. On the way, He was unable to carry the cross. Some theorize that he may have fallen while going down the steps of the Antonio Fortress. A fall with the heavy patibulum on His back may have led to a contusion of the heart, predisposing His heart to rupture on the cross. (Ball) Simon of Cyrene (currently North Africa (Tripoli)), who apparently was affected by these events, was summoned to help.

The present Via Dolorosa was marked in the 16th century as the route over which Christ was led to His crucifixion (Magi). As is the location of Calvary, the true location of the Via Dolorosa is disputed. Much tradition as to what happened to Jesus is encountered on the Via Dolorosa today. There are 14 stations of 'events' that occurred and 9 churches on the way today. The stations of the cross were established in the 1800's (Magi). Today, there is one section of the path where one can walk on the stones which were used during Jesus time.

SUFFERING ON THE CROSS

Psalm 22:16-17: *Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me."*

The crucifixion event is prophesied in several places throughout the Old Testament. One of the most striking is recorded in Isaiah 52:13, where it says that, "My servant will act wisely (or prosper). He will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted." In John 3, Jesus talks about His fulfillment of that prophecy when He says, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life." He refers to the events recorded in Numbers 21:6-9. The Lord had sent a plague of fiery serpents on the people of Israel and they bit the people so that many of the people died. After the people confessed their sin to Moses, the Lord for gave them by having a bronze serpent made. Bronze

is a symbol for judgment and the serpent is a symbol of the curse. Whoever was bitten by a serpent and then looked at the bronze serpent, was saved from death.. These verses are prophecies that point to the crucifixion, in the Jesus would be (lifted up) on the cross for the judgment of sin, so that whoever believed in Him should not die (an eternal death), but live an eternal life. 2 Corinthians 5 :21 amplifies this point, in that *"He (the Father) made Him who knew no sin (the Son) to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (Pink). It is interesting that the sign of Aesculapius which is the symbol of the medical profession today, had its roots from the making of the bronze serpent (Metherall). Indeed, Jesus is the healer of all! Jesus is led to the place of the skull (Latin: Calvary; Aramaic: Golgotha) to be crucified. The actual location of Calvary is also in dispute. At the end of the Via Dolorosa, there is a *"T intersection"*. If one turns left, we go to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. If one turns to the right, one goes to Gordon's Calvary. The Church of the Holy sepulcher has long been believed to be the traditional site of the crucifixion.

Gordon's Calvary has a possible prophetic reason for being the actual site of the crucifixion .In Genesis 22, Abraham is tested by God to sacrifice Isaac on the top of a mountain. Realizing that he is acting out a prophecy, that *"God Himself will provide a Lamb"*, Abraham calls the place of the event *"Jehovah Jireh"*, meaning *"In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."* If we take this as a prophetic event of Jesus' death, then Jesus' died on the high ground of Jerusalem. Gordon's Calvary is the highest point of Jerusalem, 777 meters above sea level (Missler: Map from Israel tour book). Today, at Gordon's Calvary, caves in the rock are situated which give the site the appearance of a skull.

Jesus was then crucified. Crucifixion was a practice that originated with the Persians and was later passed on to the Carthaginians and the Phoenicians. The Romans perfected it as a method of execution which caused maximal pain and suffering over a period of time. Those crucified included slaves, provincials and the lowest types of criminals. Roman citizens, except perhaps for soldiers who deserted, were not subjected to this treatment (McDowell).

The crucifixion site *"was purposely chosen to be outside the city walls because the Law forbade such within the city walls...for sanitary reasons ... the crucified body was sometimes left to rot on the cross and serve as a disgrace, a convincing warning and deterrent to passers by."* (Johnson) Sometimes, the subject was eaten while alive and still on the cross by wild beasts (Lipsius).

The procedure of crucifixion may be summarized as follows. The patibulum was put on the ground and the victim laid upon it. Nails, about 7 inches long and with a diameter of 1 cm (roughly 3/8 of an inch) were driven in the wrists . The points would go into the vicinity of the median nerve, causing shocks of pain to radiate through the arms. It was possible to place the nails between the bones so that no fractures (or broken bones) occurred. Studies have shown that nails were probably driven through the small bones of the wrist, since nails in the palms of the hand would not support the weight of a body. In ancient terminology, the wrist was considered to be part of the hand. (Davis) Standing at the crucifixion sites would be upright posts, called stipes, standing about 7 feet high (Edwards). In the center of the stipes was a crude seat, called a sedile or sedulum, which served a support for the victim. The patibulum was then lifted on to the stipes. The feet were then nailed to the stipes. To allow for this, the knees had to be bent and rotated laterally, being left in a very uncomfortable position. The titulus was hung above the victim's head.

There were several different types of crosses used during crucifixion. In Jesus' time, it was most likely that the cross used was a T shaped (or tau cross,), not the popular Latin, or t shaped cross which is accepted today (Lumpkin).

PHYSICAL SUFFERING ON THE CROSS

Psalm 22:14-15: *"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death."*

Having suffered from the beatings and flogging, Jesus suffered from severe hypovolemia from the loss of blood. The verses above describe His dehydrated state and loss of His strength.

When the cross was erected upright, there was tremendous strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders, resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints (Metherall). The arms, being held up and outward, held the rib cage in a fixed end inspiratory position which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. The victim would only be able to take very shallow breaths. (This may explain why Jesus made very short statements while on the cross). As time passed, the muscles, from the loss of blood, lack of oxygen and the fixed position of the body, would undergo severe cramps and spasmodic contractions

ABANDONED BY GOD -- SPIRITUAL DEATH

Matthew 27:46: *"About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

With the sin of the world upon Him, Jesus suffered spiritual death (separation from the Father). Isaiah 59:2 says that sins cause a separation from God, and that He hides His face from you so that He does not hear. The Father must turn away from His Beloved Son on the cross. For the first time, Jesus does not address God as His Father (Courson).

DEATH BY CRUCIFIXION : SLOW SUFFOCATION

- Shallowness of breathing causes small areas of lung collapse.
- Decreased oxygen and increased carbon dioxide causes acidic conditions in the tissues.
- Fluid builds up in the lungs. Makes situation in step 2 worse.
- Heart is stressed and eventually fails.

The slow process of suffering and resulting death during a crucifixion may be summarized as follows:

"...it appears likely that the mechanism of death in crucifixion was suffocation. The chain of events which ultimately led to suffocation are as follows: With the weight of the body being supported by the sedulum, the arms were pulled upward. This caused the intercostal and pectoral muscles to be stretched. Furthermore, movement of these muscles was opposed by the weight of the body. With the muscles of respiration thus stretched, the respiratory bellows became relatively fixed. As dyspnea developed and pain in the wrists and arms increased, the victim was forced to raise the body off the sedulum, thereby transferring the weight of the body to the feet. Respirations became easier, but with the weight of the body being exerted on the feet, pain in the feet and legs mounted. When the pain became unbearable, the victim again slumped down on the sedulum with the weight of the body pulling on the wrists and again stretching the intercostal muscles. Thus, the victim alternated between lifting his body off the sedulum in order to breathe and slumping down on the sedulum to relieve pain in the feet. Eventually, he became exhausted or lapsed into unconsciousness so that he could no longer lift his body off the sedulum. In this position, with the

respiratory muscles essentially paralyzed, the victim suffocated and died. (DePasquale and Burch)

Due to the shallow breathing, the victim's lungs begin to collapse in small areas causing hypoxia and hypercarbia. A respiratory acidosis, with lack of compensation by the kidneys due to the loss of blood from the numerous beatings, resulted in an increased strain on the heart, which beats faster to compensate. Fluid builds up in the lungs. Under the stress of hypoxia and acidosis the heart eventually fails. There are several different theories on the actual cause of death. One theory states that there was a filling of the pericardium with fluid, which put a fatal strain on the ability of the heart to pump blood (Lumpkin). Another theory states that Jesus died of cardiac rupture" (Bergsma). Another says the cause of Jesus' death "*may have been multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia and perhaps acute heart failure*" (Edwards). A fatal cardiac arrhythmia may have caused the final terminal event (Johnson, Edwards).

These are all medical theories and don't take into account Scriptures which give us a clear statement of how Jesus died. For the actual cause of Jesus' death see below.

A LAST DRINK OF WINE VINEGAR

John 19:29-30 "*A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.*" When he had received the drink, Jesus said, *'It is finished'*. "*With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*"

Having suffered severe blood losses from His numerous beatings and thus in a dehydrated state, Jesus, in one of His final statements, said "*I thirst.*" He was offered 2 drinks on the cross. The first, which He refused, was a drugged wine (mixed with myrrh). He chose to face death without a clouded mind.

Edersheim writes: "*It was a merciful Jewish practice to give to those led to execution a draught of strong wine mixed with myrrh so as to deaden consciousness*" (Mass Sem 2.9; Bemid. R. 10). This charitable office was performed at the cost of, if not by, an association of women in Jerusalem (Sanh. 43a). The draught was offered to Jesus when He reached Golgotha. But having tasted it....He would not drink it.He would meet Death, even in his sternest and fiercest mood, and conquer by submitting to the full....(p.880).

The second drink, which He accepts moments before His death, is described as a wine vinegar. Two points are important to note. The drink was given on the "*stalk of a hyssop plant*". Remember that these events occurred at the Feast of the Passover. During this feast, (Exodus 12:22) hyssop was used to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to the wooden doorposts of the Jews. It is interesting the end of this hyssop stalk pointed to the blood of the Perfect Lamb which was applied to the wooden cross for the salvation of all mankind. (Barclay) In addition, the wine vinegar is a product of fermentation, which is made from grape juice and yeast. The word literally means "*that which is soured*" and is related to the Hebrew term for "*that which is leavened*" (Holmans). Yeast or leaven, is a Biblical symbol of sin. When Jesus took this drink, (i.e. a drink which was "*leavened*") it is thus symbolic of His taking the sins of the world into His body.

CELEBRATION OF THE OPPOSITION SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Psalm 22:12-13: "*Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me.*"

While He was on the cross, darkness covered the land (noon to three p.m.). Jesus, in Luke 22:53, associates those who arrested Him with the power of darkness. Where were the evil forces while Jesus was on the cross? The verses above from Psalm 22 seem out of place when first read. There seems to be no mention of "bulls" and "lions" around the cross. The verses, however, have a deeper meaning (Courson). Bashan was an area to the east of the Jordan River which was famous for its fertility. Cattle were raised there which grew to enormous sizes. The people there worshipped demon spirits (associated with Baal) within the cattle. In 1 Peter 5:8, Satan is described as "a roaring lion...seeking those who he may devour" These verses are thus suggestive of the spiritual activity of Satan and his demons, celebrating as Jesus was suffering on the cross.

JESUS LAID DOWN HIS LIFE

John 10:17-18 *"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."*

Luke 23:46 *"Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'." When he had said this, he breathed his last.*

The average time of suffering before death by crucifixion is stated to be about 2-4 days (Tenney). There are even reported cases where the victims lived for 9 days (Lipsius). Jesus died a relatively quick physical death. In fact, Pilate was surprised that He had died so soon (Mark 15:44). While many of the physical signs preceding death were present, Jesus did not die from physical causes.

Jesus gave up His life of His own accord. All of the final statements that Jesus makes on the cross leave one with the impression that Jesus chose His time to die. His last statement, *"Into your hands I commit my Spirit"* shows that Jesus' death occurred by giving Himself up. John's gospel records Jesus' death in this way: *"With that He bowed His head and gave up His spirit"* (John 19:30b). Matthew writes: *"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His spirit"* (Matthew 27:50).

Earlier in Jesus' ministry, Jesus made it clear that only He has the power to lay down His life (John 10:17-18). He proved His power over death by His resurrection. Jesus gave up His life of His own accord.

DEATH BY CRUCIFIXION:

HASTENED by the breaking of the legs, so that the victim could not push up to take a good breath.

John 19:32-33: *The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.*

CONFIRMED by a spear thrust into the right side of the heart.

John 19:34: *Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.* Death in crucifixion was hastened by the breaking of the legs of the victim. This procedure, called crurifracture, prevented the ability of the victim to take in a good breath. Death would quickly occur from suffocation. In Jesus' case, He died quickly and did not have

His legs broken. Jesus fulfills one of the prophetic requirements of the Passover Lamb, that not a bone shall be broken (Exodus 12:46, John 19:36).

To confirm that a victim was dead, the Romans inflicted a spear wound through the right side of the heart. When pierced, a sudden flow of blood and water came from Jesus' body. The medical significance of the blood and water has been a matter of debate. One theory states that Jesus died of a massive myocardial infarction, in which the heart ruptured (Bergsma) which may have resulted from His falling while carrying the cross (Ball). Another theory states that Jesus' heart was surrounded by fluid in the pericardium, which constricted the heart and caused death (Davis). The physical stresses of crucifixion may have produced a fatal cardiac arrhythmia (Johnson).

The stated order of "*blood and water*" may not necessarily indicate the order of appearance, but rather the relative prominence of each fluid. In this case, a spear through the right side of the heart would allow the pleural fluid (fluid built up in the lungs) to escape first, followed by a flow of blood from the wall of the right ventricle (Edwards). The important fact is that the medical evidence supports that Jesus did die a physical death.

The story, of course, does not end here. The greatest event that separates Jesus from all others is the fact that He rose again and lives today. He intercedes for those who follow Him at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 7:25).

APPEARANCE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 5:6: *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.*

In eternity, Jesus will bear the marks of His crucifixion. Revelation 5:6 suggests that He appears in heaven with the marks as a Lamb "*looking as if it had been slain.*" We know that when He appeared to Thomas that He bore the scars of the nails and the spear in His side (John 20:26-28). It is also worth considering reasons as to why He was not immediately recognized after His resurrection. In John 21:12, it is stated that the disciples did "*not dare to ask Him His identity, because they knew that it was the Lord.*" It is possible that His resurrection body still has the marks of His beatings. "*The body of His glorification will be the body of His humiliation*" (Missler).

Are we ready to meet Him? What have we done with what He has given to us?. Today, He encourages us to consider the cost of the cross and to apply it to our own lives.

FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST

Luke 9:23: *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

When He was on earth, Jesus stated that , "*If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.*" (Luke 9:23) As we have seen, in Jesus' time it meant going to your death, giving up and separating yourself from all that you had.....your rights, your friends, your body and blood and even your "*god*", to follow Him.

We are challenged by the example of Simon of Cyrene. Scripture mentions Him as being the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Rufus ("*a choice man in the Lord*") and Simon's wife were both addressed by Paul in his letter to the Roman church (Romans 16:13). Here was a man, who indeed carried the cross...and made an impact for Christ in eternity. What commitment are you willing to make to Him now?

The Bible, God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17), relates how God once had a personal relationship with man. God would talk and relate to man, just as you might relate to your best friend. God created man to give him a meaningful and purposeful life.

Man chose to go his own way by disobeying God. (This applies to all men as in Romans 3:23.) This disobedience, called sin, caused a break in the relationship between man and God. If a man casually seeks a relationship with God by his own efforts (religion), he will find nothing, because sin has broken the communication (Isaiah 59:2).

Christianity is the story of God sacrificing His Son to restore a relationship that was broken. As stated in the above text, Jesus gave up His life to pay for the sins of mankind and take the punishment for the sin upon Himself. On the cross a divine transaction took place. He received all of our sin. But there is a second part to the transaction. When we trust our lives to Jesus, we receive all of His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). Because He gave His life on the cross, any one who believes in Him will have a restoration of a personal relationship with God. Jesus Himself claimed to be the only way to God (John 14:6) and only by the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ can man have a meaningful and purposeful life (John 10:10).

God desires that all men come to know Him in a personal way. If you have never received Jesus' gift of Himself for your sins, or have any doubts to how you can have a meaningful and purposeful life by the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, you can start by praying a simple prayer, such as:

Dear Lord Jesus. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. I confess that I am a sinner before God. I acknowledge that by your death and sacrifice that you have paid the penalty of my sins for me. Please come into my heart and become the Lord of my life. As you gave your life, I give my life to you. I will take up my cross and follow you, not as I will, but to follow Your perfect will for my life. In Jesus Name, Amen.

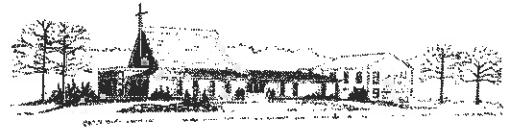
Would you like to know more about how you can have a personal relationship with God? If so, [click here](#).

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Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 74)

Scripture: Mark 15:33-41

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 9th, 2007

The Darkness, the Centurion and the Women **(The Crucifixion, Part 2)**

Mark 15:33-41 (NASB)

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" ³⁵ And when some of the bystanders heard it, they *began* saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. ³⁸ And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" ⁴⁰ And there were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem.

PP 1

Introduction Sometimes, to just speak about the cross of Jesus Christ almost feels crass or too casual. It was almost a speechless event. Imagine yourself, there, at the foot of the cross. Peter fled, as had almost all of them. Judas sat in a black funk. Mary can say nothing. Pilate has gone back into his chambers, confused, I think, not saying much. Few are saying much at the point we arrive in our study of Mark, today...

We cannot really gauge or know the depth of feeling that those at the foot of the cross felt, as they watched Jesus of Nazareth die. The words Mark leaves us are relatively few... Perhaps a few of our songs compliment the shut-mouth feeling... and authorize us to speak of it:

- Like a rose, trampled on the ground, You took the fall, and thought of me, above all.

PP 2

- Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.
His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.
- **A**nd when I think, that God, His Son not sparing;
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.
Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

High noon—the half-way point of Jesus' six hours on the cross. He is in the midst of being executed for... what? Criminal activity? Treason? No one is really sure. But there He hangs. We know, of course, why He was dying... We take our cue, our explanation, from the apostle Paul, and we do not apologize for doing so. For that, we love the cross:

PP 3,4,5

He [the Father] **made Him** [the Son] **who knew no sin to be sin on our** [Paul & the Corinthian Christians, and US] **behalf, that we** [us] **might become the righteousness of God in Him.** 2 Corinthians 5:21

τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν,
ton mé gnonta hamartian hupér hémon hamartian epoiésen
ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.
hina hémeis genometha dikaiosuné Theou en auto.

PP 6

So let's see what Mark adds to what we know from last week about the cross of Jesus Christ:

vs.	Mark 15:33-41	
33	3 hours of darkness, Noon to 3 PM	Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachthani (Ps.22:1 in Aramaic)
34	Jesus' outcry at 3 PM	Calling for Elijah?
35-36		Second drink offered
36		
37	cried out loudly, died	
38	Temple veil torn in two	From top to bottom
39	Centurion's interpretation	see vs.37
40,41	Observant women	from Galilee, ministering

By verse 33 Jesus has been on the cross for three hours. Mark's account of Jesus' death included SIX climactic events:

- the darkness,
- two of Jesus' cries,
- His death,
- the tearing of the temple veil, and
- the Roman centurion's confession.

PP 7

During the first three of Jesus' six hours on the cross he suffered in daylight at the hands of humans (15:21–32). In the darkness of the second three hours He suffered at the hands of God.¹ This darkness, I think, was fearsome. It came from God. It had to DO with what was happening on a spiritual level, which transcends the physical. It was a sign of God's judgment of human sin, which was placed on Jesus. AS A PLAGUE OF DARKNESS FELL UPON EGYPT BEFORE THE PASSOVER², NOW IT FALLS OVER THE LAND OF JUDAH AS JESUS BECOMES THE FINAL PASSOVER AND SUBSTITUTIONARY CURSE (v. 33; cf. Gal. 3:13). Nature participates in the prelude to Jesus' cry of dereliction as he bears in himself the holy wrath of God on behalf of sinners:³

The Son of God is the Son of God for earth. He was and is the Son of God for Mars. For any distant star or galaxy of stars. He is the Son of God for heaven and for hell. He is the only Son of God. He is the eternal Son of God and He is the beloved Son of God. This Son came and became the "son of Man." As He died, the region grew dark. It was daytime but darkness happened.

Jesus cried out, with the words of the psalmist (22:1) in Aramaic which some of those standing there did not understand evidently. He cried out what was happening: the Son of God was forsaken, abandoned, left there, by God the Father. ***My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*** Although He uses the quote, which is a question, Jesus is not really uninformed. He knows why He is forsaken. He knows why, for the only minutes and hours in all eternity, the Father has turned His back on the Son. He is alone, judicially. He is experiencing what you and I deserve to experience.

We should be careful when we talk about hell. It is a real place. We don't know too much about it other than it is real and it is a place of abandonment. People who go to hell, go there because they deserve it, and because they did not—for whatever reason—receive THIS abandonment at Calvary. You see, wherever Calvary is, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on that encroachment

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 15:31 (Galaxie Software, 2003).

² Exod. 10:21–22

³ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*., electronic ed., Mk 15:33 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996, c1989).

that General Gordon liked, or some other place over there, it ought to have a little stone on it, inscribed with your name on it, if you are really a Christian. Your sins were paid for **THERE**. Your sins are not paid for by your going to church *now*, or by that check you wrote so that someone could go on some missions trip, or that old jacket you gave to the Salvation Army, or your mother's faith or Mary's faith or any other act that anyone else did. If your sins are paid for, they were paid for on the cross by the Son of God who cried out, **My God My God why have You forsaken Me?**

Then we have this thing that Mark and Matthew and Luke. The veil in Herod's Temple **was torn in two from top to bottom**. It was a big and thick piece of woven cloth, was probably the one that separated the most holy place from the holy place. Priests would have been preparing the evening sacrifices in the temple when this event occurred near 3:00 p.m., a rude and completely unexpected tearing sound. It may be that priests who later became believers in Jesus reported the event (cf. Acts 6:7). Neither Matthew nor Mark nor Luke explain the event, but the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews did (Heb. 6:19–20; 9:1–14; 10:19–22). It represented God's opening a way into His presence by the death of His Son.⁴

Then we read the one thing the centurion is remembered for, as He watched Jesus die: a realization of Who Jesus really was. The centurion was a pagan; he probably believed in many gods. Yet the cross brought him to a sobering awareness of the reality that what he was watching was not a joke after all -- that some ghastly mistake was being made in the crucifixion of this man. He sees that Jesus indeed is a royal personage, the Son of God, and this centurion, perhaps used to appearing in the presence of royalty, suddenly becomes aware of the true character of Jesus. Notice he speaks in the past tense -- **this man was the Son of God**. There is no hope here; there is no understanding that there may be help for him in the process. I think this is representative of many people today. Many people understand that God is at work in the death of Jesus. They understand that strange and mighty forces are being released in this remarkable event. They understand that he was more than a mere man, but it never gets further than that. They are impressed by the cross and impressed by the character of Jesus, but it never becomes personalized, and they never enter into the value of that death.⁵

PP 8,9

Finally, when all the men have disappeared, we have the women who are still there. Women -- they were the first to love Jesus and they were the last to

⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 15:38 (Galaxie Software, 2003).

⁵ Ray C. Stedman, Sermon Title: *The Awful Penalty Series: The Ruler who Serves*
Scripture: Mark 15:21-47 Message No: 16 Catalog No: 3330 Date: October 12, 1975

stop loving him. In 1975 Ray Stedman said that this is something beautiful that is truly characteristic of women. Let me share it with you:

PP 10

Are men and women simply human beings who are completely alike at the bottom, but simply come in two different models? That is a big question today, and I think this scene around the cross gives us a partial answer. Yes, there is a difference. The stark revelation of the clear light of the cross unveils exactly what is going on in human hearts. It reveals that women, who love first, who easily respond emotionally, also are able to maintain their love longer than men.

People today may be offended at the core of what we believe as Christians. I don't WANT them to do so, and I take no joy if they are offended, but I think they find our beliefs offensive. I'm not sure if you have heard it put this way or not, but here's what we believe that is so outrageous, that Jews and Muslims and maybe a few Buddhists and Hindus do not like to hear:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.⁶

These women are not gathering around the cross in hope; they are gathering in hopelessness. This is a picture of hopeless commitment. It was the women who stayed with Jesus and tried to minister to his dead body, bringing spices to anoint him. The men were gone. There are many today who believe in God; they believe in the record of the Scripture. They believe that God is there and that he works -- until it comes to the exact moment of a crisis in their own life. Then their hope is gone. They really have no hope that God actually will act in the hour of despair. While their love remains, their hope and faith are gone. Their faith is strong as long as everything goes well, but when the bottom drops out, they still love, but their faith is gone.⁷

PP 11

Do you know Jesus? Does His death move you to SPEECHLESSNESS? Is He just THE Son of God, or is He YOUR Savior? Nothing changed my life like the day He went from being something in a creed, to living in my heart! He can live in yours too, if He does not yet. Invite Him in. Surrender to Him. Take Him at His word and call Him on it. See if He doesn't become all the Bible says He is.

⁶ First part of *the Apostles' Creed*, the earliest creed of Christianity.

⁷ Stedman, *Ibid.*

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 75)

Scripture: Mark 15:42-47

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 16th, 2007

The Burial of the Son of Man

Mark 15:42-47 (NASB)

⁴² And when evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

⁴⁴ And Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. ⁴⁵ And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ And *Joseph* bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ And Mary Magdalene and Mary the *mother* of *Joses* were looking on *to see where He was laid*.

Introduction Usually when you're young, death is an *unreal* thing, remote, maybe a joke. As you get older, and see a few deaths, you find it tempting to believe as the old saying goes, only two things are certain: taxes and death.

One of Jesus' greatest miracles—and one which is not thought of in the usual way, as a miracle—was His death. That the Son of God, come as a man, COULD die is amazing. He said, ***For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.*** (John 10:17-18) Jesus performed His own death, at the right time, and for a huge reason and purpose. He gave up His life in “atoning sacrifice” for any and all who would then embrace it, and in years and centuries to follow as the news spread from continent to continent; as parents inform their children and they, their children, generation to generation until He comes again. The fact that this man, born in Bethlehem to the applause of angels, shepherds, magi, humble parents themselves visited by angels, who did miracle after miracle, who stood on the mountain with Moses and Elijah, who commanded the very weather to obey Him, who raised people from the dead, who shut the

mouths of scholars by His own brilliance, who in the tender moments, won such a love from such a random crew, COULD ACTUALLY DIE—is incredible.

But before we go further, let's notice a simple fact of Mark's text from 15:42. We read that it was **Preparation Day**, the day before the Sabbath, a detail which John also points out (John 19:42.) I'm struck by that fact because I note that the Jews took the Sabbath day seriously. So seriously, that they were thinking about it even on the day before, and each week. We have lost the concept of "Sabbath" almost entirely today, and this makes me sad. I wonder if we'll ever get it back? It is an ancient observance—God Himself rested, the Bible tells us, after creating the world and the universe and everything in it in six days (Genesis 2:2,3.) And since most Jews disciplined themselves, gave themselves a weekly "margin" to rest and refuel and enjoy a different pace, they needed to gear up, to dial down. So, they called the day before "Preparation Day." I wish, somehow, all Christians had busy Saturdays, and then relaxed, enjoyable Sundays. Perhaps one day...

Now death is such a strange thing. Look sometime at some of the Matthew Brady photos from the Civil War. Your reaction at first will be surprise and then a strange weirdness. We only know life, and when we view a body of someone who USED to be alive and now are dead, it is bizarre to us—especially if we knew them. Life has been there and now, it is gone. People still love the person, but as they look at the lifeless shell, they find it so confusing and sad. They touch the body and find it cold. They look at the eyes but they're closed. They look at the lips but they now lay silent. They want to hold the person and *will* life back in to the body. They want to dress the body in some way that is dignified, somehow reminiscent of better days. This is how we are now, with death. It is a hard reality that owns a number of reactions from people—denial, cynicism, fantasy and a magical view, and the Christian take on it.

The people around the cross were no different. Two Marys remain nearby. And strangely, two Sanhedrin members, one named Joseph and one named Nicodemus who want to make sure the body is properly honored. Pontius Pilate has merely a scientific interest: ***And Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead.*** (Mark 15:44) John has it for us this way:

And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body. ³⁹ And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. ⁴⁰ And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² Therefore on account of

the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.
(John 19:38-42)

Joseph of Arimathea is one of those people in the Bible that we wish we knew more about. Mark tells us a few things about this man:

He was from a town about 20 miles NW of Jerusalem,

He was a senior leader of the Sanhedrin (and thus by implication, must have been very troubled at their reaction to Jesus—Luke tell us plainly that Joseph had not gone along with their plan),

He was (and Luke says this too) ***waiting for the kingdom of God***
(Matthew adds he had ***become a disciple of Jesus***,

He exercised some courage to go before the Roman governor and ask for Jesus' body,

He prepared Jesus' body for burial in a new and expensive tomb of his own, rolled the stone into place.

There are certain expressions in the New Testament, certain phrases or terms that tend to slide by us when we hear them. We listen to them and they are familiar but they don't really register for us because it is hard for us in the 21st century to grasp what that phrase meant back then. I'm thinking of expressions like, "Hosanna" or "disciple" or "kingdom" and "kingdom of God." We become kind of glazed over when some words are used, because they don't come up in our everyday conversation like words like "grocery store" and "mortgage" and "cell phone." Joseph was ***waiting for the kingdom of God***.

He had a forward-looking perspective.

He was expecting God to somehow SHOW UP and TAKE OVER.

He was hungry for it, as he served on the Sanhedrin in those dark days of Roman occupation. He could see corruption and wickedness even on the Sanhedrin. He wanted God to show up and make things right. We can identify a little with Joseph of Arimathea in this political world in which we live, especially since the kind of person and leader that *Jesus had been*, whetted Joseph's appetite even more for the Lord's administration. Me too!

Let's not gloss over the expense that Joseph and Nicodemus apparently, invested in this funeral. Joseph bought the linen cloth, Mark says. And they also had brought a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to dress the body for burial. (Did you catch that? There's myrrh and both Jesus birth and death!) Nearby was a garden, and in that garden was A NEW TOMB, freshly hewn out of the rock paid for by Joseph. He says to himself, "This is for Jesus, now."

A simple point of observation: the Jews did not cremate bodies. They buried them, generally in trench graves much as we use, but wealthier families used crypts hewn out of solid rock. Such was what Joseph and Nicodemus felt Jesus was worthy of.

Finally, we see that Joseph and Nicodemus had a little audience, off in the shadows maybe. Verse 47 says, ***Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid.*** There they are: still watching. They've seen Jesus' crucifixion and now His entombment. We know the story is not done with these two yet, as we shall see next week. They have no hope of Jesus coming back. They saw Him die and now they see Him laid in a tomb and the stone rolled over the entrance. Still, they love Him. It is sad and it would stay just a sad story, except for what's coming.

Do you love Jesus without hope, or with hope? Do you know what's coming, and know it in your heart? This is what separates real faith in Jesus Christ from mere "churchianity." We know that death could not hold Him. As sad is the fact of His trial, scourging, death on the cross, it is made purposeful by what is coming. We get a full taste of hope from what is coming. I hope you know Jesus as your Savior. He is worth trusting, and worthy of following Him. Even at times when things look dark. He is there.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 76)

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 23rd, 2008

The Resurrection of the Son of Man

Mark 16:1-8 (NASB)

AND when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, they *came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they *saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. ⁶ And he *said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here* is the place where they laid Him. ⁷ "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.'" ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Introduction Did you know that angels speak English? Actually, we don't know that. What we do know is that they could speak, and in a language which could be understood by Mary Magdalene. Today we come to the story of what happened on Sunday morning, about 30 A.D. in Jerusalem, Judea. Mark relates it as we have read in our Scripture passage for today. Verse 6 says all we really need to know: ***He is risen; He is not here*** as according to Mark at least, the young, white robe wearing man said. Matthew says this was an ***angel of the Lord*** and Mark is joined by Luke who calls him a man, though he says there were two of them there. John doesn't mention any men OR angels but says that Jesus briefly appears to Mary Himself and converses with her with instructions as to what to do. So four ancient documents testify that Jesus didn't stay dead. Each wrote his gospel independently from the others and they are joined by Peter and Paul and others who wrote that Jesus rose from being completely, dead as a doorknob. For instance:

²⁰ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through Him are

believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:20-21

and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, Hebrews 13:20

It would be a hundred years before anything like the New Testament would be put together, but these writings existed. And they spoke of Jesus, who had come back to life, spent about six weeks here and there at various times with His disciples

To the [apostles whom He had chosen] He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

And then, on a hill in Jerusalem, rose up into the sky (“ascended” we say) back into heaven. He told His disciples to keep talking about Him and about a new concept—salvation by free grace—out from Jerusalem, and into the whole world. Finally, He also made it clear that He would return—didn’t say when (though they *wanted* to know when), but that it would definitely happen.

The resurrection though, if you believe it, or not, what is at stake? Today I want to share with you NINE BENEFITS of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whether or not Jesus rose from the dead, makes a tremendous difference in people’s lives. It isn’t just some dry, philosophical fact. It isn’t just a metaphysical anomaly. It is in fact, the greatest historical event of all time. And it has almost incalculable impact. Here’s why:

9 Benefits of the Resurrection of Jesus

1. New bodies not diseasable, breakable, ageable. I take it that these are true going by what Jesus’ post-resurrection body seems to have been like.
 - a. 1st Corinthians 15 – Paul describes our resurrection bodies (by “our” I mean all and anyone who is a true Christian) with these words:
imperishable, raised in glory, raised in power, spiritual, in the image of the heavenly...changed...victorious over death.
 - b. Philippians 3:21 ...***who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.***

2. A reuniting somehow with the saints – I could not think of a specific verse that tells us we will be reunited with our beloved grandmother who was a Christian, or with our friend who was a Christian. What I can deduce from what the Scripture *does* say is that we will somehow be connected to all people who were Christians when alive.

a. Matthew 24:31 ***“And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.***

b. 1st Thessalonians 4:14 ***For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*** The elect are gathered TOGETHER and God will bring with Him THOSE. That certainly implies a reunification between all believers in the same place and in the same event. This is because Jesus defeated death Himself, and therefore makes that victory apply to His children.

This is not a *bona fide* evidence, but I am impressed by the story of Don Piper who says he died for ninety minutes in 1989 in a terrible auto accident in Texas. He says that when he went to heaven, because he was a Christian, he was met by a large group of people he had known who had died before him who were also Christians. Until I get some good reason to not believe him, this is one man whose story I am inclined to think might be true.

3. We will see Christ – Dwell on that thought for a moment, in your imagination. You will see the real Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Lamb of God, the King of Kings, the Great Shepherd. You will see His height, facial appearance, His hands, hear His voice, see His expressions, understand His words. I think He will address us by name and give us each a new name. I could dwell on this all day, but we know that since Jesus defeated death He will be with us. And He went to prepare a place for us!

a. 1st John 3:2 ***Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.***

4. No more death, sorrow, crying, pain – Those are all things of this world, of this broken and sinful place. Creation groans Paul said, and we read near the end of John’s Revelation,

a. Rev. 21:4 ***and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.***

Just eliminating any ONE of death, sorrow, crying, pain would be so wonderful we can hardly imagine it. But for all of those to be no more, will

make way for a joy that is too fabulous to even imagine! BECAUSE JESUS DEFEATED DEATH and came out of the tomb!

5. No injustice – Some of us have lived lives where justice or a lack of justice has become the main issue. It hasn't been poverty or disease or loneliness so much as you have felt "ripped off." Because Jesus defeated death, He will come again and there will be total justice AND mercy ruling. He will make all things right. No wickedness will go unpunished and no fraud will go unjudged.

- a. ***Rev.21:5-7 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.***

Do you see what I mean when I suggest to you that a lot is at stake with whether the resurrection of Christ is true or not?

6. Evil defeated – All evil will go down. Satan, all who followed him, all who were deceived by him, will go down. There will be utter defeat as has never been seen before. There will be no negotiated peace between the forces of evil and the Lord. Evil will undergo a complete and final conquering and vanquishing.

- a. ***Rev.20:10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.***

7. Power for living, here, while we wait – There are many places in the New Testament where we are promised power from God to live as He wants us to live, while we have life on earth. That power is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

- a. ***Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.***

8. When you die, you don't. – Death seems so horrible here, especially for the loved ones left behind. But for a Christian we know that though this body will wear out, and get tired and maybe get sick.

- a. ***2nd Cor. 5:8 - we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.***

Coupled with a couple of the OTHER benefits listed above, this one is a great comfort. Physical death will come but the bigger death—a thing we will realize more I think once we're there—is spiritual death. We are not susceptible for that because Jesus took it on Himself to die for us, to die spiritually for us.

9. A future in heaven –

I can only imagine What it will be like When I walk By your side
I can only imagine What my eyes will see When your face Is before me
I can only imagine

[Chorus:]

Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel
Will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of you be still
Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
I can only imagine

I can only imagine When that day comes And I find myself
Standing in the Son

I can only imagine When all I will do Is forever Forever worship You
I can only imagine

- a. Rev. 21:1-8 - *AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, ⁴ and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." ⁶ And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. ⁷ "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. ⁸ "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Exposition of the Gospel of Mark (Lesson 77)

Scripture: Mark 16:9-20

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 30th, 2008

The End of Mark's Gospel

Mark 16:9-20 (NASB)

⁹ [Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ And when they heard that He was alive, and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. ¹² And after that, He appeared in a different form to two of them, while they were walking along on their way to the country. ¹³ And they went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. ¹⁴ And afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining *at the table*; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. ¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. ¹⁷ "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." ¹⁹ So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.][*And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.*]

Introduction This will be the final and 77th message in this exposition of the Gospel of Mark. We began this exposition of the Gospel of Mark on January 18th, 2004. With intervening messages and series, it has taken 4 1/3 years to cover the shortest Gospel. (In contrast, a 1988 exposition of Revelation took 15 months and 37 messages. A 1984-85 exposition of Hebrews took 17 months and 40 messages. A 2000-2002 exposition of Ephesians took 20 months and 39 messages. Which only goes to say I suppose that I am long-winded!) But I have loved carefully going through the Gospel of Mark and I kind of regret its ending. I was prompted to do this study of Mark because

of a casual comment someone made several years ago, who no longer attends our church. He said, “I love listening to preaching that is about Jesus.”

Today we come to the disputed ending of Mark. It may strike you as strange that the Bible has a discrepancy like this in it. You may be thinking, “I thought the Bible was perfect, without any inconsistencies?” You need to remember that what WE have, with our English Bibles (or Chinese, or Spanish) are not 100% exact copies of the original 66 writings. They are compilations of a great effort of scholarship to produce the most accurate and representative approximation of what the original Book of Genesis, prophecy of Isaiah, Gospel of Mark, and all the other inspired writings SAID. We have the NASB, the NIV, the KJV, the *NewKJV*, the RSV, ASV, NLT, ESV, CEV, HCSB, not to mention translations like the Arabic Life Application Bible, the 1940 Bulgarian Bible, the Haitian Creole Version, the 1545 Luther Bible, seven different Spanish Bibles, Bibles in Croatian, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Korean, Dutch, German, French, Romanian, Apache, Albanian, Russian, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Swahili and two in Chinese. Some of these are based on the same manuscript families, but there ARE a few differences between manuscripts. The incredible thing is that all the verses which have differences put together make up less than one tenth of one percent of all the verses in the Bible. Which is to say that 99.9% of all the verses of the Bible are evidenced by perfect witness between all the thousands of known manuscripts—this of writings of which the *newest* was written two thousand years ago. However, the ending of Mark is one of the places, perhaps the most significant example where we sometimes have some disagreement between the manuscripts. The ending of Mark’s Gospel is one of the major textual problems in the New Testament. The main reason some interpreters regard verses 9–20 as spurious is this. The two oldest Greek uncial (all “caps”) manuscripts of the New Testament (fourth century), Codex Sinaiticus (*Aleph*) and Codex Vaticanus (B), plus many other old manuscripts, do not contain them. Moreover the writings of some church fathers reflect no knowledge of these verses. On the other hand, verses 9–20 do appear in the majority of the old manuscripts, and other church fathers refer to them.¹ There are also some differences *between* the manuscripts which do contain them.

Four possible solutions for this have been suggested: (1) Mark finished his Gospel but the original ending was lost or destroyed in some way now unknown before it was copied. (2) Mark finished his Gospel but the original ending was deliberately suppressed or removed for some reason now unknown. (3) Mark was unable to finish his Gospel for some reason now unknown—possibly sudden death. (4) Mark purposely intended to end his Gospel at verse 8.²

¹Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Mk 16:8 (Galaxie Software, 2003).

²John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2:194 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985).

Of these options, numbers 1 and 2 are unlikely even though the view that the original ending was accidentally lost is widely accepted. If Mark's Gospel was a scroll manuscript rather than a codex (leaf form of book) the ending would normally be on the inside of the scroll and less likely to be damaged or lost than the beginning of the scroll. If the incompleteness of Mark is assumed, number 3 is the most probable option but due to its very nature it cannot be confirmed. In light of Mark's use of the theme "fear" in relation to Jesus' followers (verse 8), many modern interpreters incline toward option 4.³

Personally I am satisfied with the conclusion offered by *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (and others) which says,

A final conclusion to the problem probably cannot be reached on the basis of presently known data. A view which seems to account for the relevant evidence and to raise the least number of objections is that (a) Mark purposely ended his Gospel with verse 8 and (b) verses 9-20, though written or compiled by an anonymous Christian writer, are historically authentic and are part of the New Testament canon (similarly the last chapter of Deut.). In this view, very early in the transmission of Mark's Gospel (perhaps shortly after A.D. 100) verses 9-20 were added to verse 8 without any attempt to match Mark's vocabulary and style. Possibly these verses were brief extracts from the post-Resurrection accounts found in the other three Gospels and were known through oral tradition to have the approval of the Apostle John who lived till near the end of the first century. Thus the material was included early enough in the transmission process to gain recognition and acceptance by the church as part of canonical Scripture. These verses are consistent with the rest of Scripture. The development of the theme of belief and unbelief unifies the passage.⁴

However I would also add that because of the questionable situation with these verses, I would be hesitant to base any doctrine on them.

Now to take a look at the text itself:

The idea of rising from the dead often meets disbelief at first, as we read in vs. 11: ***And when they heard that He was alive, and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.*** Human nature would rather cling to the physical, the visible, than to stretch into faith. Jesus had *told them* He would rise. The notion of resurrection is present in the Old Testament. It is not a wholly new idea to the disciples, but at first they didn't believe. Today people are faced with the same crisis. Is it reasonable to believe that Jesus could rise from the dead? And it follows then that if you can believe that, there would be no reason NOT to believe that He can give a rising from the dead to whomever He chooses. Without

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

reviewing the evidences today, I believe there are *many convincing proofs* that He did rise from the dead.

Verse 12 is an encapsulation of what we have recorded elsewhere in Luke 24:13-35 with Jesus' appearing (and hanging out I might add) with the two unnamed disciples on the road to Emmaus. There we see that the disciples still found it hard to believe and tried to rationalize what had been seen as ghosts!

Verse 14 tells us that unbelief is a symptom of *hardness of heart*. We spend our whole lives battling "hardness of heart." Many things will conspire to harden our hearts, to make us cynical, to deaden our quickness to believe God. But we need to do the things that SOFTEN our hearts. We need to believe the promises that the Bible makes to us and live in light of those promises.

Verse 15 is like the great commission that Matthew records at the end of his Gospel. In fact, this is more succinct: ***Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.*** Every country and every tribe and people group deserves the chance to hear the good news of free grace and forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ. It doesn't take long to share the good news. And people desperately need to hear it. We just need to tell it, to "preach" or proclaim it. It isn't up to us WHO responds. It is up to us to do the telling.

Verse 16 is interesting because it sounds like you need to be baptized to BE saved. However baptism elsewhere in the New Testament is always an outward confession of belief in Jesus Christ. This verse also regards baptism as such. The second part of the verse clearly teaches that unbelief results in condemnation (9:43-48), not unbelief and failure to undergo baptism. In the first part of the verse one article governs both participles: has believed and has been baptized (NASB) or believes and is baptized (NIV). This indicates the close relationship between believing and being baptized. However they are not inseparable (Rom. 3:21-28; Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism is not a condition for salvation, but it is an important step of obedience for a believing disciple.⁵ If you have not been baptized, you need to be. It is your public identification with what Jesus did.

Though the New Testament writers generally assume that under normal circumstances each believer will be baptized, 16:16 does not mean that baptism is a necessary requirement for personal salvation. The second half of the verse indicates by contrast that one who does not believe the gospel will be condemned by God (implied) in the day of final judgment (9:43-48). The basis for condemnation is unbelief, not the lack of any ritual observance. Baptism is not mentioned because unbelief precludes one's giving a confession of faith while

⁵ Ibid, Constable.

being baptized by water. Thus the only requirement for personally appropriating God's salvation is faith in Him (cf. Rom. 3:21-28; Eph. 2:8-10).⁶

The signs that are mentioned in verses 17 and 18 were promised to the apostolic community (Matt. 10:1; 2nd Cor. 12:12), not to all believers in all ages (cf. 1 Cor. 12:29, 30). All (with the exception of drinking poison) were experienced by some in the apostolic church and reported in Scripture (e.g., Acts 28:5), but not afterward (cf. v. 20).⁷ A great challenge to this idea of cessation has been presented by the Pentecostal and charismatic movements which arose after 1906 in the United States and then spread elsewhere. Today we simply want to say that we are to FOCUS on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, itself. The Gospel is primarily a set of ideas, which are to be joined by faith and repentance, and which will result in a change and improvement of lifestyle. Good works are to accompany that change of lifestyle and if God chooses to add supernatural signs, that is His right. But in general, we are to focus on the sharing of the news of salvation, which can be had freely, and to live lives which authenticate that. Christians aren't supposed to look crazy. They're supposed to look loving, and like Jesus. We are to make a difference in our town by living as He lived. That means it is not all about me. It is about those around me.

Finally in verse 19 we read that He ascended back into heaven (as we read in Acts 1) and **sat down at the right hand of God** where He is until He comes again here. Which will happen, my friends. And then we read that they **went out and preached everywhere** (as we read in the rest of the book of Acts.)

The purpose of the Gospel of Mark was to let a primarily Roman and pagan audience know the basics about what Jesus did, and what happened with Him. The results are there which change people's lives today. How are you with these things? If you have never yet really met the Lord Jesus, you can. Invite Him into your heart. Ask Him to really reveal Himself to you and to be your Savior. It isn't automatic just because your Dad or Mom or grandfather or grandmother believe. You must trust Christ and believe in Him yourself. And the news will become good news for you.

⁶ Ibid, John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

⁷ John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed., Mk 16:17 (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997).

The Disputed Epilogue of Mark (16:9-20)

The last 12 verses of Mark (16:9-20) known as “the longer ending of Mark” constitute one of the most difficult and most disputed textual problems in the New Testament. Were these verses included or omitted in Mark’s original text? Most modern English translations call attention to the problem in some way such as adding an explanatory footnote at verse 9 (NASB), setting this section apart from verse 8 with an explanatory note (NIV), or printing the whole section in the margin (RSV).

The *external* evidence includes the following: (1) The two earliest (fourth century) uncial manuscripts (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) omit the verses though their respective scribes left some blank space after verse 8, suggesting that they knew of a longer ending but did not have it in the manuscript they were copying. (2) Most all other manuscripts (fifth century on) as well as early versions support the inclusion of verses 9-20. (3) Several later manuscripts (seventh century on) and versions supply a “shorter ending” after verse 8 which is clearly not genuine but all these manuscripts (except one) continue on with verses 9-20. (4) Early patristic writers—such as Justin Martyr (*Apology* 1: 45, ca. A.D. 148), Tatian (*Diatessaron*, ca. A.D. 170), and Irenaeus who quoted verse 19 (*Against Heresies* 3: 10. 6)—support the inclusion of these verses. However, Eusebius (*Questions to Marinius I*, ca. A.D. 325) and Jerome (*Epistle* 120: 3; *ad Hebraeos*, ca. A.D. 407) said verses 9-20 were missing from Greek manuscripts known to them. (5) An Armenian manuscript of the 10th century attributed verses 9-20 to “the presbyter Ariston,” probably Aristion, a contemporary of Papias (A.D. 60-130) who was purportedly a disciple of the Apostle John. (6) If Mark ended abruptly at verse 8, then it is easy to see why some early copyist(s) wanted to provide a “suitable” ending for the Gospel from other authoritative sources. However, if verses 9-20 were part of the original, it is difficult to see why the early copyists would have omitted it.

Internal evidence includes this data: (1) The transition from verse 8 to verse 9 involves an abrupt change of subject from “women” to the presumed subject “Jesus” since His name is not stated in verse 9 of the Greek text. (2) Mary Magdalene is introduced with a descriptive clause in verse 9 as though she had not been mentioned already in 15:40, 47 and 16:1. (3) About 1/3 of the significant Greek words in verses 9-20 are “non-Marcian,” that is, they do not appear elsewhere in Mark or they are used differently from Mark’s usage prior to verse 9. (4) The Greek literary style lacks the vivid, lifelike detail so characteristic of Mark’s historical narrative. (5) Mark would have been expected to include a Resurrection appearance to the disciples in Galilee (14:28; 16:7), but the appearances in verses 9-20 are in or near Jerusalem. (6) Matthew and Luke parallel Mark until verse 8 and then diverge noticeably, suggesting that Mark began his literary existence without verses 9-20.

ca. circa, about

Equally astute and conscientious interpreters differ widely in their evaluations of this data and reach opposing conclusions. Those who include these verses in light of the preponderance of early and widespread external support must still account satisfactorily for the internal evidence which appears to distinguish these verses from the rest of the Gospel. And those who omit these verses must still account for their early and widespread attestation externally and give a suitable reason for Mark’s seemingly abrupt conclusion at verse 8. Four possible solutions for this have been suggested: (1) Mark finished his Gospel but the original ending was lost or destroyed in some way now unknown before it was copied. (2) Mark finished his Gospel but the original ending was deliberately suppressed or removed for some reason now unknown. (3) Mark was unable to finish his Gospel for some reason now unknown—possibly sudden death. (4) Mark purposely intended to end his Gospel at verse 8.

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cf. confer, compare

v. verse

John F. Walwood, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 2:193 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985).

