

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

# MARK

BY BOB WINTON



**GOSPEL  
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## Acknowledgment and Preface

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven member of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs and Henry Simmons. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, Ray Hawk and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections. Our grasp of the infinite will of God is not absolute, despite the diligence of our efforts; there is always more to learn.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The notes were put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over much time. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, doing full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people. "Outlined" does not imply skimpy—these are full-length books.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we barely cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge to the recipients. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received.

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie help as much as she could despite the dementia she has had for several years—and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches. She moved into eternity on November 25, 2022.

Bob Winton

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[bwint38@hotmail.com](mailto:bwint38@hotmail.com)

(931) 728-7610 \* (931) 639-0317

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## Introduction to Mark

### A. The Author.

1. The author of the book is Mark, also known as John Mark.
  - a. "When the authorship of a book has never been disputed, its friends have usually but little to say on the subject....There is no book of antiquity, in either sacred or profane literature, whose authorship is more unquestionable" (McGarvey, pp.7f). The book does not name Mark as its author, but ancient testimony puts the subject of authorship beyond serious question.
  - b. "If we were to transcribe from our Introduction to the book of Matthew, what we have written on the subject of its authorship, almost every word would be equally appropriate to the book of Mark. There is the same uniformity in the testimony of early writers; the same absence of doubt among both ancient and modern scholars; the same improbability that the authorship could have been attributed in early times to the wrong person, and the same or even greater certainty, that if a fictitious authorship had been assumed for the book by the early Christians, it would have been attributed to some on supposed to have a higher claim to credibility and to the reverence of the disciples" (McGarvey, p.257).
  - c. References to Mark are found in these passages:
    - 1) Acts 12:12: "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying."
    - 2) Acts 12:25: "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark."
    - 3) Acts 15:37: "And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark."
    - 4) Colossians 4:10: "Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him)."
    - 5) Philemon 24: "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers."
    - 6) 2 Timothy 4:11: "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."
    - 7) 1 Peter 5:13: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."
  - d. He was not an apostle, but was an inspired evangelist and prophet. He was a son of Mary, a woman who lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Her home was the gathering place of the disciples, to which Peter went after he was delivered from prison. "...Mark may have been converted through the preaching of Peter, and this may have been the cause of Peter calling him 'his son' (1 Pet. 5:13), which doubtless means son in the ministry. He returns with Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25), and accompanies them, as minister (Acts 13:5) on the first great missionary journey as far as Perga (Acts 13:13). There he left them and returned home. On the second missionary tour Paul declined to take him and separated from Barnabas, Mark's cousin (Col. 4:10), who chose Mark for his companion (Acts 15:37-39). Ten years later he seems to be with Paul in his imprisonment at Rome and was certainly counted a fellow worker by Paul (Col. 4:10, Philemon 24). Paul found him useful and asked Timothy to bring him to him in his last imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11). He was with Peter when he wrote his first epistle (1 Peter 5:13)" [Coffman].
  - e. His Hebrew name was John, (Acts 12:12) and it is probable that he used the name Mark when he was among Gentiles. The apostle to the Gentiles was known as Saul when among the Jews, but was called Paul in the world at large. He was part of the first missionary journey, with Paul and Barnabas, who was a kinsman to Mark. He garnered the disapproval of Paul when he turned back from this great work:
    - 1) Acts 13:13: "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."
    - 2) Acts 15:36-39: "And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus. "

- f. At some point, Peter and John Mark were associated in the work: “The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son” (1 Pet. 5:13).
- g. Mark regained Paul’s favor: “Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Tim. 4:11). He remained at Rome while Paul was imprisoned there
  - 1) Colossians 4:10: “Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him).”
  - 2) Philemon 24: “Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.”
  - 3) From Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome, we hear that Mark went from Rome to Alexandria, in Egypt, where he planted a church, and died and was buried in the eighth year of the reign of Nero, A.D. 64. [See Barnes].

#### B. Characteristics of the Gospel of Mark as Compared With the Other Three Accounts.

1. Each Gospel account has its own theme, and each account was written to a specific group:
    - a. Matthew was written to the Jews, and it shows Jesus’ Messianic work as a king over His everlasting spiritual kingdom, which is His church.
    - b. Luke was written mainly to the Greeks, and it shows the human side of Jesus and portrays Him as being a perfect man.
    - c. John was written to all Christians, and its primary focus is Jesus being Deity, and that He is the Son of God (John 20:30-31).
    - d. Mark was written to the Romans, and it shows that Jesus is the one with power and strength through His miraculous works.
  2. Mark deals with facts, rather than themes or topics. He emphasizes the miraculous works of Christ, and his strong words and statements. Mark’s account bears resemblances to Matthew’s reports, and not much like that of Luke or John.
    - a. Matthew begins with the lineage of Jesus, and thus demonstrates that he was a descendant of the patriarch Abraham. This information would be of great importance to the Jews. Matthew shows that the Lord was born in Bethlehem, thus fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. Such things were of special import to the Jews.
    - b. Luke shows the lineage of Jesus, tracing it back to Adam.
    - c. John presents the background of Christ, going back to eternity. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).
    - d. Mark is guided by the Holy Spirit to begin his account of the gospel with the work of John which leads directly into the work of Christ: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Mark 1:1-3).
  3. Mark omits “...all the ground covered by the first two chapters of Matthew, announces Jesus at once as the Christ, the Son of God (1. 1), hurriedly touches the ministry of John and the temptation of Jesus, and enters on his main theme with the commencement of the ministry in Galilee. He also omits other passages of the history which Matthew treats at considerable length, such as the sermon on the Mount, the denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees found in the 23d chapter of Matthew, and the prophetic discourse found in the 26th chapter” (McGarvey, *Matthew and Mark*, pp.259f).
  4. We offer the following from Coffman:
    - a. It is a Gospel of Vividness and Details. He shows the effect of awe and wonder produced upon those present by the works and teaching of Jesus. He tells the details of the actions of Jesus and his disciples and the multitudes. Jesus "looks around," "sat down," "went before". He is grieved, hungry, angry, indignant, wonders, sleeps, rests and is moved with pity. The cock crows twice: "it is the hour", "a great while before day," or "eventide," "there are two thousand swine", the disciples and Jesus are on the sea, on Olivet, or in the court yard or in the porch. Everything is portrayed in detail.
    - b. It is a Gospel of Activity and Energy. There is no story of his infancy, but he starts with "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ". He portrays the active career of Jesus on earth. He, however, lays emphasis upon the works rather than the words of Jesus. Few discourses of any length and only four of the fifteen parables of Matthew are given and those in the briefest form, while eighteen of the
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miracles are given in rapid review. The rapid succession is indicated by one Greek word, translated by the seven words "immediately", "anon", "forthwith", "by and by", "as soon as", "shortly", and "straightway", which occur forty-one times in this gospel. The last meaning, straightway, is truest to the Greek idea and may be called Mark's characteristic word. It indicates how with the speed of a racer he rushed along and thereby furnishes us a breathless narrative which Farrar says makes us "feel like the apostles who, among the press of the people coming and going, were twice made to say they 'had no leisure so much as to eat.'" It moves as the scenes of a moving picture show.

- c. It is a Gospel of Power Over Devils. Here as in no other gospel the devils are made subject to Jesus. They recognize him as the "Son of God" and acknowledge their subordination to him by pleading with him as to what shall be done with them (5:7, 12).
  - d. It is a Gospel of Wonder. Everywhere Jesus is a man of wonder that strikes awe and terror and causes to wonder those who see and hear him. Some of these may be studied, especially in the Greek, in 1:27; 2:13; 4:41; 5:28 6:50; 51; 7:37. As Thompson puts it, "The wonder-working Son of God sweeps over his Kingdom swiftly and meteor-like" and thus strikes awe into the hearts of the on-lookers. He is "a man heroic and mysterious, who inspires not only a passionate devotion but also amazement and adoration".
  - e. It is a Gospel for the Romans. The Romans were men of great power, mighty workers who left behind them great accomplishments for the blessing of humanity. So that Mark would especially appeal to them by recording of Jesus his mighty deeds. He lets them see one who has power to still the storm, to control disease and death, and even power to control the unseen world of spirits. The Roman, who found deity in a Caesar as head of a mighty Kingdom, would bow to one who had shown himself King in every realm and whose kingdom was both omnipotent and everlasting, both visible and unseen, both temporal and spiritual.
  - f. Then, too, the Roman cared nothing for Jewish Scripture or prophecy and so he omits all reference to the Jewish law, the word law not being found in the entire book. He only once or twice refers in any way to the Jewish scriptures. He omits the genealogy of Jesus which could have no value to a Roman. Then, too, he explains all doubtful Jewish words, such as "Boanerges" (3:17), "Tabitha cumi" (5:41), "corban" (7:11), "alba" (15:36). He reduced Jewish money to Roman currency (12:42). He explains Jewish customs as not being understood by them. (See 7:3; 13:3; 14:12; 15:42).
  - g. And once more by the use of terms familiar to him such as centurion, contend, etc. "Mark showed the Roman a man who was a man indeed". He showed them manhood crowned with glory and power; Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God; a man but a Man Divine and sinless, among sinful and suffering men. Him, the God-man, no humiliation could degrade, no death defeat. Not even on the cross could he seem less than the King, the Hero, the only Son. And as he gazed on such a picture how could any Roman refrain from exclaiming with the awe-struck Centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God".
5. Other information:
- a. The Gospel according to Mark is the shortest gospel and in presentation the most dense one. Mark does not so much describe the teachings but more the actions of the Lord Jesus. Very often Mark uses the present time in his accounts instead of the past time. The word "and" (Greek: *euthys*) is very striking and appears more than forty times. Neither the genealogy nor the birth of Jesus are mentioned. In the very first chapter Mark starts his account of the Lord Jesus' ministry.
  - b. The Lord Jesus retires into a quiet place much more frequently than is mentioned in the other gospels (Mark 1:12; Mark 1:35; Mark 6:31; Mark 6:46; Mark 7:17; Mark 7:24; Mark 9:2; Mark 11:19). Mark mentions particularly often that the Lord Jesus did not want his actions to be made public:
    - 1) Mark 1:34: "And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him."
    - 2) Mark 1:44: "And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."
    - 3) Mark 5:43: "And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat."
    - 4) Mark 7:36: "And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it."
    - 5) Mark 8:26: "And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."
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- 6) Mark 8:30: "And he charged them that they should tell no man of him."
  - 7) Mark 9:9: "And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead."
  - 8) Mark 9:30: "And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.:
  - c. The disciples do not once call Jesus "Lord" and he is called "Christ" (Anointed One) seven times only.
  - d. All these peculiarities show that the subject of this gospel is to present Christ as God's servant. He was not only the promised king of Israel as in Matthew's gospel but also the true servant of the Lord (compare Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 52:13-15; Zechariah 3:8). According to his own words he has not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).
  - e. But the Lord Jesus is also presented as the true prophet in the Gospel of Mark (compare Deuteronomy 18:15). As such He announced the good tidings of God, the gospel. This key word appears eight times in Mark, four times in Matthew and not at all in Luke (except for the Greek verb "evangelize") and neither in John. In Mark 1:38 the Lord Jesus explains with authority what His ministry was: announcing the Word of God as prophet: "Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth."
  - f. God's servant is also the suffering servant. The report of the Lord's suffering and death occupies a relatively large place in respect to the length of the gospel. Four times the Lord Jesus announces His coming sufferings to his disciples:
    - 1) Mark 8:31: "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."
    - 2) Mark 9:12: "And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought."
    - 3) Mark 9:31: "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day."
    - 4) Mark 10:32-34: "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again."
6. From the Fourfold Gospel:
- a. "John begins his Gospel from eternity, where the Word is found coexistent with God. Matthew begins with Jesus, the humanly generated son of Abraham and David, born in the days of Herod the king. Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist, the Messiah's herald; and Mark begins with the ministry of John the Baptist.
  - b. "While the three other evangelists take a brief survey of the preparation of the gospel, Mark looks particularly to the period when it began to be preached. Gospel means good news, and news is not news until it is proclaimed. The gospel began to be preached or proclaimed with the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke xvi. i6).
  - c. "His ministry was the dawn of that gospel of which Christ's preaching was the sunrise of Jesus [this is our Lord's name as a human being; it means "Saviour"] Christ [Though this is also sometimes used as a name, it is in reality our Lord's title. It means "the Anointed," and is equivalent to saying that Jesus is our Prophet, Priest and King] the Son of God. [This indicates our Lord's eternal nature; it was divine].
  - d. "Mark's Gospel was written to establish that fact, which is the foundation of the church (Matt. xvi. 18). John's Gospel was written for a like purpose (John xx. 31). John uses the phrase "Son of God" twenty-nine times, and Mark seven times. As these two evangelists wrote chiefly for Gentile readers, they emphasized the divinity of Jesus, and paid less attention to his Jewish ancestry. But Matthew, writing for Hebrews, prefers the title " Son of David," which he applies to Jesus some nine times, that he may identify him as the Messiah promised in the seed of David."

### C. The Date of the Book.

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1. The exact date of the writing is unknown. The date of Luke is fixed as not later than Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea which was from the summer of 58 A.D. to the fall of 60 A.D.
2. The scholars are generally agreed that Mark wrote his account of the Gospel from Rome, between 60 and 70 A.D. His Roman name was Mark [Marcus] and his Jewish name was John, a common name. "There can be no doubt that the author of the second gospel was Mark. This is the unbroken testimony from the earliest of reputable tradition" (*New Testament Survey*, Fort Worth Lectures, 1962, p.53: Avon Malone).
3. Quoted from Malone: "'The general [of Mark's Gospel] depicting the Lord's ceaseless activity and His power over demons, disease and death is such as would appeal to Roman readers whose interest was in deeds rather than words.'" In their time of strength, the Roman people seem to have been more interested in action, than with nebulous abstractions. Thus, Mark presents Jesus as a virile worker, one who was ever busy.
4. The book does not identify the writer by name or the identity of the first recipients; certainly, it was meant to be read by Christians, to supply important information about the Gospel System. Multiplied millions of people have read the book with much satisfaction and profit.

D. Introductory Material on Mary from McGarvey:

1. John Mark was the son of a woman named Mary, who was a prominent disciple in the city of Jerusalem at the time of the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter, and whose dwelling in that city was a well known place of resort for the disciples. All of this appears from the incident recorded in Acts 12:12-17. The house was so well known as a place of resort for the brethren, that when Peter was released from prison by the angel, though it was the dead of night, he at once repaired thither to give notice of his release, and to send word to the surviving James and other leading brethren.
  2. Mary was also a sister to Barnabas (Col. 4:10); which fact would in itself render her somewhat conspicuous; for Barnabas became at a very early period one of the most noted men in the Jerusalem Church. (See Acts 4:36, 37; 9:26, 27; 11:22-24). The land which Barnabas had owned in the island of Cyprus, and which he sold for the benefit of the poor, points to the probability that his sister Mary, besides owning a residence in Jerusalem, was possessed of other property. The indications are that she was a widow in easy circumstances, full of hospitality, and intimately associated with the apostles and the other leaders of the Church in Jerusalem.
  3. But besides these opportunities, Mark spent some years in most intimate association with Paul and Barnabas, laboring as their "minister," or assistant (Acts 12:25, 13:5; 15:37-39); at a later period he was associated in a similar way with Peter (1 Peter 5:13); and then again with Paul (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11). During these associations, Mark must have heard the inspired preachers, in preaching to different communities and different individuals, rehearse many hundreds of times the leading events in the life of Jesus; and he must have been an exceedingly inattentive listener, if these events, in the very language of the apostles, were not indelibly imprinted on his memory.
  4. It is impossible, then, for Mark to have enjoyed better natural opportunities than he did, except by having, in addition to these, the opportunity of witnessing for himself the events of which he writes. He could truly have said with Luke: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having obtained perfect understanding of all from the beginning, to write." (Luke 1:1-4). Those, then, who are disposed to regard the gospel narrative as nothing more than uninspired records, should abate nothing from the credibility of Mark's narrative on the ground of his want of information; for surely no uninspired writer ever had better facilities for informing himself with entire accuracy concerning events of which he had not been an eye-witness.
  5. As we have intimated before, there is no express statement in the Scriptures of the fact that Mark was an inspired man; yet there are various facts which force us to the conclusion that he was. In the first place, it was a custom of the apostles to impart spiritual gifts to prominent men in the churches, and especially to their traveling companions and fellow-laborers, thus Philip, Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, Silas, Judas, and Timothy, enjoyed miraculous gifts (Acts 8:6; 13:1; 15:32; 2 Tim. 1:6) and individuals in the churches in Samaria, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, Galatia, etc. enjoyed similar gifts. (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6; 1 Cor. 1:4,7; Rom. 15:14; Gal. 3:5).
  6. Now to assume that Mark, who was, at different times, and for many years, a companion and fellow-laborer of two apostles, was overlooked in the distribution of these gifts, would be unwarrantable and even absurd. In the second place, there are evidences that Mark was regarded as especially fitted for labors which were usually performed by men possessed of miraculous gifts, he was chosen by Paul and Barnabas as their assistant on their first tour among the Gentiles (Acts 12:25; 13:5); and although, on their second tour, Paul
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declined his company, Barnabas still preferred him and separated from Paul rather than separate from Mark (15:36-39).

7. At a later period he was sent by Paul on important missions among the churches (Col. 4:10); and he was sent for by Paul during the last imprisonment of the latter, because he was profitable to him for the ministry. (2 Tim. 4:11). Finally, if a tradition preserved by Papias, who wrote in the first half of the second century, has any foundation in fact, the apostle Peter had some connection with the labors of Mark in preparing his gospel, and it is highly improbable that he would have allowed him to undertake such a work without imparting to him the Holy Spirit if he were not already endowed with the requisite gifts.
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**Mark 1****A. Mark 1:1-8: The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

1. Verse 1: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”
  - a. In a practical sense, the start of the Gospel of Christ was in the work of John the Immerser. This is precisely the method the inspired prophet Mark begins his rather short but powerful revelation of his account of the gospel.
    - 1) The word *gospel*, as everyone should now know, means “good news” or “good tidings.” “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16; cf.18).
    - 2) The name *Jesus* means “Savior.” “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).
    - 3) Mark openly declares Jesus Christ to be the *Son of God*. This does not mean that Jesus Christ is a created being. God is not the Father of Christ in the sense that he created Christ. Instead, he is his Father in the sense that he has greater authority. Also, God brought Christ into the world, giving him a physical body; and later, when he raised him from the dead, God is said to have begotten the Son (Heb. 1:5-6; Acts 13:33-35). It is impossible for a Divine Being to have either a beginning or an end; Christ is Deity.
      - a) Acts 13:33-35: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."
      - b) Hebrews 1:5-6: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."
  - b. The gospel story is a report of the life Christ lived on earth, the teachings and the works of the Messiah, God’s Anointed One—the Savior. There is more to the gospel than the biography of Jesus.
  - c. The Gospel of Christ contains Facts which are to be believed:
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”
    - 2) John 8:24: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”
    - 3) Mark 16:15-16: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
  - d. The Gospel of Christ contains Commands which are to be obeyed:
    - 1) Even faith is depicted as a command:
      - a) John 6:29: “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”
      - b) 1 John 3:23: “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”
    - 2) Repentance is required:
      - a) Luke 13:3: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
      - b) Acts 17:30: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”
    - 3) Baptism is a command:
      - a) Acts 10:47-48: “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name

- of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”
- b) Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
- e. The Gospel of Christ contains Blessings which are to be enjoyed:
- 1) Remission of sin:
    - a) Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
    - b) Luke 24:47: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
  - 2) Providential assistance:
    - a) Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
    - b) Philippians 4:19: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”
    - c) 1 Corinthians 10:13: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”
  - 3) Promise of Eternal Life:
    - a) John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
    - b) 1 Peter 1:9: “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”
    - c) 1 John 2:25: “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”
- f. The Gospel of Christ contains Warnings which are to be heeded:
- 1) Do not alter the pure gospel:
    - a) Galatians 1:8-9: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
    - b) Revelation 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”
  - 2) We must be Faithful unto death:
    - a) Revelation 2:10: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”
    - b) Hebrews 4:1-4: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.”
    - c) Hebrews 10:35-39: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”
    - d) 2 Peter 1:5-11: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these
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things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

- g. Mark was guided by the Holy Spirit to start his report of the gospel of Christ by beginning with the work of John. As the chapter will next tell us, John the Immerser began his work as the forerunner of the Messiah by preparing a host of people for the Anointed One of God. John prepared the way for the Son of God and His work.
  - h. McGarvey: “Mark introduces him at once as ‘the Son of God.’ With a view to Gentile readers, he emphasizes the relation of Jesus to God rather than that to Abraham and the Jewish people” (p.263).
2. Verses 2-3: “As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.”
- a. Other versions:
    - 1) ASV: “Even as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight.”
    - 2) NKJ: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight."
  - b. Coffman: “Some critics really have a problem with this passage, because Mark included with his quotation from Isaiah a passage from Malachi, and put it first at that! In fairness to Mark, it should be noted that he did not declare that Isaiah was the author of both passages, his only reason for mentioning Isaiah having apparently been for the purpose of identifying the quotation as Scriptural, which of course it is. One can only be amused at what a passage of this kind does to some critics, all of whom are dramatically reminded by such a passage that the sacred authors were untroubled by many of the punctilious rules so much respected and slavishly followed by themselves.”
  - c. John 1:6-8: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”
    - 1) This John is called "the Baptist" because that was what he did: he baptized people. It is used the same way as Alexander is called "the coppersmith" (2 Tim. 4:14) and Zenas is called "the lawyer" (Tit. 3:13). Thayer defines the words as, "A baptizer; one who administers the rite of baptism" (p.95). Josephus, the Jewish historian, spoke of John (*Ant.* 18,5,2, p.382).
    - 2) John came to be a witness; a witness is one who is qualified to testify about certain facts and truths. A qualified witness is one whose testimony may be trusted. But John was an inspired prophet who spoke God’s infallible message. Since God sent this man to perform an important mission, it is certain that he provided him with all the tools to do his work.
    - 3) The testimony John bore was “of the Light.” We are here prepared to perceive that Christ is the Light who has come into the world, illuminating a dark and dismal world, overwhelmed by sin.
    - 4) Malachi, as he closed out the Old Testament Scriptures, foretold the coming of John the Immerser: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4:5-6). A great and terrible day of judgment was in the works, but before this tremendous event occurred, God would send Elijah the prophet to Israel. Some have supposed that Elijah the Tishbite, in person, would be sent; that since he did not actually die, God has held him in readiness through the centuries to be sent back to earth.
    - 5) But, as noted under Malachi 3:1, the New Testament shows that John the Baptizer is the person meant, that John came *in the spirit and power of Elijah*.
    - 6) The work of John the Baptizer is described here. In the work that great man of God did, men and women and boys and girls were turned in the right direction. "The mission of this Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, was to turn the affections of the people back to God and his divine law. He was to restore a right relation between parents and children and to turn the hearts of the children to the ancestral religion of their fathers. In this condition of heart they would be ready to receive the Messiah, for they would see in him the fulfillment of all God's wondrous promises and the glorious hope of their fathers" (Hailey, p.425: Commentary on Malachi).
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- 7) If the work of John had not been successfully accomplished, it would have been necessary for God to smite the earth with a curse. It is interesting and no doubt highly significant that the Old Testament closes with the word *curse*. This was the final statement to issue from heaven until the arrival of John; four hundred dreary, trouble-filled years lay ahead of Israel before the coming of the Messiah's forerunner.
- 8) "All of God's prophets had done their work, but the people had rejected them all. There was no further word that God could send. The hardened and rebellious nation would continue to exist (according to God's holy purpose); but the precious fellowship of other days was gone for ever. A hint of all this may be found in these final six verses .... In the meanwhile, let the true followers of God keep the sacred Law and await the unfolding of the purpose of the Almighty" (Coffman, pp.305f: Commentary on Malachi).
- d. Compare: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey" (Matt. 3:1-4).
- 1) "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
  - 2) John was spoken of by Isaiah in 40:3 (cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). His work is figuratively described as road-building. John prepared the way for Christ by preparing the people. The Law of Moses was a schoolmaster to prepare people for his coming (Gal. 3:24); John's work was to be his forerunner, to "go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).
  - 3) John was not Elijah, but operated in the spirit and power of Elijah; however, John did not do miracles (John 10:41).
  - 4) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of **these** kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom...." The context and secular history show that the kings meant were the Roman kings. The first kingdom of Daniel 2 was the Babylonian Empire; the second was the Medo-Persian; the third was the Grecian Empire; and the fourth was the Empire of Rome. God had determined to set up his eternal kingdom during the days when the Roman Empire was in power. Luke 3:1-3 gives the names of the current rulers when God's final plans for the establishment the kingdom were set in motion: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."
    - a) Beginning at this point, Matthew calls attention to God's promise in Daniel 2:44. In the next verse he reports John the Immerser's message to be, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Luke gives a parallel account, but provides the names of the various rulers of the Roman system at the time. Why did he name these rulers if there is no connection with his subject and Daniel 2:44?
    - b) Luke 3:1-6: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Luke names certain prominent worldly rulers and ties these to Daniel 2:44's statement: "And in the days of **these** kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom...."
  - 5) John is called "the Baptist." Some say this verse is a reference to the Baptist church, but that church did not come into existence until the 1600s. There is historical evidence that the Baptist denomination originated from certain apostates from the church of Christ in the latter part of 17<sup>th</sup> century.
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3. Verse 4: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”
    - a. He preached in the wilderness of Judea, near the Jordan River (cf. John 3:23). McGarvey reported that in the Jordan valley the heat and insects make life miserable, but the people still flocked to hear him (*Sermons*, p.310).
    - b. John did not work in Jerusalem or in any other city in Palestine; his mission was to preach in the areas which were unpopulated. He preached at the Jordan River because there was sufficient water in which to immerse the large numbers who responded to his message (John 3:23).
    - c. God used the efforts of John to prepare the way for the greater work of Christ. John did his work well. Compare: “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt. 11:11). Being citizens of God’s great spiritual kingdom, which came into being with the marvelous work of Christ and his apostles, provides us with greater blessings than those which John the Baptizer possessed during his time on earth.
  4. Verse 5: “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”
    - a. John was the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, in their old age: “But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:13-17).
    - b. John’s message included repentance as a condition to baptism. Their baptism was for the remission of sins—predicated on the later death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Those who received baptism by the teaching of John were not required to be baptized again after the church was established in Acts Two. We know this because of what happened with the men Paul met in Ephesus:
      - 1) Acts 19:1-7: “And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples: and he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given. And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John’s baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men” (ASV).
      - 2) Because of their answer to his opening question, Paul saw something was wrong. He asked them about their baptism. They had been baptized according to John’s baptism. The apostle accepted as a basic premise that they had been baptized, because they had believed. Nothing had been said about baptism till now, but the reference to their belief included baptism. However, the baptism they received was not the baptism of the Great Commission.
      - 3) Paul properly appraised John’s baptism—it was valid for a time. But when it was being practiced with God’s approval, it pointed forward in time to the coming of Christ. New Testament baptism (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:36-38) points back in time to the fact that Christ had come and had completed his mission.
      - 4) But since it was the case that these disciples had been baptized, being told to believe on Jesus who was to come, and their immersion was flawed. The immersion of believers for the wrong purpose today nullifies the benefits of their immersion. For baptism to be correct and beneficial, it must be done by the right people (people who believe and repent—Heb. 11:6; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38), it must be done in the right manner (immersion in water), and it must be done for the right purposes (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21; Mark 16:16). Anything short of this makes it ineffectual. One cannot be taught wrong and be baptized right!
      - 5) John’s baptism was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4); the remission offered was prospective, in that it looked forward to the death of Christ (Heb. 9:22; 10:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 1:7). It looked to the coming of Christ and the completion of his mission (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:15).
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- c. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow and results in a changed life. The process includes godly sorrow over sin, a renunciation of sin, and a determination never to get involved with sin again.
- 1) Matthew 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."
  - 2) Acts 26:20: "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."
  - 3) 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, *a repentance* which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (ASV).
- d. Did the baptism of John bring them to repentance? (Cf. "I baptize you with water unto repentance"). The purpose of his baptism was "the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). "The desire to receive the forgiveness of sin would prompt those who had not submitted to John's baptism to repent so that they might be baptized and in so doing receive the remission of sins" (Boles, on Matthew, p.82). Repentance brought them to baptism; baptism did not bring them to repentance. "Promotions in the army are in order to the encouragement of obedience and valor, although these qualities of the good soldier must appear before promotion can take place. In the same way was John's baptism in order to repentance..." (McGarvey, p.37).
- e. All other New Testament teachers, and indeed all Bible teachers, sought the towns and cities; John, the wilderness. After his birth we see him no more until the strange, startling, voice is heard in the wilderness of Judea, preaching a strange message with such power as to call all Israel to rush into the wilderness to hear him, He describes himself (John 1:23) as a Voice. He organized no body of followers, established no system, but broke up the old stagnation, aroused a ferment of thought, and filled men with the expectation of the Coming One. He is well described as a Voice in the wilderness. [Johnson].
- f. McGarvey:
- 1) Remission of sins is but another expression for pardon, or the forgiveness of sins. "For the remission of sins" declares the object for which the baptism of repentance was administered; or, in other words, it points out the blessing to be enjoyed by the penitent Jew when baptized. This would need no argument to an unprejudiced mind, for it is the natural and obvious meaning of the words. But those who have been taught to deny the divinely established connection between baptism and remission of sins, have resorted to various ingenious devices in order to put a different meaning on passages like this.
  - 2) One of these devices is the assumption that the preposition "for" connects "remission," not with the term baptism, but with repentance; and that repentance, not baptism, is declared to be for the remission of sins. According to this assumption, "repentance for the remission of sins" is an adjunct of "baptism," showing what baptism John preached—a baptism preceded by repentance for remission of sins. But this is a forced construction of the sentence, and it bears all the marks of having been invented for a purpose. By the natural and grammatical construction, "of repentance" must be regarded as an adjunct of "baptism," showing that it is a baptism of repentance, while "for the remission of sins" declares the object of this baptism.
  - 3) We have examples of the same construction, in both English and Greek, in the following places: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." (Rom. x. 4.) "They (the civil ruler) "is the minister of God to thee for good." (Rom. xiii. 4.) In each of these examples the preposition "for" connects its object with the leading substantive of the sentence, while the subordinate substantive with its preposition "of" constitutes an adjunct of the principal subject. So, in the instance before us, "for" connects "baptism" with "remission of sins," while "of repentance" is an adjunct of "baptism."
  - 4) Another device has been to assign to "for" the meaning "on account of" thus making the passage mean that John preached the baptism of repentance on account of the remission of sins which had already taken place. But this is assigning to the Greek preposition (*eis*) rendered "for" a meaning which it never bears, and it makes John announce as a reason for baptism that which could not be a reason for it. How could the fact that a man's sins had already been forgiven be a reason why he should be baptized?
    - a) Even if forgiveness had preceded baptism, baptism would still have an object of its own, as it has in the system even of those who accept this interpretation, and for this object it would be administered. The course which candor and fair dealing with the word of God requires, is to accept the meaning which the inspired writer has left on the very surface of the passage, and not
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to seek for forced interpretations in order to save a theory which must be false unless it can find better support than this.

- b) It follows, that in addition to the animal sacrifices for sin which the law still required, John commanded the Jews to be also baptized for the same purpose, and thus his baptism served as a transition from the Jewish law of pardon to that which prevails under the reign of Christ.”
  - g. The baptism of the Great Commission requires that the subject first repent. “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins: Acts 2:38. Peter here shows that both repentance and baptism are “for” the same thing—namely, the remission of sins. The word translated “for” is from the Greek word *eis*, which points to the object of the action. It means in order to or for the purpose of. Baptism is in order to obtain remission of sins. In Acts 2:38, the apostle is answering the question posed by the audience: “What shall we do?” These people were already believers [Acts 2:36-37]. They were not told to become believers; they were already believers in Christ, thus they asked their question. To be saved these believers were commanded to repent and be baptized in order to obtain salvation. They could not be saved by faith alone.
5. Verses 6-7: “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey.”
- a. The people to whom John preached were Jewish. They were living lives of rebellion toward God. He preached that they were to repent and be baptized, confessing their sins. These were already children of God by reason of their natural birth into the nation of Israel. Who among them could honestly and correctly affirm that they had not sinned? None, of course. Their repentance would openly declare their admission of guilt [cf. John 8:1-11].
  - b. The number of people who came out to hear John was immense. Great crowds from Judea and the city of Jerusalem came out to hear and obey. This was a wondrous preparation for the coming of the Son of God, the Messiah. Many who came out to John would naturally gravitate toward Jesus.
  - c. While John was doing his work, baptizing many who came to hear his message, he stated plainly that he was not the Messiah. It seems that many in his audiences thought he was that long-anticipated Personage. Indeed, he stated in this context (of John 1:15) that the one for whom they were looking would come after him, and that he “is preferred before me: for he was before me.”
  - d. His food and clothing were rough. His clothing was made of camel's hair, and he wore a leather girdle. Elijah wore similar clothing (2 Kings 1:8). His food was locusts and wild honey. Locusts were authorized under the Law (Lev. 11:22). Wild honey was abundant in Palestine (Deut. 32:13; Judg. 14:8; 1 Sam. 14:25-26; Ps. 81:16).
    - 1) His manner of life was austere, which was conducive to the type of work he did. His needs were simple and few. When life is reduced to its bare minimums, our basic needs are food, clothing and shelter. Those who have been forced to get by with what is available, can survive. Military men in the field and jungle have learned that their needs are simple.
    - 2) Jesus himself did not live a life of ease and plenty during his public ministry. “And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20).
  - e. Elijah had some lean times in his work: "So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land" (1 Kings 17:5-7).
    - 1) For a considerable amount of time, Elijah found refuge at the brook Cherith, where there was water and food. But in time, owing to the great drought, the brook dried up, and it was necessary for the prophet to find another means of sustenance.
    - 2) God had the power to provide for his needs by means of miracles, but there were other things which he intended for Elijah to be doing.
    - 3) Elijah was a striking figure in his clothing and general appearance:
      - a) “And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite” (2 Kin. 1:8).
      - b) Either in allusion to his shaggy cloak of untanned skin; or, more probably, an expression descriptive of the prophet's person, of his long flowing locks, abundant beard, and general
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profusion of hair. His costume was that of a thorough ascetic. Generally the Jews wore girdles of linen or cotton stuff, soft and comfortable. Under the girdle they wore one or two long linen gowns or shirts, and over these they had sometimes a large shawl. Elijah had only his leather girdle and his sheepskin cape or mantle (Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database).

6. Verse 8: "And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."
  - a. John rightly perceived his relative smallness in contrast to the Messiah. He did not consider himself as being worthy to help his Lord put on his sandals.
  - b. Matthew 3:11-12: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."
  - c. John baptized the people in water, but one was coming after him who was greater than John, who would baptize certain ones with the Holy Ghost and fire. The apostles were baptized (overwhelmed) in the Holy Spirit in Acts 2; all the wicked will be baptized in the fire of hell. Three baptisms are mentioned in the verse: (1) baptism in water, (2) baptism in the Holy Spirit, and (3) baptism in the lake of fire.
  - d. *With* water is from the Greek *en* ("in"). John baptized people in Jordan: "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (Jn. 3:23).
  - e. Many think that this verse teaches that baptism of the Holy Spirit and baptism in fire are for all righteous people. To best understand who would be baptized in the Spirit, the fulfillment must be weighed. In John 14-16, Christ gave the promise of Holy Spirit baptism to the apostles only. Acts 1:26—2:47 shows that only the apostles received it. John's statement must be understood as being limited. [The pronouns of Acts 2:1-4 connect to the noun *apostles* of Acts 1:26].
  - f. Baptism with fire is a reference to the final punishment of the wicked. A limited fulfillment of the statement could be to the overthrow of Judaism in A.D. 70. The next verse shows conclusively that no rational person should desire the baptism of fire. The baptism of fire has nothing to do with the "cloven tongues like as of fire" that sat upon the apostles when they received Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:3). What sat on the apostles was not fire at all.
  - g. The One coming after John would be mightier than John (Mk. 1:7; Luke. 3:16; John 3:28-31). John only baptized in water; Christ would baptize in the Spirit and fire.
    - 1) Mark 1:7: "And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."
    - 2) Luke 3:16: "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."
    - 3) John 3:28-31: "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all."
    - 4) Matthew 25:40-41, 46: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels .... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

#### B. Mark 1:9-15: The Baptism of Jesus and His Temptations.

1. Verse 9: "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan."
  - a. It was during this time that Jesus came to John, to be baptized. This act of obedience to the Father marked the beginning of the Lord's ministry. As Mark will quickly note, Jesus went into a deserted place where he fasted for forty days; after this, he was severely tempted by Satan.
  - b. Johnson:

- 1) While John was preaching and baptizing in the Jordan. It is supposed that he had been preaching about six months when Jesus came to him, as he was six months older than Christ, who was baptized when he was thirty years old, and in accordance with Jewish customs, John would be likely to begin his work when he was thirty.
  - 2) Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee. This mountain town had been his home ever since the return from Egypt. It was about 70 miles north of Jerusalem and probably 80 from where John was baptizing, situated on one of the foot hills of the Lebanon range. It is not named in the Old Testament, was a considerable village in the time of Christ, having a synagogue .... It lies just north of Samaria and overlooks the valley of Esdraelon.
  - 3) And was baptized of John in Jordan. These words plainly show how Christ was baptized, but if the *eis* of the Greek, here rendered in, had been properly rendered into, which is its primary meaning, it would have been still plainer. Matthew tells of John's reluctance to baptize one so much higher and purer, of the demand of Jesus, of his declaration that it thus became them to fulfill all righteousness, Our Lord came to set us a perfect example, hence it was needful for him, having taken the form of a man and a servant, to set us an example of obedience. He was baptized, not unto repentance, for he had no sins, but to fulfill all righteousness, and thus to show us how every disciple ought to do,
- c. Matthew reports that there was a conversation between Jesus and John before John agreed to immerse the Lord: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him" (Matt. 3:13-15).
- 1) Jesus was now about 30: "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son* of Heli" (Luke 3:23). John continued to baptize people for a while (John 3:22-24). The exact location at Jordan where the Lord was immersed is unknown.
  - 2) He came to John to be baptized, which was in keeping with God's will (Heb. 10:7; cf. Luke 7:30).
    - a) Hebrews 10:7: "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."
    - b) Luke 7:29-30: "And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."
- d. John opposed the idea of immersing the Lord. He recognized Christ, and knew that the Holy One did not need baptism.
- 1) Some argue that the purpose of baptism is not "for the remission of sins," because Jesus had no guilt. But the Lord was baptized in spite of his sinlessness; he was immersed to fulfill righteousness (to obey God). Luke 1:36 shows that Mary and Elizabeth (and thus, John and Jesus) were cousins. John was inspired, and from natural and supernatural viewpoints, he could know Christ. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:29-33).
  - 2) The Lord insisted on being baptized because it "becometh us to fulfill all righteousness"
    - a) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
    - b) Matthew 21:25: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?"
    - c) Luke 1:5-6: "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."
    - d) John 1:33: "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto
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- me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."
- e) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
  - f) Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
  - g) 1 John 3:7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
- e. *Now* indicates some force to John's position, but baptism has two sides: remission of sins and obedience to God. For Christ—obedience to the Father; for us—obedience and pardon.
2. Verses 10-11: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
    - a. Matthew 3:16-17: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
    - b. Three Divine Personalities are pictured: Jesus at the river, the Spirit descending, and the voice of the Father speaking from heaven.
      - 1) God's audible voice acknowledged his good pleasure in his Son. Compare: "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again" (John 12:28).
      - 2) Matthew 12:18: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles."
      - 3) John 1:29-33: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."
      - 4) Luke 3:22: "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."
    - c. McGarvey: "Mark's report of it, as Luke's also, differs from Matthew's in representing the words as addressed to Jesus in the second person. It is most likely that Mark and Luke give us the words in their exact form, while Matthew adopts the less definite form of the third person, because his mind was chiefly directed to the effect of the speech on the by-standers, or because he is given to the less definite forms of speech" (p.266).
  3. Verses 12-13: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him."
    - a. Matthew 41-2: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered." Luke's account of this experience is found in Luke 4:1-13.
    - b. Matthew tells us that the Lord was "led" into the wilderness in order to be tempted by Satan. This leading was deliberate and was from someone other than himself; the Holy Spirit guided him to proceed into the wilderness. Mark uses a stronger term to describe this action: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12).
    - c. It was the will of the Father that the Son endure the forth-coming temptations—thus it was a God-given requirement. God did not have to force Jesus to go into the wilderness, against his will. Indeed, the Lord knowing ahead of time what awaited him in that desolate place, willing went there, since it was already his set will to do what the Father had planned.
    - d. Notice these passages:
      - 1) Hebrews 10:7: "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy
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- will, O God.”
- 2) Philippians 2:7-8: “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
  - e. There is no significant interval of time between his baptism and desert experiences for Mark states he was "immediately" driven into the wilderness. The inspired writer is not implying that Christ had to be forced into the wilderness where he was to be tempted, but that there was a divine motivation from heaven behind this event. It was not against his own will. He fasted for 40 days and nights, an action dependent upon his own determined volition. His temptations were for the purpose of proving and testing him for the work he was to do and to make him the perfect example. The location of this trial is not specified, but tradition suggests that it was the rugged mountainous region near Jericho.
  - f. We are told by Mark that wild beasts inhabited the area of his temptation. No human lived there, so it is unlikely that he could have found any food, even if he has desired to get it during this long period of fasting. The presence of wild animals added some measure of danger to the severe hunger of his fast and the strong temptations which Satan added at the end of his deprivations. Lions were prominent in Palestine in Old Testament times.
    - 1) Samson had an encounter with one (Judges 14:5-6).
    - 2) David fought with a lion and a bear (1 Sam. 17:34-36).
    - 3) Another case is found in 2 Kings 17:25-26: “And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.” This was after the ten northern tribes had been captured by the Assyrians.
    - 4) Barnes: “This is added to show the desolation and danger of his dwelling there. In this place, surrounded by such dangers, the temptations offered by Satan were the stronger. Amid want and perils, Satan might suppose that he would be more easily seduced from God.”
  - g. If we wonder where the Lord obtained food when this ordeal was completed, Mark provides the clear answer: The angels ministered to him—obviously bringing food for him to eat. We remember that a similar angelic meal was provided for Elijah: “But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God” (1 Kings 19:4-8).
4. Verses 14-15: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”
- a. Other versions:
    - 1) ASV: “Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel.”
    - 2) NKJ: Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."
  - b. Mark’s shorter report omits many things that were not germane to his inspired purpose. In Matthew’s account, John’s ordeal is not reported until chapter fourteen. In our text, we are told that John had not been imprisoned when the Lord was preaching (cf. Mt. 4:17).
  - c. McGarvey: “The imprisonment of John is the only event named in the gospels to fix the time when the Galilean ministry of Jesus began. (Comp. Matt, iv 12). An account of the imprisonment is given in Mark vi. 17-20" (p.267): “For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against
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him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”

- d. Matthew 4:12-17: “Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- e. “The land of Galilee, or of Zebulun and Naphtali, had the misfortune to be the first in the sad calamity which fell upon the Jewish nation through the Assyrian invasion; and, in order to console them under this grievous affliction, Isaiah assures them that, by way of recompense, they, above the rest of their brethren, should have the chief share in the presence and ministry of the future promised Messiah. It seems probable that our Lord remained some time in Judaea after his baptism. From thence he went, with Andrew and Peter, two of John's disciples, into Galilee, where he called Philip. And then it was that he turned the water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana. This was his first coming out of Judaea into Galilee, related by John (John 1:43, etc.). But the Passover brought him back into Judaea, that he might present himself in the temple; and then occurred his first purging of the temple (John 2:14). Then came the visit of Nicodemus to him by night; and then he began openly to preach and to baptize (John 3:26), and thus incurred the envy of the scribes and Pharisees. Therefore he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee; and this is the departure here recorded by Mark and by Matthew (Matt 4:12). Hence it came to pass that it was in Galilee that Christ called to himself four fishermen—Andrew and Peter, James and John” (Pulpit Commentary).
- f. The time had come for the Lord to begin his preaching, which is introduced in this passage. “The time fixed in the writings of the prophets and in the purpose of God, for the long expected Messiah to make his appearance, and for the kingdom of heaven to be at hand” (McGarvey, p.267).

#### C. Mark 1:16-22: The Apostles are Called.

1. Verses 16-18: “Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.”
  - a. Compare Matthew’s account given in 4:18-22: "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him."
    - 1) He saw Peter and Andrew, who were brothers, casting a net into the sea. He invited them to follow him and become fishers of men. One might conclude when considering only this passage that this was the first contact he had made with them. Even Christ would not expect two such men to give up their business, family and friends, and follow a complete stranger.
    - 2) John 1:36-42 records the first meeting between these two and Christ: "And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."
    - 3) Matthew 4:21-22: "And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." Two other brothers, James and John, who were mending their nets, were invited to follow Jesus also. Immediately they left their ship and their father and followed him. Other details are given in Luke 5:1-11 and 6:12-13.
    - 4) Compare also Luke 5:4-7: “Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we

have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.” Mark’s concise report does not include this highly significant event.

- 5) John the Immerser also had an immense role in the background of these men who became apostles of the Messiah.
  - b. Having enabled Simon and Andrew to catch a great load of fish would have had a tremendous effect on these two fishermen. The Lord encouraged them to follow him and become fishers of men! Perhaps Peter reflected on this event when he and other apostles saw three thousand precious souls respond to the gospel on the Day of Pentecost and afterwards:
    - 1) Acts 2:36-41: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”
    - 2) Acts 6:7-8: “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”
  2. Verses 19-20: “And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.”
    - a. Going a little more along the shore of Galilee, he met James and John, the sons of Zebedee. These two brothers quickly accepted the Lord’s invitation to become a part of his band of followers, and left their father and the hired servants, and entered into the company of Jesus. This move would forever change their lives for the better.
    - b. These men were in the process of mending their nets when they were called. Zebedee had enough help to continue his fishing enterprise.
    - c. “The presence of hired servants is the only item added by Mark to those given by Matthew. The fact that the four partners (Luke v. 10), Simon and Andrew, and James and John, with Zebedee, the father of the latter two, had hired servants in their employ, shows that they were conducting a business of respectable proportions. Though their capital was probably very small, they were enterprising businessmen” (McGarvey, p.29).
  3. Verses 21-22: “And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”
    - a. The first place the Lord led these men was to Capernaum. Jesus went up to Galilee when he heard John was imprisoned, but there were other events that occurred in between his temptation and that journey. John 1-3, if inserted chronologically into Matthew’s record, would properly fit between the eleventh and twelfth verses of Matthew four.
      - 1) Jesus was in Nazareth after returning to Galilee, for he left this little town and went on to Capernaum. This latter city was situated on the borders of the territories that belonged to Zebulun and Naphtali, on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum is called the Lord’s own city in Matthew 9:1, where he paid his taxes (Matt. 17:24).
      - 2) It was one of the chief cities of Galilee, and the home of Peter and Andrew, James and John, and perhaps even Matthew (Mt. 9:1-9; Mk. 1:21; Lk. 5:27; 7:1,8; John 6:59).
    - b. Jesus taught in the synagogue; a Roman garrison, and custom station, was there; it was denounced by Christ later for its rejection of him (Mt. 11:23). It has been destroyed since then, and Boles says that no trace of it had been found at the time he wrote his commentary on Matthew.
      - 1) The synagogues were built in which the Jewish people could be instructed in the Law. They were needed after the captivity and return to Palestine. After the temple was rebuilt, the Israelites could come together for study and exhortation there, during the times they could not go to the temple.
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- 2) "In them the law and the prophets were publicly read in such portions as to include the whole of the Old Testament in the course of the year. After the reading, comments were made and exhortations delivered. A body of rulers, usually called elders, presided over each synagogue, and a discipline was enforced which sometimes resulted in expulsion, and sometimes in the use of the scourge. (See 10:17; Lk. 4:16-20; John 9:42; Ac. 13:14-16)" (McGarvey).
- c. They were astonished at his doctrine.
  - 1) Matthew 7:28-29: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes."
  - 2) The effect of Christ's message was profound: they were astonished at his doctrine. What stunned them was not the physical manner of its presentation, but in the amazing truths he affirmed.
  - 3) "The simplicity, the content of the sermon, its profound philosophy of life, and the authority by which Jesus spoke 'astonished' 'the multitudes'" (Commentary on Matthew, Boles, p.185).
  - 4) His authority was absolute, not as the scribes' who spoke by the authority of Moses; or of Moses himself for he spoke as he was directed from above. "The truly perceptive must surely have detected the advance indications that here indeed was THE MESSIAH" (Coffman, p.101).
- d. Johnson:
  - 1) "It is not strange that the great Teacher whose doctrines have revolutionized the earth, astonished the audiences who listened to him in Judea and Galilee. *Taught as one who had authority*. He taught with the authority of one who knows all the facts and all their bearings. Being Divine he knew all about heaven and hell and the way there, all about God and the truths he had revealed to the Jews, and all his plans and purposes for his kingdom in the future. It was this perfect knowledge that gave him the authority with which he spoke, and gives superiority to the Bible over all philosophical systems and attempts at religious systems.
  - 2) "He never was in doubt, nor had he ever to lean on the authority of others, because he knew all things. *And not as the scribes*. The scribes were the learned men of the Jewish nation, the men who had to do with letters. Almost all the writing that was required in the nation would be done by them; most of the reading, too. The transcribing of the Scriptures would devolve on them, hence the interpretation of the Law and Prophets, in the synagogues, would devolve chiefly on them. They also engaged in idle discussion and differed among themselves."

#### D. Mark 1:23-27: The Effect of the Lord's Miracles.

1. Verses 22-23: "And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."
  - a. "And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 'saying, [Let us alone;] what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is his humble position in human society. (Comp, note on Matt vii. 28, 29) [McGarvey, *ibid.*].
  - b. These demons recognized the Lord as the Holy One of God. They all knew Jesus; they believed in him, but that knowledge and faith could do them no eternal good. "Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder" (Jas. 2:19. ASV). Christ died on the cross for the salvation of sinful humans who would believe and obey the gospel. He did not die to redeem fallen angels or demons such as these.
  - c. There are specific cases cited in the Scriptures of demons recognizing the Lord.
    - 1) Matthew 8:28-31: "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine."
    - 2) Mark 1:32-34: "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him."

- a) The Lord did not want anyone's faith to be based on the testimony of some demon, but on the word of God (Rom. 10:17).
  - b) Paul and Silas did not want the people of Philippi to have their faith grow out of what the demon-possessed girl was moved to say: "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour" (Acts 16:16-18).
  - d. Johnson has this dissertation regarding demons:
    - 1) The address of the great Teacher was interrupted by a piteous cry of a demoniac. In the audience was a man with an unclean spirit, He had evidently remained silent until Jesus was nearly done, and then his cry arose. *An unclean spirit*. Some have held that the possession of unclean spirits and of demons was only a way of described epilepsy or lunacy.
    - 2) Abbot well says: That there is described here, not a case of physical and mental disease, but rather a real and actual possession of the soul by a fallen spirit is, I think, clear, both from the tenor of the narrative here, and from parallel passages in the New Testament.
    - 3) How could a lunatic know Christ to be the Holy One of God, when as yet he was unknown even to his disciples? How could he fear that Christ would destroy him, who came to heal the sufferer, but to destroy the Devil? How could lunacy be said to come out of him, or to cry with a loud voice?
  - e. Demons who in dwelled certain humans knew their eventual fate—to be cast into the place of torment. They knew they were to be "destroyed." The eternal spirits of sinful men are to be destroyed, but that does not mean that these souls will go out of existence. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:9). Brother Lipscomb, commenting on this verse, observes:
    - 1) "This is not a destruction of the souls of men, but they will be banished from the presence of the Lord. The bonds that unite them will be destroyed forever. They will never be restored. And away from God, with all the means of help and blessing from God severed, man will be the subject of misery and woe forever. The Scriptures are so clear on this point that it seems that none willing to receive the truth can doubt this. In making the punishment for sin a light matter, we make sin against God a trivial matter and derogate his honor, majesty, holiness, and power.
    - 2) "The whole trouble arises over a misconception of the meaning of death. Death does not mean annihilation, but separation of the spirit, the vital principle, from the body. Spiritual death means the separation of the soul and body from God, the vitalizing principle of spiritual life. Eternal death is the final and everlasting separation of the soul and body from God, the vitalizing principle of spiritual life. Eternal death is the final and everlasting separation of soul and body from the presence and glory of God. Thus separated, it is not annihilated. It is subject to perpetual and eternal suffering.
    - 3) "Nothing looking toward annihilation is found in the Bible when we rightly use terms. This idea is not found in the Bible. Whence does it come? It comes from a disposition to mitigate rebellion against God, and to find lighter punishment than God has prescribed. Why should this be done? Is man too fearful of sinning against God? Lighten the sin and ameliorate the suffering and will it then make men dread sin and rebellion more? We may well suspect our position and our spirit when we find ourselves excusing sin or ameliorating the woes that come from sin against God" (Lipscomb, Matthew, pp.90f).
  - f. This place for the eternal banishment of sinful people was created for Satan and his messengers: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).
    - 1) "That is, primarily prepared for the devil and his angels, though not without anticipation of its use for the punishment of men. The fact that, wicked men must suffer the same punishment as the devil and his angels, shows the enormity of our sins" (McGarvey, p.221).
    - 2) The eternal fire the Lord mentioned describes both the means of the punishment and its duration. Fire is probably more feared than any other kind of pain and punishment; its pain is horrible; its scars can scarcely be removed; its memory is cruel. God is just in punishing sin.
    - 3) In this place, neither Satan and his angels, nor wicked men, will lose their being; they will lose their well-being; it is a place of severe, unending punishment.
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- g. The demon of our present text is identified as an unclean spirit. Being associated with Satan and his evil nature, these demons are all tainted with sin and rebellion. That is the reason for their being called demons.
  - h. When the unclean spirit cried out in addressing certain remarks to Jesus, we have no reason to think that the words were not heard and understood by the Jewish audience in the synagogue. This must have had a strong impact on those who heard what was stated.
2. Verses 24-25: “And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.”
- a. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and would not allow him further to speak, but commanded him to come out of his host. The demon had no choice! Those who face the Lord in the last day will have no choice but to obey the voice of the Master:
    - 1) Matthew 25:46: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”
    - 2) Matthew 25:34: “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”
    - 3) Matthew 25:41: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”
  - b. But before departing from the one he possessed, he tore him, shouted something out with a loud voice, he the came out of the man.” We are not told what he said or in what way he tore the man. “Had convulsed him .... The demon, on leaving the man, gave expression to his impotent rage and malignity, by throwing his victim into a convulsion, and by uttering a loud outcry through the unfortunate man's lips” (McGarvey, p.269).
  - c. Where did these evil spirits (demons) go when they were cast out of an individual? We may not know as much as we think we ought to know, but some facts are evident:
    - 1) 2 Peter 2:4-5: “For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”
    - 2) Jude 6: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”
  - d. These angels violated God’s will and were cast down into hell [*Tartarus*], where they are confined in darkness, awaiting judgment. Angels are created beings and are subject to sin. But there is no provision for their restoration if they commit sin. Sinful angels have no hope of salvation. These sinful angels lived in the direct presence of God, they knew full well what they must do and what they must not do; their transgression cannot be excused; only punishment awaits them.
    - 1) Our English word “hell” was used to describe a covering; a man who put roofs on houses was called a “heller.” Covering up potatoes in the ground (*i.e.*, planting potatoes) was called “helling” potatoes. Tartarus was the word in the Greek language that described the place where souls of wicked men were held after death. It is used by Peter to describe the place where these evil angels were being held.
    - 2) Peter and Jude both say that they will be there until the judgment in the last day. The nature of this place is the same as that in which the rich man (Luke 16:23-26) was being confined and punished; it is reasonable to identify these two places as the same.
    - 3) “The word here rendered ‘hell’ is ‘Tartarus,’ a word not found in any other of the sacred writings. The meaning of the word must therefore be sought in the pagan literature. Strachan said: ‘In Homer, Hades is the place of confinement of dead men, and Tartarus is the name given to a murky abyss beneath Hades, in which the sins of fallen immortals are punished’ ....It was natural for Peter, writing to Greeks, to use their word with reference to the state of condemnation of the angels, but without endorsement of any of the pagan traditions about the fallen Titans....It would appear that the demons themselves used another of the pagan words for this very place. See Luke 8:31, where is the record that the demons besought Jesus not to send them into the abyss” (Coffman, p.316). Peter was guided by the Holy Spirit in recording his epistle. The words used were not of Peter’s choice (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-13).
    - 4) There is no escape from that prison. The inhabitants will surely be retained there and be in torment until the end of time, when the Judgment will occur; at that time, the final sentence will be

rendered, and the final destiny of each individual will be administered.

3. Verse 27: "And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him."
  - a. Casting out an unclean spirit was a miraculous work. The miracle proved to the audience that Jesus had the authority to do what he had just accomplished. By this action, which could not be denied by any who witnessed it, the Lord proved his identity and his message.
    - 1) Mark 16:15-20: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
    - 2) Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
  - b. God promised that the unclean spirits would cease to afflict humankind: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zech. 13:2).
    - 1) In connection with the opening of the fountain (Zech. 12:1), God would cause the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. During the first century, Satan was able to send evil spirits to afflict certain individuals. Although the subject is somewhat shrouded in mystery, some aspects are clear.
    - 2) They were spiritual beings: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16).
    - 3) They were unclean beings, under Satan's control: "But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.... When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.... Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:25, 43, 45).
    - 4) They were intelligent beings: "Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
    - 5) They had volition and locomotion: "Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:44-45).
    - 6) They often brought illness, affliction, or special powers on the individual:
      - a) Dumbness—Matthew 9:32.
      - b) Blindness—Matthew 12:22.
      - c) Convulsions—Mark 9:18.
      - d) Epilepsy—Matthew 17:15.
      - e) Special knowledge—Acts 16:16-18; 19:15.
      - f) Great strength—Mark 5:4; Acts 19:16.
      - g) Demon possession often brought physical ailments, but this was a symptom or side-effect (Matt. 4:24; 8:16).

- 7) Christ came to strip Satan of his power, including the power to afflict humanity with his demons (Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:20-33; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:25-26). He was successful!
- 8) With the end of the age of miracles, demon-possession and the power to expel demons ended. There is no proof of demons taking over anyone today. The burden of proof is on one who claims that the problem still exists in the world. Zechariah (13:2) connected the end of unclean spirits with the opening of the fountain (verse 1) and the ending of prophets; since both of these others have occurred, the unclean spirits have been taken away.
  - a) Zechariah 13:2: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land."
  - b) 1 Corinthians 13:8-10: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

#### E. Mark 1:28-34: The Fame of Jesus.

1. Verse 28: "And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee."
    - a. Notice Matthew's account: "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (Matt. 4:24-25).
      - 1) Naturally his fame for such miracles would spread. Soon, almost the whole populace was coming to hear him. Their motives were not always pure. Galilee was more connected to Damascus by trade than to Jerusalem, thus his reputation went far and wide, even into Syria.
      - 2) Great multitudes from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan followed him. The number is indeterminable. "The miracles of Jesus for a season attracted such crowds and excited so many that they saw and heard but little else than the power of Jesus to cure diseases; many did not appreciate his teaching, neither did they look forward with great anxiety to the coming kingdom. The miracles of Jesus, if properly understood, would mean that he who wrought the miracle had the power of God, and if he had the power of God in working miracles, God was with him in his teachings" (Commentary on Matthew, Boles, p.119).
    - b. Genuine miraculous activity will be seen as true manifestations of divine power. Even among widely-spaced communities, reports can quickly spread, and great crowds will gather. Mark does not elaborate the details of how far his fame spread, but Matthew fills in those details.
  2. Verse 29: "And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John."
    - a. As soon as the Lord and those disciples who were with him left the synagogue, they went to the house of Simon and Andrew. Although the Lord did not personally own any home to call his own, yet he was welcome to nearly every place where he needed shelter. "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).
    - b. "If this house was in Bethsaida, the home of these brethren previous to their call (John i: 45), this village must have been a suburb of Capernaum; for below (verse 33) it is said that the whole city was gathered together at the door, and the only city mentioned in the context is Capernaum. (Verse 21)" [McGarvey, p.270].
    - c. James and John were with the Lord when he entered into the house of Peter and Andrew.
  3. Verses 30-31: "But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them."
    - a. Here is a thorn in the flesh of Roman Catholicism: they maintain that the pope and all priests must remain unmarried. Peter, whom they wrongly claim was the first pope, was married, and remained married.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 9:5: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"
      - 2) Not only was Peter married, but he had at least one child. He stated in 1 Peter 5:1-4 that he was an
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- elder; Paul shows that an elder must have a wife and believing children (1 Tim. 3:2-5; Tit. 1:6).
- b. Luke reports that Peter's mother-in-law had a great fever.
    - 1) Matthew 8:14-15: "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."
    - 2) Luke 4:38-39: "And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them."
  - c. "Mark tells us that this was the house of Simon and Andrew, his brother; he also records that James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, were present. This miracle was a domestic scene—a miracle in the very home of his earliest disciples, and in the presence of two more. The original home of Peter was in Bethsaida, which was a suburb of Capernaum; it may have been there that the miracle was performed. (See John 1:45; Mark 1:29)" (*Matthew*, Boles, p.193).
  - d. She was confined to bed with a fever; her friends besought him in her behalf as soon as he entered the house (in Mark's account). He stood over her bed, and rebuked the fever, and it left her (Luke 4:39). He "took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them" (Mark 1:31). "A severe fever always leaves a person very weak, but the miraculous healing of Jesus was so complete that the patient was given normal strength at once" (Boles, p.193).
  - e. "It was impossible for the witnesses to doubt that the cure was miraculous" (*Matthew*, McGarvey, p.77). Notice that she immediately arose from her bed and began to carry on her duties as host. It is clear that Peter's wife (and children) would also be present.
  - f. Coffman:
    - 1) "Lay sick of a fever ... Luke, being a physician, was more technical in describing this malady, referring to it as "a great fever," the medical designation of those times for such a malady as typhoid. Luke also recorded the fact of Jesus' standing over her, and the information that others had interceded on her behalf. Thus, it is Luke who provided the delicate little touches alleged to be found principally in Mark.
    - 2) "This account and those of Matthew 8:14-17 and Luke 4:38-40 exhibit the superlative effect of interlocking narratives by independent writers combining to give a composite record of undeniable truth and beauty. Luke said it was Simon's house; Matthew said it was Peter's; and Mark related that it was Simon's and Andrew's. This is another pseudocon, explained by the fact that Peter and Andrew, as brothers, owned a house jointly."
4. Verses 32-34: "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him."
- a. As evening began, as the sun was setting, the people in the vicinity brought all that were ailing from disease, and those who were possessed by demons. Word had quickly spread that Jesus the Healer was present at the house of Peter and Andrew.
  - b. Mark succinctly reports that all who were thus afflicted were treated by miraculous cures; the diseased were healed and the demons were cast out. The Lord did not permit the demons to say anything; he did not want or need their testimony that Jesus is the Christ.
  - c. Johnson:
    - 1) And at Even, when the sun did set, I. e., the close of the sabbath, which, amongst the Jews, ended with the setting sun. There are two reasons why the time should be thus specified. (1) It was natural that the sick should be brought in the cool of the evening, rather than in the scorching heat of the afternoon. (2) It was the sabbath, and the feeling which made the Pharisees question the lawfulness of a man's carrying the bed on which he had been lying (John 5:10) on the sabbath, would probably have deterred the friends of the sick from bringing them as long as it lasted. They brought to him.
    - 2) *All that were diseased*. The term diseased in its current modern acceptation, is perhaps a trifle too strong to represent the import of the original expression; but when looked at etymologically, dis-eased, that is sundered from ease, or ill at ease, and thus unwell, it is all that could be desired.
    - 3) *All the city*. The effect was to rouse and gather the entire population of the city, to obtain healing for themselves or friends, or at least to see and hear the new teacher.

#### F. Mark 1:35-39: The Lord Continues His Work.

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1. Verse 35: “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”
    - a. Jesus arose very early in the morning and departed to a solitary place so he could enter into prayer, without being disturbed.
    - b. It was also necessary for him to leave before daylight to avoid being mobbed by the multitudes. The evening before, the house of Peter and Andrew was invested by the crowd. We are not told how many were there or how late it was before the Lord was able to go to bed.
    - c. McGarvey:
      - 1) “This is Mark’s first allusion to the prayerfulness of Jesus. There are two circumstances connected with this prayer that are worthy of note: first, the very early hour—‘a great while before day’—at which he arose and went out to the solitary place where he prayed; and second, his abrupt departure when he learned (verses 37, 38) that the people were seeking for him.
      - 2) “The unbounded admiration with which the people were regarding him might have swelled him with vanity, had not some means been employed to guard against this weakness. The means employed were prayer and flight. Jesus lived a spotless life, not merely because he was the Son of God, but because he used, with unfailing success, the means of resisting and of avoiding temptation. What an example for us who by nature are so weak! When temptation draws near, let prayer and flight occur ... (Comp, verses 29,32, 35) [p.271].
  2. Verses 36-37: “And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.”
    - a. The apostles [four are named in the context: Peter, Andrew, James and John] noted the Lord’s absence and followed after him. Did they know when he left; were they able to see Jesus as he went to the solitary place? Did they know about this place beforehand? Probably not.
    - b. The last part of this passage tells us that they found Jesus; they had to look for him. They told him that “all men seek for thee.” He already knew this fact; that is why he left the house so early. They could have known that dealing with their maladies would have been an unending process. Not only are the poor always with us, but also those who are ailing or injured.
    - c. The Lord grew just as tired physically as other men do. He was just as human as Mary and just as divine as the Father. He often had to seek solitude for rest and prayer; he had to continually teach the apostles, also.
  3. Verses 38-39: “And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.”
    - a. How would the apostles react to the immense popularity of the Lord? As his work with them went forward, they could come to see how tiring the relentless press of the multitudes was; they would need rest and solitude just at Jesus did.
    - b. When the apostles brought him word about the people seeking him, he quickly arose to go to other towns where he would be able to preach to those folks also. He stated that this preaching lay at the heart of his earthly mission. To establish his identity and prove his message, he also performed many miracles. Mark here reports that the Lord cast out demons as he preached in these various cities, in their synagogues.
      - 1) Matthew 4:23-25: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.”
      - 2) Luke 4:18-19: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”
    - c. Johnson: In Luke (4:43) he says. “I must preach the kingdom of God in other cities also.” Towns. The word so translated means village cities, country towns, imperfectly enclosed towns, and unenclosed villages. Josephus says, concerning the two Galilees, Upper and Lower, “The cities lie thick; and the multitude of villages are everywhere full of people, in consequence of the richness of the soil, so that
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the very least of them contains about 15,000 inhabitants” (War, 3:3, 2).

G. Mark 1:40-45: The Cleansing of a Leper.

1. Verse 40: “And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”
    - a. In the preceding verses, we are told about miracles being wrought, but details were not there given. In this case, there must have been something special about this individual’s case. First, there was the way he approached the Lord: He besought him; he kneeled down before him, and said, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”
    - b. This man approached Jesus in the very best way. He did not demand that the Lord cleanse him, but asked for this benefit; he stated that he knew that Jesus had this power to cleanse him.
  2. Verse 41: “And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.”
    - a. This man’s approached appealed to the Lord’s compassion! Jesus demonstrated compassion to many people, and calls on his followers to follow this example.
      - 1) Matthew 9:36: “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”
      - 2) Matthew 11:29-30: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
      - 3) Luke 19:41-44 : “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”
    - b. “Galilee, the northernmost province of Judea, was the scene of Christ’s most abundant labors; all the apostles except Judas Iscariot were Galileans; its inhabitants were simpleminded and comparatively free from the control of the priestly class, which ruled in Judea, and from the bigotry and intolerance of the Jews who dwelt about Jerusalem. The greater part of Mark’s Gospel is confined to our Lord’s ministry in Galilee” (see Johnson).
  3. Verses 42-44: “And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”
    - a. The Lord stated at the end of verse 41 that it was indeed his will that this man might be cleansed from his leprosy. He willed it so, and it immediately became so! Although he does not perform miracles today, he is as much interested in our ailments, sorrows, and problems as he was back then. Compare: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:5-6).
    - b. Although this man was physically cleansed from his leprosy, the Law of Moses which was then in effect, called on such a person to present himself to the Levitical priests. “When the disease had departed he was to be examined by a priest, to see if this were a fact, and then he was to procure two birds, one of which was to be slain and its blood caught in a vessel of running water; he was to be sprinkled seven times with this bloody water; was to wash his clothes, shave off his hair, and bathe his body in water, both on that day and the seventh day thereafter; and after all this he was clean. He was then allowed to approach the altar, where certain other offerings were to be presented. (See Lev. xiv. 1-20) [McGarvey, p.272].
    - c. Jesus sent this man away with three instructions: Do not report your cleansing to anyone; and present yourself to a priest; and offer the sacrifices specified by the Law of Moses. This man did not follow the first of these orders.
  4. Verse 45: “But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.”
    - a. We can see why this man could not contain the best news he could have ever received: “I am free from my leprosy!” Medical science could not heal that affliction. The report that Jesus had cleansed a man
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of leprosy would ignite a *firestorm* of interest in finding Jesus.

- b. He was beside himself with happiness! He announced to everyone in every place this great news. The result of his spreading this information forced the Lord to and his apostles to move to other places. But they were still pressed by great crowds, wherever they went.
  - c. This man was not re-afflicted by leprosy by violating the Lord's restraint. But he deprived others in that place of the help and teaching the Lord could have done.
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## Mark 2

### A. Mark 2:1-12: The Healing of the Palsied Man.

1. Verses 1-2: “And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.”
  - a. Mark 1:45 states that the Lord could not enter into the city openly because of the press of the great crowds; our present text took place after a period of days, after the furor over his miracles has lessened. Even now, he must have quietly returned to Capernaum, for after he had entered a house, the report of the return of Jesus was spread about, and the front of the house was so many about the door that there were some who could not enter, the ones bearing the palsied man.
  - b. But in the house, Christ presented the word of God to those who were there. The focal point of his earthly work was to reveal the truth to the Jewish people. He aided those who were sick, afflicted, blind, or who had various other maladies. These miracles had the greater effect of proving who he was and to confirm the messages he delivered.
    - 1) Mark 16:20: “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”
    - 2) Hebrews 2:1-3: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”
  - c. This was a time with limited medical knowledge and services; there were no hospitals; operations and medicines were not available. We remember the lady who touched the Lord’s garment: “And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any” (Luke 8:43). Many people were desperate for help.
  - d. There were those who sought food and medical help, but were oblivious to the truth the Lord taught. We still have such seekers today—no interest in the condition of their souls, but with demands for money!
2. Verses 3-4: “And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.”
  - a. This story is also covered in Matthew 9: “And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (9:2).
    - 1) This story is also reported in Luke 5:17-26, where additional details are given. Mark reports that the crowd was so great that the four men bearing their sick friend could not enter the house where Jesus was. They got on top of the house, removed part of the tile roof (cf. Lk. 5:19), and lowered the sick man, still on his bed, into the Lord's presence.
    - 2) Christ observed the faith of the four friends and said to the sick man, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” We have only two occasions where the Lord expressly stated, “Thy sins are forgiven” (Matt. 9:2; Luke 7:48; cf. Luke 23:43). Why the Lord addressed the man's sins is revealed in verse six.
    - 3) No mention is made of faith on the part of the palsied man. The Lord could dispense his blessings on man as he saw fit, with or without conditions, since his Law (his last will and testament) had not yet taken effect.
      - a) Galatians 3:15: “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.”
      - b) Hebrews 9:15-17: “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.”
  - b. The man who was afflicted with palsy now enters the story.

- 1) Palsy: “Paralysis; the loss of ability to control one’s movements” (Webster). This man was unable to transport himself; he had four friends who carried him on his bed.
  - 2) His bed: “A rude pallet, merely a thickly-padded quilt or mat, held at the corners ... They could easily reach the roof by the steps on the outside, since the roof is low; or they could have gone into an adjoining house and passed along the roofs. Some suppose that the crowd was assembled in an upper chamber, which sometimes extended over the whole area of the house. It is not possible accurately to reproduce the details of the scene. Dr. Thomson says that Jesus probably stood in the lewan (the reception room), a hall which is entered from the court or street by an open arch; or he may have taken his position in the covered court in front of the house itself, which usually has open arches on three sides, and the crowd was around and in front of him” (Vincent).
  - c. Not being able to enter the house, they reached the roof and opened a hole through which they were able to lower their friend into the presence of the Lord. “Broken it up, *exoruxantes*. Literally, ‘scooped it out.’ Very graphic and true to fact. A modern roof has shingles or tiles, but an oriental roof would have to be ‘dug’ to make such an opening as was required. A composition of mortar, tar, ashes, and sand is spread upon the roofs, and rolled hard, and grass grows in the crevices. On the houses of the poor in the country, the grass grows more freely, and goats may be seen on the roofs cropping it. In some cases, as in this, stone slabs are laid across the beams. See Luke 5:19, where it is said that they let him down through the tiles; so that they would be obliged, not only to dig through the grass and earth, but also to pry up the tiles. Compare Ps 129:6.” “Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up” (Psa. 129:6).
  - d. The man could not walk, but he had four friends whose faith in the power and willingness of Jesus to heal him was so great, that they bore him on his bedding to the house. Unable to get into the house, on account of the eager pressure of the crowd, but determined not to be baffled, they contrived by some means, most likely by an outside flight of stairs, to get upon the roof with their burden. It was no easy task for them to make the ascent, carrying a man who was perfectly helpless. They found, or perhaps they knew before, that the roof was one which could be broken open easily (it was a tile roof, Luke v. 19), and now, notwithstanding the expense they would incur, and the probable displeasure of the owner of the house, they tear open the roof and let the man down as low as they can reach, above the heads of the people within. It is difficult to see how they could have shown their faith more plainly. The reason why sinners do not now show their faith in him as plainly, when they have it, is because they have not so great a desire to be healed. Men who would risk every thing for the cure of bodily disease, often bear very patiently the maladies of the soul. [See McGarvey].
  - e. Luke 5:19 describes the roof as being tiled: “And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.” ASV: “And not finding by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went up to the housetop, and let him down through the tiles with his couch into the midst before Jesus.”
  - f. These four friends must have been much dedicated to the palsied man. The crowd around the door did not deter them from getting their ailing patient into the Lord’s immediate presence. The people in the house must have been surprised to see the hole in the roof appear, followed by the man on his bed being lowered into the room.
3. Verse 5: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”
    - a. Nothing was said about whether the afflicted man possessed faith, but the Lord beheld the faith of the four men who transported him. We do not doubt that the man had faith; when the Lord pardoned him from his sins, and then healed his body, he immediately arose, took up his bed, and left the gathering. He must have had much gratitude for what he had been freely given!
    - b. The four friends had demonstrated their faith by getting the afflicted man to the right place, and doing what was necessary to get him into the house. The easy thing for them when they saw the press of the crowd at the door was to take their friend back home. There were at least two obstacles to their getting in to the house: mounting the roof and opening a hole in the roof.
    - c. The palsied man was able to hear and understand. The Lord spoke directly to him. “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” No one would have expected this statement. The Lord’s words to him show that the condition of the man’s soul was more important than the state of his physical body. The man, being a Jew, was thereby a child of God. But he was also guilty of sin. Christ released him from the taint of his sinful condition; he knew exactly what he was going to do.
  4. Verses 6-7: “But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?”
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- a. In the house were some scribes; they were upset over the Lord's claim to have the power to forgive sins. "Only God can forgive sins!" This was only in their thoughts.
- b. The statement of the verse shows that the Biblical heart is that part of man which is able to reason. The number of scribes is not given, but there must have been several. Each of them reasoned the same thing in their hearts. What is in our minds is unknown to others around us unless we reveal our thoughts or intents in some definite way (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11). They did not know that their very thoughts were plainly and fully known by Jesus, and would be revealed for countless readers.

Meaning of Heart-Felt Religion			
<i>"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."</i>			
<i>The Bible Heart And What It Does!</i>	<b>INTELLECT—</b>		<b>FAITH—</b>
	THINKS.....	Gen. 6:5	Rom. 10:17
	BELIEVES.....	Rom. 10:10	Rom. 1:16
	UNDERSTANDS.....	Mt. 13:15	Acts 15:9
			<b>CONVERTED THROUGH</b>
	<b>AFFECTION—</b>		<b>REPENTANCE—</b>
	DESIRES.....	Rom. 10:1-3	Jno. 14:15
	LOVES.....	Mark 12:30	Jas. 4:8
	TRUSTS.....	Prov. 3:5	2 Cor. 7:10
			<b>CONVERTED THROUGH</b>
	<b>WILL—</b>		<b>BAPTISM—</b>
	INTENDS.....	Heb. 4:12	Rom. 6:16-18
PURPOSES.....	2 Cor. 9:7	Rom. 6:3-6	
OBEYS.....	Rom. 6:16-18	1 Pet. 1:22	
		<b>CONVERTED THROUGH</b>	

[Chart is from Gospel Minutes]

5. Verses 8-9: "And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?"
  - a. Instantly, the Lord perceived their reasoning thoughts within them. How his response to their thoughts must have disconcerted them! He knew their very thoughts! Nothing was hidden to him.
  - b. The spirit of Jesus knew what they were thinking. The heart is able to know things—another feature of the heart. "Why do you reason these things in your hearts?"
  - c. He then stated which is easier: to tell them palsied man that his sins are forgiven, or to say, take up your bed and walk. Being deity, Christ could just as easily say one as the other—with equal results.
6. Verses 10-11: "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."
  - a. To prove to these skeptical scribes that he had the authority to forgive sins even while he lived on the earth, he told the palsied man to get up onto this feet, pick up his bed, and return home. This miracle established for all time that Christ could forgive sins.
  - b. "It would be impossible without a miracle for this paralytic to do as Jesus commanded him; that they might know that Jesus had both right and might, authority and power, to forgive sins on earth, he would command the man sick of palsy to arise and take up his bed and walk: if the man obeyed his command, then they would know that he had the power and authority to forgive sins" (Boles, p.204).
  - c. He was healed easily, instantly, completely; there were no "magical" incantations, no agonizing, no long and loud prayers; there was no prior staging or preparations; it was done in plain view of all; there was no doubt about the genuineness of the miracle.
  - d. McGarvey: "The reason why sinners do not now show their faith in him as plainly, when they have it, is because they have not so great a desire to be healed. Men who would risk every thing for the cure of bodily disease, often bear very patiently the maladies of the soul" (p.274).
7. Verse 12: "And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."
  - a. Instantly the man arose, picked up his bed, and walked from the room. The audience in and out of the house were all amazed! The man's affliction was known to them all; they had seen him being carried by four other men; the Lord had told him that his sins were forgiven by the spoken word of Christ; he stood up and carried his bed back to his home.

- b. In their minds, the scribes had accused the Lord of blasphemy by asserting the authority to forgive sin. His miraculous healing of the obviously afflicted man proved his right to pardon sins. What did these scribes now think? They must have been severely shocked to witness the miracle! We are not told by the text that their views of Jesus were now changed. The others declared they had never seen such a thing before!
- c. From my notes on Matthew:
  - 1) The effects of these events on the multitudes were great. They marvelled (were afraid, ASV), and glorified God for providing this power to men. "The fear of the multitude is proof that they saw in this great miracle nothing but the power of God in a dramatic display of authority over sin and disease. God's power, even in nature, is always awe-inspiring; and it is much more so when seen in those areas of the soul itself which are concerned with man's spiritual health" (Coffman, p.121).
  - 2) The phrase, "which had given such power unto men," is Matthew's record of what the multitude was thinking or saying. "Those who profess to see in this spontaneous comment from the rabble positive sanction of *their* authority to forgive sins certainly see far more than is in it" (Coffman, pp.121f).
- d. Johnson: "This whole incident illustrates: (1) The difference between the spiritual authority of Christ and that of his apostles, none of whom assumed to forgive sins. See Acts 8:22-24. (2) It affords a test for all claims of priests or bishops to pardon sin, or to officially pronounce the absolution of sin. If they possessed the power to absolve from sin they should be able, like Christ, to relieve from the temporal consequences of sin. Romish priests claim a prerogative that was never claimed by Peter or the other apostles, which belongs to the Lord alone, and which it is not only presumption but blasphemy for any man or set of men to claim who cannot manifest divine credentials to confirm their claims."

#### B. Mark 2:13-18: Matthew is Called to Become an Apostle

1. Verses 13-14: "And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him."
  - a. Matthew's account of his own call to be a disciple is very brief; it may be that the Holy Spirit knew of this man's modesty, thus used few words for this episode: "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him" (Matt. 9:9). Matthew later became an apostle of Christ, along with the eleven, when they were overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit in the second chapter of Acts.
    - 1) The brevity of the account given by Matthew of his call suggests a high degree of modesty and humility. Mark 2:14-17 and Luke 5:27-32 furnish additional details. All Matthew reports is that as Jesus passed by, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the place of toll.
    - 2) As the Lord "passed by," he saw a man; many only saw a despised tax-collector. The call of Andrew and Simon and James and John (Matt. 4:18-22) appears to be spontaneous, but John 1 shows that contact had already been made with Jesus. It is probable that some kind of previous contact had been made with Matthew.
    - 3) The very nature of collecting taxes is complicated and requires records to be kept. We do not suppose that Levi left his work without closing out his books or turning this work over to someone else. At the least, he would notify his supervisor about quitting his office. Clearly, he could not have continued collecting taxes for the hated Roman government and serve as an apostle of the Lord at the same time. The Jews would have hated him even more!
  - b. McGarvey:
    - 1) "He saw Levi—There were many who fished in the lake—There were many more who came in and out of the city—from all of these would Levi collect taxes. Jesus had already healed one leper—he is about to heal another—a social leper of the society of His day. Here was a Jew hired to collect taxes of his own people for the despised Romans. If such tax collectors were paid a common wage for their work it would have been scorned as an occupation—but when all knew they assessed beyond the amount prescribed and kept the overcharge for themselves it became a position of utter contempt.
    - 2) "By Mark alone is he called the son of Alphaeus. There is no reason to suppose that this was any other Alphaeus than the one referred to in all the lists of the apostles where we have "James, the son of Alphaeus." In three of the lists he stands next to Matthew and Thomas, Matthew and James are thus presumably brothers; and if, as is almost certain, Thomas was the twin brother of Matthew, Alphaeus was the father of three of the twelve ....
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- 3) "We have no record of a previous acquaintance of Jesus on the part of Levi. We can assume the following: (1) He could have heard the preaching of vs. 13. (2) One of his brothers could have introduced Jesus to him. (3) He could have been among the other publicans who were baptized by John (Luke 3:12, 13: 7:29). (4) Peter said the apostles were followers of Jesus from the baptism—or baptizing of John (Acts 1:21-22).
  - 4) "We must conclude that when the words of Jesus Follow Me fell on his heart it was one prepared to receive them. Here was a hungry soul in the most unlikely of circumstances—but then our Lord found several of these—we think immediately of the woman at the well (John 4:7-38).
  - c. Luke's account is found in 5:27-28: "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him."
  - d. We are not told of any previous contact between Jesus and Matthew, but it is possible that he had heard the Lord teach. Perhaps he was even among the multitudes which had been around Christ during the miracles which are reported in the general context. Simon, Andrew, James and John had earlier been introduced to the Lord, before their call to the apostleship.
  - e. The other accounts show that Jesus was eating a feast in Matthew's house, which this new disciple had provided. Matthew does not record that it was he who made this feast. During the course of the proceedings, certain publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus. These were probably former associates and friends of Matthew.
    - 1) "The publicans and other sinners habitually neglected the law and the traditions in regard to legal purifications, and therefore the Pharisees regarded it as incompatible with religious purity to associate with them" (McGarvey, p.82).
    - 2) "The Pharisees were not present at the feast, but they could pass along the street and observe what was going on in Matthew's house; the self-righteous Pharisee would not pollute himself by going into the house of a publican and making common with sinners" (Boles, Matthew, p.206). Thus, they asked the disciples of Jesus why their Lord ate with such people. His association with such people was shocking to their sense of morality. However, they were operating by tradition, not by God's word.
  - f. Publican: "Publican—one who farmed the taxes (e.g., Zacchaeus, Luke 19:2) to be levied from a town or district, and thus undertook to pay to the supreme government a certain amount. In order to collect the taxes, the publicans employed subordinates (5:27; 15:1; 18:10), who, for their own ends, were often guilty of extortion and peculation. In New Testament times these taxes were paid to the Romans, and hence were regarded by the Jews as a very heavy burden, and hence also the collectors of taxes, who were frequently Jews, were hated, and were usually spoken of in very opprobrious terms. Jesus was accused of being a "friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34)" [Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved].
  - g. The Lord left the place where the palsied man had been restored to health, he made his way to the shore of Galilee, where many people were found. He met with Levi as he made this short trip.
2. Verses 15-16: "And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"
    - a. NKJ: Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"
    - b. Luke tells us that he made a great feast for the Lord, in his house: "And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" (Luke 5:29-30).
    - c. Jesus and his disciples were present, as well as many publicans and sinners; doubtless Levi's family and servants were there. There were others also who entered the house. The Jews did not associate with the publicans, so Levi would have as his friends and companions, his fellow publicans and others who were seen as sinners. In this great feast, Levi [Matthew] would be expected to invite those with whom he had been in fellowship.
    - d. The presence of Jesus with this "motley" group would give his enemies an occasion to attack him—but
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would also provide the Lord an opportunity to teach them [and all others] the truth that he had come to aid those in sin.

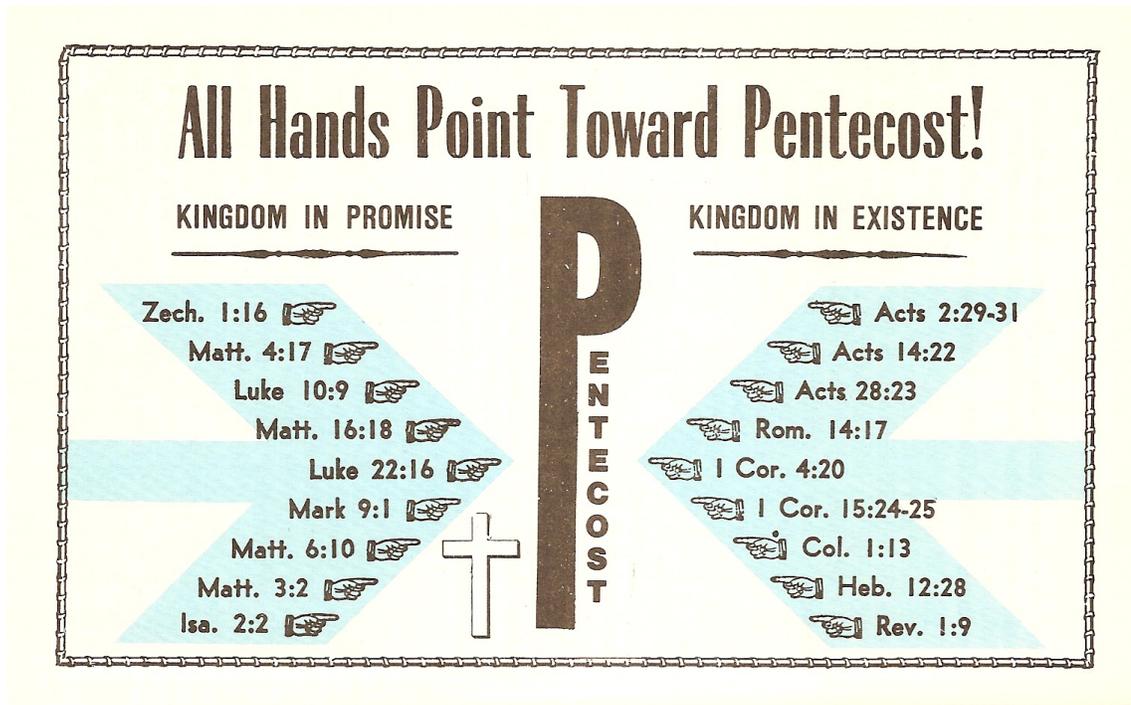
3. Verses 17-18: “When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?”
  - a. The Lord’s answer to these was enough to put them to silence. "Had Jesus been unable to vindicate himself in reference to these associations, his cause would have been damaged in the estimation of many good persons. But he here presents three brief arguments which are so conclusive, and so tersely expressed, that they must have taken his accusers by surprise" (McGarvey, pp.206f).
  - b. Those in need of a physician are sick people; those who are well have no need to seek medical assistance or treatment. If Jesus was to heal the spiritual ills of men, it was necessary for him to go where they were. Who could argue with such logic! Jesus came to call sinners to repentance; to do this he must talk to them. This does not imply that the Pharisees did not need to repent; they had the appearance of being righteous, but the publicans and sinners obviously needed to repent. In Matthew 23, Christ denounced the sins of the scribes and Pharisees, and exposed their need to repent.
  - c. These troublemakers also demanded to know why the disciples of Jesus did not fast; John’s disciples fasted, so why did not their Master teach them to fast?

C. Mark 2:19-22: The Lord Responds to the Complaint.

1. Verse 19: “And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.”
  - a. Do people at a wedding feast engage in fasting? A wedding feast is not an occasion for fasting, but for enjoyment! The very nature of such an event excludes fasting.
  - b. The time when the Messiah was with them, his special disciples did not need to fast. While he was with them was a period of gladness; he could teach them what they needed to learn; he could protect them from any deadly enemy; he could provide with all essentials; they had the benefit of direct fellowship with the very Son of God! Why should they fast!
  - c. Fasting was a time of deep need, a time of sorrow or a time of prayer. Prayer and fasting go together; it was a time when many sat in ashes and put dust and ashes upon their heads. The Lord’s foes made fasting a means of demonstrating their humility! They were very happy to be so haughty!
  - d. Matthew 6:16-18: “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”
    - 1) The hypocrites, which included the Pharisees, were claiming their fasting showed their profound piety and godliness while it was really demonstrating their poverty in these spiritual qualities. They were merely putting on a show to gain approval of men. They were successful in that they were lauded by their fellows, but God saw them for what they really were—hypocrites!
    - 2) The Lord added his instructions on the subject of fasting which puts it entirely in the private, personal realm. When and if his disciples fasted, they were to do it in secret. In the public eye, there was not to be any indication they were fasting. They were to keep themselves washed and normally clothed; they were not to disfigure their faces as did the hypocrites.
  - e. It was common for those fasting in ancient times to wear sackcloth and put ashes on their heads. Their tears and sweat would mingle with the ashes to disfigure their faces. Their sad countenances, together with their audible mourning and rough clothing, would make it very apparent to all that they were fasting; if they were fasting, then they must be spiritual giants; that would be the intended impression. Many great Bible people (David, Job, et al) were true spiritual giants, but not so with these hypocrites Jesus described. The fasting approved of by the Lord was that which did not call attention to itself, which was done out of deep need, and not for public notice.
2. Verse 20: “But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”
  - a. The time would come when his disciples would fast. “Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days

will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast" (Matt. 9:14-15).

- b. Think of their doleful demeanor when Jesus was arrested, tried, beaten, condemned, and taken outside Jerusalem and nailed to the cross! We can only imagine the horror of seeing our beloved one suffer the cruelties of the cross. Crucifixion may be the cruelest form of execution invented by wicked minds. The nails driven through the hands and feet would be painful. With the cross in an upright position, the body would sag and pull against the nails; in order to breathe, the victim had to lift himself upward—pushing and pulling against the nails. How could his mother Mary stand to see her son thus suffer!
- c. Coffman:
  - 1) In context, this was a devastating reply. John the Baptist had already identified Jesus Christ as the bridegroom, and this metaphor was appropriately used here as an appeal to John's disciples. Furthermore, the Pharisees relaxed the rules for themselves regarding fasts on the occasion of their attending weddings. With many weddings to attend, the Pharisees found little need to do any fasting at all, despite the fact that they were always preaching it. What a center shot this part of Jesus' reply achieved! It is as though he had said, "Look, you Pharisees, this is a wedding!"
  - 2) The bridegroom ... John the Baptist had declared, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom" (John 3:29); and, from this, some have erroneously concluded that the bride, or church, was in existence when John spoke. The bride of God, or of Christ (he and the Father are one), is actually the true or spiritual Israel; and, when John spoke, the genuine Israel was being separated through his preaching from the secular Israel wherein it was until then commingled. That spiritual Israel (which in time would include the church) John had directed to follow Jesus Christ, hence, the statement that he had the bride.
- d. The church did not come into actual existence until the time of Acts chapter two.



3. Verses 21-22: "No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles."
  - a. NKJ: "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."
  - b. Notes from my book on Matthew:

- 1) "No one 'seweth' a new piece of cloth, rough from the weaver, 'undressed,' unshrunk, upon an old garment; if it should be done the new would shrink and would rend the garment" (Boles, p.209). "He draws an argument from the absurdity of putting a patch of *new* (properly rendered *unfulled*) cloth on an old garment. The unfulled piece, never having been shrunk, would shrink the first time it got wet, and would tear open the rent still wider" (McGarvey, p.84).
- 2) In this illustration, the old, torn garment represents the old law; the new cloth stands for the gospel; Jesus did not come to make his new law a part of the old, merely a patch for the "rents" in the old.
- 3) Another illustration refers to the old custom of storing wine in animal skins, especially goat skins. "Only new wineskins could serve for unfermented or new wine. After fermentation, the skins hardened and became brittle, thus becoming entirely unsuitable for new wine, yet continuing to serve well enough as containers for old wine" (Coffman, p.125). This is identical in application to the preceding: the new wine of the gospel was not intended to be poured into the old wineskin of Moses' law. It was so powerful that it would burst asunder that old law and destroy it. Two laws that are different cannot be imposed at the same time, on the same people.
- c. Luke 5:36-38: "And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved."
- d. "Patching old clothes was a familiar thing to our Lord, suggesting his poverty that has made us rich. The force of this humble metaphor lies in the fact that: if a piece of new, unshrunk cloth is used to mend a hole in an old garment, then just as soon as the garment is washed, the new material will shrink, thus tearing out an even larger hole in the garment. The application of this means that Christ did not come to patch up Judaism with the new teachings of Christianity. His holy religion was not designed to mend old religions but was a gloriously new thing, bearing the same relationship to Judaism that a building has to the scaffolding that precedes it" (Coffman).

#### D. Mark 2:23-28: The Disciples Pluck and Eat Grain on the Sabbath Day.

1. Verse 23: "And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn."
    - a. The word *corn* in the King James Version has reference to barley or wheat, not to what Americans call corn. Footpaths ran next to the grain fields and those who passed by were allowed to pluck the heads of grain and eat it as they traveled; it would have been stealing if they had tried to harvest the heads in a larger number.
    - b. The Mosaic Law gave them the right to thus eat as they traveled. "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn" (Deut. 23:25).
    - c. Luke 6:1 says they rubbed the grain out in their hands. Wheat or barley could easily be removed from the head and eaten directly, although that was not a pleasant way to eat, as farm boys know. Our teeth are not made to crush such small items. [However, as a boy, I knew an old farmer who had chewed tobacco for such a long time, that his molars were worn down flat—so he said].
  2. Verse 24: "And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?"
    - a. The Pharisees were closely watching the Lord, and quickly learned what the disciples had done. Their knowledge of this shows how minutely they spied on him. They accused the Lord with allowing his disciples to violate the law of the Sabbath, but this was a false charge since God did not prohibit the preparation and eating of food on the Sabbath day. Exodus 16:23 deals with gathering manna which was available only on six days during the week.
    - b. Christ said the disciples were without guilt (verse 5) when they plucked and ate on the Sabbath day. The only things they had transgressed were the Rabbinical traditions. The Talmud says: "In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered as sifting; if she rubs heads of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherencies, it is sifting out fruit; if she bruises the ears, it is grinding; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing" (ALC, 1959, p.130). These Jewish traditions were unauthorized additions to God's Law.
    - c. "In the Pharisees' view, the disciples were guilty of *threshing wheat!* Such pedantry, nit-picking, and magnification of trifles would also have made them guilty of *irrigating land*, if they had chanced to
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- knock off a few drops of dew while passing through the fields" (Coffman, p.165).
- d. A Sabbath day's journey was about seven-eighths of a mile. "From the injunction in Exodus 16:29, that every man is to 'abide in his place,' and not 'go out of his place' on the Sabbath, the ancient Hebrew legislators deduced that an Israelite must not go 2000 yards...beyond the temporary or permanent place of his abode" (McClintock & Strong, Vol. IX, p.198). A Sabbath day's journey is given different values by various scholars.
3. Verses 25-26: "And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?"
    - a. NKJ: But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?"
    - b. The Lord replied by showing that his accusers were being inconsistent when they justified David's unlawful act and condemned the disciples' action which he shows to have been lawful and right.
    - c. "Jesus expressly admits that what David did was unlawful; and some have supposed that he here intends to justify it on the ground of necessity, and then to argue that his disciples, though guilty of violating the law of the Sabbath, are justifiable on the same ground. There is no doubt that on this ground David excused himself for eating the showbread, and that the Pharisees did the same for him.
      - 1) "But it can not be that he who refused to turn stones into bread when tortured by a forty days' fast, and who said, 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven,' would approve such a violation of law as David was guilty of. Neither can it be that he allowed his own disciples while under the law to break the Sabbath. If Christians may violate law when its observance would involve hardship or suffering, then there is an end of suffering for the name of Christ, and an end even of self-denial.
      - 2) "But it is clear that by the Pharisees, David's act was thought excusable; otherwise they could have retorted on Jesus thus: Out of your own mouth we condemn you: you class your act with David's; but David sinned, and so do you.
      - 3) "Now the real argument of Jesus is this: David, when hungry, ate the show-bread, which it was confessedly unlawful for him to eat, yet you justify him: my disciples pluck grain and eat it on the Sabbath, an act which the law does not forbid, and yet you condemn them" (McGarvey, p.104).
    - d. The showbread was replaced each Sabbath day, and the old bread eaten only by the priests: "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute" (Lev. 24:9).
    - e. Human necessities do not override the Law of God. If one is cold, that does not give him the right to steal the coat or blanket from another. Hunger does not allow us to break into a food store and take what we want. Coffman said: "His refusal to permit his own dire hunger to cause him to yield to the devil's temptations to change stones into bread (Matthew 4:1-4) refutes the conceit that human need justifies setting aside God's laws. Christ's true teaching here is that God's law justifies setting aside petty human regulations." There are legitimate ways for a hungry person to obtain food.
    - f. An informative side-note: During the 1500-1600s in England, the religious authorities [working with the complicity civil powers], would burn those they considered to follow religious error, at the stake. This gruesome practice became more and more abhorrent to the populace. These evil people changed the means of execution to putting their victims in prison and starving them to death! [*Traces of the Kingdom*, Keith Sisman].
    - g. The Lord has promised his faithful followers that their necessities would be provided—Matthew 6:33. He did not promise to prevent their being executed (James was slain with the sword—Acts 12). Being starved to death is awful; being crucified is even more so. Being thrown into the presence of hungry lions would be mighty fearsome.
  4. Verses 27-28: "And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."
    - a. Christ affirmed that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man; man was not made for the Sabbath. God saw the need for man to rest one day of the week. During the Mosaic Age, during which time the Sabbath was in effect, the Jewish people were to work the first six days of the week. When the
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weather was inclement of course outside work could not be done. Also, during the time when their crops were “laid-by,” there was no need for field work. The crops would naturally grow to maturity and later be ready for gathering. For those who know little about the former activities of farmers, when the crops reached a stage of development that no cultivation was needed, the farmer could turn his efforts to other activities of his work. And during the winter, no work was necessary or perhaps even possible in the fields. God provided a weekly day of rest for the Israelites; a day which was to be used also for spiritual purposes.

b. Coffman:

- 1) “Sabbath made for man, not man for sabbath ... is a reference to the sabbath: (1) as God made it, and (2) not as the Pharisees made it. God indeed had made it for man; and quite early in the history of the sabbath law a man decided that his "human needs" took precedence over it, picking up sticks on the sabbath. Did God approve of such conduct? He commanded Israel to stone the man to death. Christ was one with the Father, and it cannot be argued that Jesus was here critical of the way God made the sabbath for man. On the other hand, the Pharisees, by their unbelievable multiplication of little frills and furbelows [*decorations*] regarding sabbath-keeping, and their extrapolation of the basic God-given laws concerning it to include an entire dictionary of ‘do's’ and ‘don't's’ God never heard of, and then by their construing their own doodlings in that regard as on an equality with the law of God and as even more sacred than God's law—that was making man for the sabbath!
- 2) “The Son of man is lord even of the sabbath ... ‘Son of man’ as used in Psalms 8 is merely a synonym for man; but that should not be allowed to contravene Jesus' use of the words in a unique sense as applicable only to himself. In Christ's usage of this title it refers to one who has the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10), hence to himself as God. Jesus meant everything by this title that he meant by ‘Son of God,’ the evident reason for his preference for ‘Son of man’ deriving from its freedom of the secular connotations (in the Jewish mind) of ‘Son of God.’ The latter title they identified with ‘Messiah,’ the re-establishment of Solomon's throne, and the lifting of the yoke of Roman tyranny.”

- c. “These verses contain an argument not reported by either Matthew or Luke. That the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, implies that when the welfare of man conflicts with the observance of the Sabbath, the latter must give way. But of this, man himself is not to judge, because he can not judge with impartiality his own interests. No one is competent to judge in the case who does not know all that pertains to the welfare of man, and this is known only by the Lord. For this reason Jesus adds, ‘Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath;’ that is, as the Son of man came to provide for man’s welfare, and as the Sabbath law might need modification or even abrogation for the highest good of man, therefore lordship over the Sabbath was given to the Son of man. The passage teaches, then, not that men might violate the law of the Sabbath when their welfare seemed to them to demand it, but that Jesus could set it aside, as he afterward did, when his own judgment of man’s welfare required him to do so” (McGarvey).
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### Mark 3

#### A. Mark 3:1-6: The Man With a Withered Hand.

1. Verses 1-2: “And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.”
  - a. Luke’s account of this episode is found in 6:6-11: “And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.”
  - b. Matthew reports this scene in 12:9-13: “And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.”
  - c. The Lord added a side note to the matter in Matthew’s account:
    - 1) "The argument in this case is drawn from the practice of his accusers, and on their account it is an argument *ad hominem*; but the practice was proper in itself, and therefore it is also an argument *ad rem*. Assuming, with the consent of all parties, that it was lawful to relieve the sufferings of 'one sheep' on the Sabbath, he argues, much more is it lawful to do the same for a man; and hence the general conclusion that 'it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days.' It is not an excusable violation of law, but it is *lawful*. From the two disputations taken together, the people learned that works of religion, like those of the priests in the temple, and works of humanity, like feeding the hungry and healing the sick, were lawful on the Sabbath" (McGarvey, p.105). Note: *ad hominem* [personal; to the person]; *ad rem* [to the point; to the matter].
    - 2) Even the Pharisees would think it right to pull an ox from a ditch on the Sabbath. They could see the truth when a beast was involved, but in their blindness of heart they could not see it when it was applied to a man.
      - a) Exodus 23:4-5: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him."
      - b) Deuteronomy 22:4: "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift *them* up again."
  - d. It was obviously right to do good on the Sabbath; doing so was not a violation of the Sabbath law for there was a higher principle involved. Their many additions to God’s law on the Sabbath were entirely without God’s approval.
    - 1) Deuteronomy 4:2: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”
    - 2) Mark 7:5-9: “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”
2. Verses 3-4: “And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto

- them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.”
- a. Did Old Testament Israel ever have to defend themselves when an enemy attacked on the Sabbath? Did any of the Pharisees ever have to call a doctor on the Sabbath? Did any of them ever have one of their oxen fall into a ditch or in some other way to suffer? If wild beasts attacked their animals on the Sabbath, what did they do?
  - b. Jesus put the audience on the spot by asking them whether it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or whether to save someone’s life on the Sabbath. Being cowardly and seeing they were on faulty religious footing, the Lord’s enemies refused to answer. The general population would certainly be in agreement with Christ. They would be willing recipients of his supernatural help for their sick and afflicted on the Sabbath or any other day.
3. Verse 5: “And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.”
- a. NKJ: And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.
  - b. We are specifically told that the Lord looked toward his enemies with anger! Among other things, this passage shows that anger is not sinful of itself—the Lord was without sin of any kind (Heb. 4:15), yet he was angry on this occasion. “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26).
    - 1) To cherish anger, or to let it operate without the restraint of the truth, is to give place to the devil. Uncontrolled anger is sinful; it works evil and not good; it causes words to be spoken which cannot be recalled, and actions to be done that cannot be erased. God gave us the emotion of anger, but it must be restrained.
    - 2) *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath*, means that anger must be limited; if it is allowed to abide in our hearts, the will of the devil is served, and the angry person corrupts himself and alienates himself from God. Anger, if allowed to remain in the heart, festers and pollutes the whole soul. It must be evicted quickly! "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19).
    - 3) This writer knows a case of a grudge-holding individual who let anger despoil his heart to such an extent that he maliciously shot and killed his own family.
  - c. Coffman: Looked ... on them with anger ... This is one of the places in which it is asserted that "Matthew corrected" Mark! It is alleged that this was considered by Matthew to have been too harsh a statement of the Lord's emotion, "anger" for some undisclosed reason being considered by critics as "unbecoming" to Jesus. Regardless of the scholarship of those advocating such a view, it is founded, apparently, in ignorance of the fact that Matthew was just as precise in his assignment of this emotion to Jesus as was Mark. The vituperative passages of Matthew 23 are a far more impressive account of Jesus' anger than Mark's casual reference to it here. Furthermore, Jesus was quoted by Matthew as saying, "The King was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city!" (Matthew 22:7), the king, of course, standing for God himself, making it impossible for Matthew to have considered Mark's attribution of anger to Jesus as anything inappropriate. Therefore, the conceit that Matthew corrected Mark in this particular is rejected.
  - d. Anger, when rightly directed and controlled, is not a sinful feeling; but it is a dangerous one, because it is very likely to end in sinful speech or action: hence the admonition of Paul, “ Be angry and sin not Let not the sun go down on your wrath.” In this case Jesus showed anger only in his look: there was none in his words. he saith to the man. —He first, according to Matthew (Matt xii. 12, 13), answered his own questions and the argument which they contained, by saying, “Wherefore, it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days.” Then he saith to the man, “Stretch forth thy hand.” He did so, and it was restored (McGarvey, p.278).
  - e. Barnes wrote: With a severe and stern countenance; with indignation at their hypocrisy and hardness of heart. This was not, however, a spiteful or revengeful passion; it was caused by excessive *grief* at their state: “being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts.” It was not hatred of the *men* whose hearts were so hard; it was hatred of the *sin* which they exhibited, joined with the extreme grief that neither his teaching nor the law of God, nor any means which could be used, overcame their confirmed wickedness. Such anger is not unlawful, Ep. 4:26. But in this instance our Lord has taught us that anger is never lawful except when it is tempered with grief or compassion for those who have
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offended.

- f. The Lord took no action that could be construed as breaking the Sabbath. He merely told the man to stretch forth his withered hand. The man did not break the Sabbath, he simply put forth his arm, an action which even the most sticklers for their man-made restrictions for Sabbath keepers, did countless time each Sabbath day.
  - g. It is as sinful to bind something that God did not bind as to loose what God has bound: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18-19).
4. Verse 6: “And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.”
- a. Compare: “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). These Jewish enemies of Jesus wasted no time in accosting the Lord over this “so-called infraction” of the sabbath law. The Jewish teachers through the years had made many additions to the Law of Moses, without any authority to do so. They had been strongly warned against it: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2, ASV).
  - b. The Pharisees, the Lord’s hate-filled enemies, wasted no time in taking counsel to make plans to murder Jesus. They were willing to join with the Herodians in this wicked scheming. The Herodians were a political party, favoring the rule of the Herod family, as evil a clan as could be found anywhere.
  - c. ISBE: A party twice mentioned in the Gospels (Matt 22:16 parallel Mark 12:13; 3:6) as acting with the Pharisees in opposition to Jesus. They were not a religious sect, but, as the name implies, a court or political party, supporters of the dynasty of Herod. Nothing is known of them beyond what the Gospels state. Whatever their political aims, they early perceived that Christ's pure and spiritual teaching on the kingdom of God was irreconcilable with these, and that Christ's influence with the people was antagonistic to their interests. Hence, in Galilee, on the occasion of the healing of the man with the withered hand, they readily joined with the more powerful party of the Pharisees in plots to crush Jesus (Mark 3:6); and again, in Jerusalem, in the last week of Christ's life, they renewed this alliance in the attempt to entrap Jesus on the question of the tribute money (Matt 22:16). The warning of Jesus to His disciples to "beware of the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15) may have had reference to the insidious spirit of this party.

**B. Mark 3:7-15: Jesus Withdrew But Great Crowds Followed Him.**

1. Verses 7-8: “But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.”
  - a. To avoid for a time the evil intentions of his enemies, our Lord made his way to the seaside, where a very large multitude pressed about him. These people were from Galilee, Judaea, Jerusalem, Idumaea, from beyond Jordan and even some from Tyre and Sidon. Mark reports that this was a **great** multitude.
  - b. McGarvey:
    - 1) Mark here states more fully than it is elsewhere stated, the places whence came the multitudes who followed Jesus. Galilee, of course, was largely represented, and so it seems were Judea and Jerusalem. The two visits which Jesus had made to Jerusalem since his baptism (see John ii. 13; v. 1), had gained him a few disciples there, and had greatly excited both his friends and his foes. As a consequence, both parties naturally sought every opportunity for visiting Galilee, that they might see and hear more.
    - 2) Some had come from Idumea, the Edom of the Old Testament, which was south of Judea; others, from beyond Jordan—that is, from the populous region which stretched away from the eastern bank of the Jordan to the Arabian desert; and others, from Tyre and Sidon, the ancient capitals of Phoenicia. Thus, from all the surrounding countries, and from some quite distant regions, were men assembled around Jesus at this particular juncture. They came, says Mark, when they had heard “what great tidings he did.” They came at great expense of time and money, that they might

see and hear and judge for themselves.

2. Verse 9: “And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.”
  - a. Jesus, perceiving the developing press of this large crowd of people, many of whom were intensely seeking relief from the many diseases and afflictions that were so common, and believing that the Lord could provide them with miraculous cures, came as close to him as they could, had asked the disciples to position a small boat just offshore. In it, he could avoid being thronged.
  - b. He and his disciples would make their way across the Lake of Galilee, to the mountainous regions of the far side. Verse thirteen tells us of going into a mountain to conduct certain matters.
3. Verses 10-12: “For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.”
  - a. Mark here reports the healing of many in the crowd, as many as had plagues. Those who had unclean spirits [demons] which afflicted them, the Lord cast out; these demons openly stated that Jesus was the Son of God. The Lord did not need or want their testimony. These demons were commanded to keep quiet about their knowledge of the identity of Christ.
  - b. “Demons, or evil spirits, took possession of human beings and controlled their speech and actions and afflicted their bodies. This, then, was not simply a mental or physical disorder.... Jesus ‘charged’ the demons ‘much that they should not make him known.’ There was nothing in common between Jesus and the demons; there was no friendly relationship between him and Satan. He did not need or desire their testimony; faith in him must rest upon better witnesses. The Pharisees said, anyway, that he cast out demons through the power of Satan. They, on the other hand, asked him to let them alone; they did not want to be disturbed by him” (Elam, *ibid.*). “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God” (Luke 4:34).
  - c. Those who received supernatural benefits of his power, were not cured merely because they were in the huge crowd. There would have been some sensible connection between those aided and the Lord.
4. Verses 13-15: “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.”
  - a. Listings of the twelve apostles are given in the following four passages:

<b>Matthew 10:2-4</b>	<b>Mark 3:16-19</b>	<b>Luke 6:14-16</b>	<b>Acts 1:13</b>
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James, Son of Zebedee	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus	James	James	James
Lebbeus, Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon Zelotes	Simon Zelotes
Simon the Canaanite	Simon	Judas, son of James	Judas, son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	.....

C. Mark 3:16-21: His Apostles.

1. Verse 16: "And Simon he surnamed Peter."
    - a. Compare: "He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:38-42).
    - b. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. When the Lord beheld Peter, he stated that his name was Simon the son of Jonah, and that his name would become Cephas, which means "A Stone." Woods: "Simon Peter was henceforth, and by express instruction of the Lord, to be called Cephas, an Aramaic name signifying a stone, and the equivalent of the Greek petros, Peter. Names in ancient times often signified some desired or actual trait of those who bore them and Simon Peter was thus designated because of the rock-like faith he held in Christ, and the disposition as an apostle of the Lord he was eventually to exhibit" (*John*, pp.44f).
    - c. For a time, Peter was inclined to be impetuous and somewhat unsteady. He was a courageous man, and one who was prone to take some action that was not properly thought through. In Gethsemane, he cut off the right ear of Malchus, in a fallacious attempt to defend his Lord.
    - d. Although the second of the two disciples is not named in the text, scholars are convinced that he was the man who later became the apostle John. This apostle who penned the book that bears his name, omits reference to his name in the sacred text he was inspired to write. That fact, in itself, is a strong indication of his identity.
  2. Verses 17-19: "And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house."
    - a. We are now told about James and John, sons of Zebedee. The Lord gave them the odd surname of Boanerges, which means "Sons of Thunder."
    - b. "This surname of the sons of Zebedee may have been given, as Simon's was, at an earlier period, or it may have been given at this time. They were called "sons of thunder," on account of their stormy and destructive temper. A striking manifestation of it is mentioned by Luke. When a Samaritan village in which Jesus desired to lodge, refused to receive him, James and John proposed to call down fire from heaven and burn up the inhabitants. (Luke ix. 51-56.) On another occasion, a man was found casting out demons, and because he was not of the immediate followers of Jesus, John ordered him to abandon his benevolent and miraculous work. The early death of James, and our scant knowledge of him, leave us without data as to any change in his disposition; but the lovely temper of John in his old age, shows that the transforming power of the gospel wrought a great change in him" (McGarvey, pp.280f).
    - c. The names of the rest of the twelve are next given. The Lord and his disciples then entered into a house, the owner and the location are not identified in this passage. Luke 8:1-3 provides this information: "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." Brother Elam thought the present location was at the place he spent much time, in Capernaum (Luke, p.51, *Elam's Notes*).
  3. Verses 20-21: "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself."
    - a. Jesus was so pressed for time and rest that he and his group could scarcely eat. This drew on his time and strength, so he sought places to rest and pray which such was possible.
    - b. Our Lord did not waste his precious time and strength: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Christ was given work to be done during his personal ministry. We all know that when the end of life comes, we can no longer work. The hands that were so strong and skillful in life, lie folded in death, unable to do anything else in this world. When the Lord stated on the cross, "It is finished," he spoke of his earthly mission.
    - c. Mark tells us that there were certain friends of the Lord who wanted to remove Jesus from this circus-like setting, thinking he was "beside himself." Barnes offers this:
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- 1) The reason why this report gained any belief was, probably, that he had lived among them as a carpenter; that he was poor and unknown; and that now, at 30 years of age, he broke off from his occupations, abandoned his common employment, spent much time in the deserts, denied himself the common comforts of life, and set up his claims to be the Messiah who was expected by all the people to come with great pomp and splendor.
  - 2) The charge of "derangement" on account of attention to religion has not been confined to the Saviour. Let a man be made deeply sensible of his sins, and spend much of his time in prayer, and have no relish for the ordinary amusements or business of life; or let a Christian be much impressed with his obligation to devote himself to God, and "act" as if he believed there was an "eternity," and warn his neighbors of their danger; or let a minister show uncommon zeal and spend his strength in the service of his Master, and the world is not slow to call it derangement. And none will be more ready to originate or believe the charge than an ungodly and infidel parent or brother, a self-righteous Pharisee or professor in the church.
  - 3) At the same time, men may endanger themselves on the bosom of the deep or in the bowels of the earth for wealth; or may plunge into the vortex of fashion, folly, and vice, and break in upon the hours of repose, and neglect their duties to their family and the demands of business, and in the view of the world it is wisdom and proof of a sane mind! Such is the consistency of boasted reason; such the wisdom and prudence of worldly men!
- d. Reflect on the present circumstances of the Lord's work. He had healed people of various illnesses, plus had restored the withered hand of the man noted earlier in the chapter. Jesus had been angered at the closed hearts of those who opposed his healing this man, although no overt actions was done by the Lord; his enemies found fault with him for this healing on the Sabbath. This would have caused stress on the average man.
  - e. He had cast out demons, and had even spoken with them! A huge multitude had pressed around him, which required him to board a boat just off shore on the Sea of Galilee. He and his disciples had been so busy that there had not been time to eat. Jesus must have been nearing the end of his physical strength—which would have been visible to those who are able to open their eyes. Compare: "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, **being wearied with his journey**, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour" (John 4:6).
  - f. Who were these friends who sought to look out for Jesus? Some scholars allege that these were his own mother and siblings. But the text describes them as his friends, not as his family. In fact, his mother would have been supportive of him, but his brothers did not believe on him. "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him" (John 7:1-5).
  - g. A few verses later in our text, these relatives were outside, wanting to see him; they were not so near to him as to render any definite aid. Anyhow, Christ fully knew what he was doing; he could extricate himself from the multitude, which he did on other occasions. When his fellow-citizens in Nazareth tried to kill him by throwing him off a cliff, he was able to avoid their efforts (Luke 4:28-30).
  - h. Coffman: His friends ... These words are made to read "his family" in GNNT, IV, and the New English Bible (1961), and this reading is supposed by McMillan, Cranfield, and many other recent commentators; but there are solid reasons for rejecting this change from the English Revised Version (1885) .... To begin with, Mark referred to the immediate family of Jesus as "his mother and his brethren" just six verses later (Mark 3:27), and why he should have called them by another term here cannot be explained. To make Mark 3:27 an "explanation" of Mark 3:21 is sheer guesswork.

#### D. Mark 3:22-30: Blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

1. Verses 22-23: "And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?"
    - a. These scribes came down from Jerusalem, and made the present accusation against the Lord. Since the royal city was higher in altitude than the current location, they literally descended. This is another case where the Bible accurate, even in details.
    - b. It would seem evident that these men were more sophisticated than their local brethren, thus might be more influential. However, no matter what their background was, they were still in error, and any attempt to withstand the Lord always fell short! Compare: "And no man was able to answer him a
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- word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Matt. 22:36).
- c. Beelzebub ... This word is actually Beelzebub [English Revised Version (1885) margin] and has the meaning of "the dunghill god," "lord of flies" or "master of the house of demons"; but all such meanings may be ignored in this context, for "in the New Testament form the word means THE DEVIL." [8] This charge of the scribes was therefore that Christ was performing such wonderful works through being in league with the devil. The necessary inference from this charge points to the genuineness of Jesus' works, the charge itself being an admission that the miracles wrought by Jesus were altogether beyond the power of human nature and were therefore supernatural. The charge that Christ was in league with Satan was an exceedingly sinful one, and it occasioned the warning Jesus at once uttered. [Coffman].
  - d. The Lord's enemies could not deny that he had cast out demons. The miracles he had just done were obvious to the vast audience, and they would have been foolish to deny their reality. But how could the enemies counteract his expelling the demons from those who were thus afflicted? They may have thought that their argument of this verse would suffice, but Christ was able to turn it to their own dismay!
  - e. The scribes who made this faulty argument had come from Jerusalem. "Matthew gives the fullest report of this discussion, but Mark here furnishes an item which Matthew omits. It was not some of the enemies of Jesus in Galilee, but shrewd and cultivated scribes from Jerusalem, who suggested that he cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub" (McGarvey).
  - f. Compare Matthew's account at this point: "Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?" (Matt. 12:22-23).
2. Verse 24: "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."
    - a. Mr. Lincoln appropriated this truth to argue against secession in the 1860s. By the way his friends lauded this argument, we might think that he had invented this truth. That period of American history is mighty sad, much evil was done; people of the south have accepted the outcome, but the facts of history cannot be changed. Compare: "There are two histories: official history, lying, and then secret history, where you find the real causes of events." —Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850)
    - b. A division between the soldiers of a military component weakens that formation; a division between the workers in a company, will have a detrimental effect of the success of that organization. Family members opposing each other, can destroy the family. A divided nation likewise will lose cohesion and strength. Our nation is presently in such a weakened condition [2022].
    - c. The devil knew this fact and would not permit anyone within his operation to weaken his efforts. The argument of the scribes was extremely faulty and foolish! Satan would not work against his own aims and purposes. Anyone who applies common sense to their allegation would easily see its folly.
  3. Verses 25-26: "And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end."
    - a. NKJ: "And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end."
    - b. Neither God nor Satan can logically work at cross purposes in their very distinct operations. God does not do so and the devil also knows not to do so.
    - c. The best these enemies of truth could offer was mere sophistry.
  4. Verse 27: "No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."
    - a. Matthew 12:22: "Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw." A parallel account of this episode are given in Luke 11:14-23. The afflicted man had a three-fold problem: he was possessed by a demon, was blind, and dumb (mute). The miraculous cure was also three-fold. It was often the case that demon-possession was accompanied with some physical disease or affliction.
    - b. Mark tells that certain scribes had come down from Jerusalem, no doubt to see for themselves the work of Jesus and to try to undermine his influence. These scribes were probably men of considerable influence in their party, and thus were thought to be sufficiently able to bring about the downfall of Jesus. Perhaps they had been successful in such efforts in the past with their other enemies. Jesus did not quail before them, but openly and boldly healed the afflicted one so that the demon was cast out, and he "both spake and saw." This took place at Capernaum.
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- c. This is the first argument Jesus used in refuting the wild assertion of his enemies. The Pharisees' argument had Satan striving against himself, a totally impossible predicament. The greatest control that the devil ever could have over a man was when he had one of his demons to possess man. "...To rob himself of so great a victory would be to fight against his own kingdom, and to involve it to that extent in the desolation common to all kingdoms divided against themselves. He argues, not that Satan could not do this, but that he would not, and that therefore the explanation which supposes him to do it is absurd" (McGarvey, p.108).
- d. Compare: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and **the unclean spirit to pass out of the land**" (Zech. 13:1-2).
- 1) In connection with the opening of the fountain, God would cause the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. During the first century, Satan was able to send evil spirits to afflict certain individuals.
  - 2) Although the subject is somewhat shrouded in mystery, some aspects are clear.
    - a) They were spiritual beings: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16).
    - b) They were unclean beings, under Satan's control: "But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils....When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none....Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:25, 43, 45).
    - c) They were intelligent beings: "Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
    - d) They had volition and locomotion: "Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:44-45).
  - 3) They often brought illness, affliction, or special powers on the individual:
    - a) Dumbness—Matthew 9:32.
    - b) Blindness—Matthew 12:22.
    - c) Convulsions—Mark 9:18.
    - d) Epilepsy—Matthew 17:15.
    - e) Special knowledge—Acts 16:16-18; 19:15.
    - f) Great strength—Mark 5:4; Acts 19:16.
    - g) Demon possession often brought physical ailments, but this was a symptom or side-effect (Matt. 4:24; 8:16).
  - 4) Christ came to strip Satan of his power, including the power to afflict humanity with his demons (Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:20-33; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:25-26). He was successful!
  - 5) With the end of the age of miracles, demon-possession and the power to expel demons ended. There is no proof of demons taking over anyone today. The burden of proof is on one who claims that the problem still exists in the world. Zechariah (13:2) connected the end of unclean spirits with the opening of the fountain (verse 1) and the ending of prophets; since both of these others have occurred, the unclean spirits have been taken away.
- e. From my notes on Matthew 12:
- 1) In some real sense Satan was "bound." Though evil abounds, it could and has been much worse (cf. Gen. 6). Satan cannot tempt a saint more than is possible to bear, and could not enter swine without the Lord's permission, had to have special approval to harass Job, could sift Peter only with Lord's permission, had to sow his tares while men slept, his angels are bound in chains of darkness, and he snatches the gospel from men's hearts but only if they allow their hearts to
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- become hardened (cf. Coffman, p.174). God does not share control of the universe with the devil. Whatever he may do, it is always under God's permissive will.
- 2) In the figure of the verse, Satan is the strong man; Christ is the invader; before he could spoil the strong man's goods he must first bind him. In casting out demons, Christ showed he had bound Satan. "Great must have been the surprise of the Pharisees when they heard the reply. An explanation by which they thought they had both refuted the argument drawn from his miracle, and turned the force of the miracle against him, has only furnished him with an occasion to show the absurdity of their explanation and their logical inconsistency in propounding it; to prove, more clearly than ever, that he acted by divine authority; and to demonstrate the fact that he was making successful warfare against the dominion of Satan" (McGarvey, p.109).
  - 3) "A man could not break into the house of a strong man and take his property unless he had rendered the man himself helpless. If he had taken his goods, it would therefore be sufficient proof that he had bound the man. So I, says he, have taken this property—this possessed person—from the dominion of Satan. It is clear proof that I have subdued *Satan himself*..." (Barnes p.121). His mastery of Satan at this point was prospective in the main, for it was after his resurrection that the ultimate demolition of his evil power was assured (Heb. 2:14-15).
  - 4) "They ought to have rejoiced in the signs of this conquest of good over evil; they should have prepared their hearts to receive a kingdom which had power to perform such works of mercy. But truly they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19)...If the kingdom of the Messiah has not come near them in the person of Jesus, how can this power be granted unto Jesus? Jesus now pushed them to extremity. They knew that no prophet had ever claimed such power; they knew that the prophets had foretold that this power would belong to the Messiah. (Isa. 49:25; 53:12.) Therefore if Jesus is not the Messiah, this power to cast out demons, as he had done, would be impossible according to their own prophets; but if it was possible and the Messiah should have such power, it was manifested in him and they should accept him as the Messiah. He had entered the strong man's house and had cast out a demon, thus manifesting his power to bind the strong man. The argument was unanswerable; but their perverse hearts were invincible" (Boles, p.268).
  - 5) When the Lord entered the hadean realm at his death, Satan thought he had won the ultimate triumph. But on the third morning Christ burst the bonds of Hades and came forth; it was not possible that he should be held continually by it. His resurrection was the crowning blow to Satan, a defeat which cost the devil the war.
    - a) Acts 2:23-24: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."
    - b) Romans 1:4: "And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."
    - c) Hebrews 2:14-15: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."
  - 6) This verse contains the final argument in the series the Lord used. "Jesus had entered [the strong man's] house and robbed him of his goods; and this proves that, instead of being in league with Satan, he had overpowered him" (McGarvey, p.109).
- f. Coffman: Jesus met the charges of his foes with three arguments, two of which are in these verses, and the third in Mark 3:28-30.
- 1) **Argument of the divided kingdom.** It is of immense importance that Jesus here revealed a world view of Satan and the kingdom of evil. The demoniacs whom Jesus had healed were actually controlled by forces administered by Satan. Satan is represented as an intelligent ruler of his evil domain and as being in possession of a desire to maintain and protect it. Satan is not stupid, as the charge of the scribes would have implied. Certainly, the devil would not rise up against himself and destroy his own wicked domain. If indeed Satan should do such a thing as they were suggesting, it would mean an end of Satan and his works.
  - 2) **Argument regarding binding the strong man.** Mark omitted to relate how the temptation of Jesus ended, but it is implied here. The Lord had entered into the house of the strong man (the world) and had bound the strong man (Satan), and was in the process of spoiling his goods. This carried the affirmation that what Jesus was doing was opposed to the works of Satan and that his
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casting out demons was being done contrary to Satan's will, and that Satan did not have the power to restrain such deeds.

- 3) **This third response to their blasphemous charge** was to imply, without actually stating it, that the blasphemers were guilty of a sin that could never be forgiven. The final clause, "because they said, etc.," connects the eternal sin with their blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Jesus made a distinction between blasphemy against the "Son of man" (Matthew 12:32) and that against the Holy Spirit.
5. Verses 28-30: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit."
    - a. Other versions:
      - 1) NKJ: "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation."
      - 2) ASV: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation."
    - b. Compare Matthew's account: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31-32).
    - c. See the outline at the end of this chapter on "Blaspheming the Holy Spirit."
    - d. Coffman:
      - 1) What was their particular sin? It was the sin of reading the pure and holy life of Jesus Christ as satanic, the sin of viewing black as white and white as black, of making wickedness righteous and righteousness wicked. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20). John Milton expressed it as the soul's deliberate choice, "Evil, be thou my good." [9]
      - 2) Can such a sin be committed today? There is every reason to believe that it can be, and the fear is justified that the commission of it is prevalent. This does not mean that any person should entertain any morbid fear that he has committed such a sin, because it may be safely concluded that any person whosoever who still retains some concern for the welfare of his eternal soul has not committed the sin in view here. We agree with Cranfield who said: "We can say with absolute confidence to anyone who is overwhelmed by the fear that he has committed this sin, that the fact that he is so troubled is itself sure proof that he has not committed it. [10]"
      - 3) The view should be rejected, however, that would make it impossible for one to commit this sin. The argument for such a view makes a distinction between men today and the scribes here in this text on the basis that they had literally seen Jesus raise the dead and do many other mighty deeds, whereas men today "believe" that Jesus did such things, thus making THEIR blasphemy contrary to their own senses, contrasting with current blasphemy which is alleged to be only against what is believed. At best, such a view is unconvincing, for there are men who have said by their actions, and presumably within themselves, "Satan, be my god!"
      - 4) An eternal sin ... This phrase is the key to unraveling the teachings of God's word on this subject. It identifies the sin under consideration as not a unique thing at all, but as one of a class of sins, suggested by the indefinite article, thus being one of a class that could be so designated. If we might be so bold as to identify the class, it is composed of the sins which cause the spiritual death of the sinner. It is the sin which is fatal spiritually and answers to the analogy in the physical world of the fatal disease. What is the fatal disease? It is the one the doctor writes on the death certificate. The sin against the Holy Spirit is therefore not a specific sin limited to any form or circumstance, but ANY SIN that destroys the spiritual life. It is the sin that "quenches the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19); the sin that ends in spiritual death (1 Corinthians 11:30); the sin that marks a condition of the sinner described as being "worse" than lost, the only conceivable state answering to such a condition being the state of being lost without possibility of recovery (2 Peter 2:20,21); the sin that makes the sinner "dead" while being alive physically (1 Timothy 5:6); the sin unto death (1 John 5:16); the sin from which "it is impossible" to renew the sinner

(Hebrews 6:4-6); the sin which results in the condition wherein there "remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26,27).

- 5) Once a person is dead physically, life cannot be renewed; and the same is true spiritually. And just as no dead person is ever concerned about his health, no person who is dead spiritually has any concern whatever regarding the commission of any sin, even an eternal sin.
- 6) Another question that arises in this connection is, "What about the man who has indulged every kind of sin for many years and then returns to God and lives out his days as a faithful Christian? It is clear in such cases that "an eternal sin" was not committed. However, he grieved and insulted the Holy Spirit, he did not "quench" the holy light within. Fortunately, the spiritual life is hardy and cannot be destroyed except in the most deliberate and sustained rebellion against God, that being exactly the conduct of the Jewish hierarchy with regard to Jesus.
- 7) This is not to take an easy or casual view of sin, any sin. Sin being what it is, and capable, when it is finished, of bringing forth "death" (James 1:15), should never be lightly viewed. No mother ever judged the danger of a splinter in a child's knee by the size of the splinter. What a blunder to classify sins as mortal and venial. Everyone knows that the tiniest lesion can produce disastrous consequences; and, in the spiritual life, any sin, however counted by men as unimportant, can if unchecked and unforgiven, lead to eternal death.

#### E. Mark 3:31-35: The Lord's Brothers, Sisters and Mother.

1. Verse 31: "There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him."
  - a. Compare Matthew's account: "While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee" (12:46-47).
  - b. The mother of Jesus here is his actual mother. Since this is so, then the brothers indicated must be his literal brothers (actually his half-brothers). Matthew 13:55-56 identifies by name his four brothers, and at least two sisters are implied. Again, there is no reason for us to think of these as other than his actual physical kinsmen.
  - c. "To send a message to him in the house (Matt. 13:1; Mark 3:31) while he was speaking to the people, was an interruption; and the message itself, that they desired to speak with him, was an interference. It was assuming that the business which they had for him was more urgent than his business with the people, and that the latter should give way to the former" (McGarvey, pp.114f).
  - d. "There is no reference to Joseph, Mary's husband; in fact he does not appear in gospel history after the period of Jesus' childhood (Luke 2); it is likely that Joseph was dead; this is strengthened by the fact that 'the carpenter's son' (Matt. 13:55) is called in the parallel (Mark 6:3) 'the carpenter'...(Boles, Commentary on Matthew, p.281).
2. Verse 32: "And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee."
  - a. Someone from the multitude reported to Jesus that his mother and brothers were outside the house, wanting to see him.
  - b. Mary, his actual mother, and his brothers his actual half-brothers were there; the multitude recognized these facts. Jesus and his four brothers (and his sisters) all had the same mother; except for Jesus, they shared the same father.
  - c. Matthew 1:20-25: "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."
3. Verses 33-35: "And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."
  - a. Matthew 12:48-50 "But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother

and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

- b. "...He would allow no interference with his work on the score of earthly relationships; and it shows plainly to us that the supposed subserviency of Jesus to his mother, which is the ground of the worship of Mary, is most emphatically repudiated by Jesus himself" (McGarvey, p.115).
- c. "Probably due to his foresight of the gross idolatry that would flourish around the name of his mother, Christ was careful to guard against it....Mary was never set forth as a female deity by Christ. If she had been, in any sense the 'Mother of God,' Christ's treatment of her on this occasion was improper" (Coffman, p.185).
- d. "It is here taught with emphasis that Jesus holds all who do the will of God as his brothers, sisters, mother; that is, as sustaining a relation to him as intimate as that sustained by these relatives. This statement not only shows the extreme absurdity of the worship of Mary, but it teaches us that our duty to the church is never to be sacrificed to the caprices, prejudices, or preferences of our earthly relatives" (McGarvey, p.115).
- e. Compare: "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed *is* the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed *are* they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:27-28).

## Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

### A. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is a fear-producing theme to many people.

1. The statements are found in these passages:
  - a. Matthew 12:31-32: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come."
  - b. Mark 3:28-31: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit. There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him."
2. The meaning of these passages has been debated for generations, and has been subjected to many differing interpretations.
3. These passages contain the Lord's conclusion to the points he has just made. He states in effect that there is a limit to divine mercy. There are some things which are unforgivable:
  - a. Hebrews 6:4-6: "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame."
  - b. 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
  - c. 1 John 5:16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
4. To blaspheme means to offer injurious speech against someone or some thing. "Rail at or revile" (Vine, p.131); is used of those who railed at Christ (Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 22:65); of those who speak contemptuously of God or of sacred things (Matt. 9:3; Mark 3:28; Rom. 2:24). To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is thus to speak evil against him, to offer contemptuous words toward him.

B. Why is it more severe to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit than against God or Christ?

1. It is not because he is more important, more powerful, or more holy than are they. The three Persons of the Godhead are equal in all things except authority. Compare: "I and *my* Father are one" (John 10:30).
2. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are also referred to as God:
  - a. Acts 5:3-4: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."
  - b. Hebrews 1:8: "But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom."
3. In authority, the Father reigns supreme for "he who sends is greater than he who is sent" (cf. John 13:16). The father sent Christ (John 3:17,18); Christ sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26). Christ plainly stated that the Father is greater than he: "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).
4. Since they are equal in all things (except authority), it is not more sinful to speak against the Spirit than against the Father or the Son. To blaspheme the Spirit must involve something else.

C. Salvation was not limited to only a few, but was intended for all.

1. Christ shed his blood for all men:
    - a. Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
    - b. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
    - c. 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."
    - d. 1 Timothy 2:4-5: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
    - e. Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
    - f. Hebrews 2:9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
    - g. 1 John 2:2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world."
  2. Everyone has the privilege of being saved:
    - a. Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light."
    - b. Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
    - c. Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
    - d. Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
    - e. Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
    - f. Acts 2:23, 37-41: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain....Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there
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were added *unto them* about three thousand souls."

- g. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
  - h. 1 Timothy 1:13-15: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."
  - i. 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
3. But God's patience has a limit. Man can grow so hard that God's truth, and thus his grace (Rom. 5:21; Acts 10:34-35; Ps. 119:172; 1 John 3:7; John 8:32; 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:24-25) will not have the proper effect on him (Eph. 4:18-19; 1 Tim. 4:2; 2 Cor. 3:3-4).
- a. Genesis 6:3: "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."
  - b. Jeremiah 7:16: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee."
  - c. Hosea 4:17: "Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone."
  - d. Romans 1:28: "And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."
  - e. 2 Peter 3:8-10: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

D. We can determine what this sin is not and thereby make it easier to identify it.

1. It is not the sin unto death of 1 John 5:16. That sin applies only to "brothers," members of the Lord's church; it is not applied to alien sinners. "If a man see his *brother* sin a sin which is not unto death he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
  - a. 1 John 1:9 identifies the sin unto death: any sin which an erring Christian confesses will be forgiven. Repentance is unstated but implied (Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3; Acts 8:22). A sin which a erring Christian will not confess (thus from which he will not repent) will not be forgiven.
  - b. In effect the sin unto death and the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit are the same; those who are guilty will be lost.
2. It is not murder, immorality, idolatry, and other such "common" sins for Paul and many others in the New Testament were saved from such sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:13-15; Acts 26:9-11). But those who die while guilty of these sins will be lost (Gal. 5:19-21).
3. It is not negligence to obey the gospel, for as long as an opportunity exists to obey, one can obey the gospel and be saved.
4. It is not suicide, for one can be guilty of blaspheming the Spirit and still be alive.
  - a. Matthew 12:31-32: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."
  - b. Mark 3:28-30: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit."
5. It is not merely to speak certain words that will condemn without hope of pardon. If so, then one could ignorantly speak those words and eternally condemn his soul. Yet the gospel is extended to all, even to

those Pharisees who were guilty of this sin (Acts 2:23,36; 3:17; 1 Cor. 2:8). Paul confessed to being a blasphemer, yet he obtained pardon (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

6. It is not merely asserting that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub. Some have alleged that this was the sin, and that no one today can commit it since Christ is not casting out demons now. If this assertion is so, why did the Lord include references to this sin in the New Testament? Why confuse people with unnecessary information?

E. To blaspheme means to speak impiously, irreverently and reproachfully against the Spirit.

1. The Pharisees did this (Matt. 12:24). They were blaspheming Christ as much as they were blaspheming the Holy Spirit: "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (12:24; cf. 12:28).
2. They were primarily rejecting what Jesus taught: his miracles proved his message, and they rejected this miracle as coming from God. When one rejects what Christ taught, he is rejecting Christ and the Father who sent him: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).
3. The message Christ taught originated with God, and was conveyed in errantly to inspired men from Pentecost Day onward by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 2:9-14; 14:37; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit caused that same message to be recorded by inspiration as the New Testament. "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (ASV).
4. When one denies, rejects, treats with contempt that Spirit-given message, he is blaspheming its Author (the Holy Spirit). One can blaspheme by action, attitude or by words.
5. There will be no hope for such a one for he has shunned the final offer of salvation which God makes available to mankind. This is the only offer being extended today, and after it there will be no other!
  - a. Hebrews 10:23-31: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
  - b. Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

F. An illustration depicting the sin blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

1. A man fell into a river which was rushing toward a great waterfall. Someone threw him a rope in order for him to grasp it and be drawn to safety; he refused the offer. Farther downstream, another person casts him another rope which he likewise ignored. As he drew nearer the cataract, a third man threw him another rope, the last one to be offered. If he refused this rope, there was no hope of escape.
2. God, through the centuries of the Old Testament era, pleaded with mankind by the prophets, a plea that was mostly ignored. During his personal ministry, Christ pleaded with the Jews; his pleas were shunned by the majority. Finally, the Holy Spirit revealed (by the edict and power of God) the gospel (John 16:13; 8:32; Acts 2:1ff; 1 Cor. 2:9-14; Jude 3). Those who accept the offer will be saved; those who reject it have forfeited their only hope.
3. But can one, who at one time utterly shunned the message of the Spirit, later change his mind, and receive salvation? Yes, if he is willing and able to meet the gospel conditions.
  - a. John 8:21,24: "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come....I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins."
  - b. Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
  - c. Romans 10:10: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession

is made unto salvation."

- d. Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
  - e. Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
4. The sin of blaspheming the Spirit is not a single act but a sin of disposition. It is developed gradually.
- a. One grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) by not living right. One resists the Spirit (Acts 7:51) when he withstands the word and refuses to believe the truth. One quenches the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19; cf. Heb. 10:29) when he disputes, denies, opposes, rejects, hates, perverts, and refuses to obey the word of God.
    - 1) Ephesians 4:30: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."
    - 2) Acts 7:51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."
    - 3) 1 Thessalonians 5:19: "Quench not the Spirit."
    - 4) Hebrews 10:29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"
  - b. The result is a hard heart on which the Spirit-given word has no effect, since it [the hard-hearted person] has rejected that message of truth.
    - 1) Matthew 13:13-16: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."
    - 2) John 12:37-40: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."
    - 3) Hebrews 6:4-6: "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame."
    - 4) Hebrews 10:26-29: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"
  - c. One can get himself into such a state of hardheartedness that he will not and cannot accept the gospel; but if he can muster a change in his attitude of heart, he could receive salvation.
  - d. Many get themselves into such a deep state of rebellion and hardness that they cannot (or will not) obey the gospel: this is the type person the Lord describes as a blasphemer of the Holy Spirit! This sin can be accomplished by words spoken or by deeds done, which reflect the hard, impenitent attitude of heart that rejects the truth of God's word.
5. The Bible gives examples of this sin.
- a. Acts 13:44-46: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear *the word of God*. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed

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bold, and said, It was necessary that the *word of God* should first have been spoken to you: but seeing *ye put it from you*, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

- b. Acts 28:24-28: "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it."
  6. If we hate the truth, reject it and refuse to believe and obey it, we are guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit; if we are concerned about whether we have committed this sin, that is a sure sign we have not!
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**Mark 4****A. Mark 4:1-9: The Parable of the Sower.**

1. Verses 1-2: "And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine."
  - a. Matthew's account: "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore" (13:1-2).
  - b. Luke's account: "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (5:1-3).
  - c. The crowds were unwilling to leave Jesus, looking first for some miraculous aid for those among them who were diseased or afflicted; we cannot blame them for this desire—we would likely have done the same. There were some who were interested in learning the truth. There were usually some who had made themselves enemies of Jesus.
  - d. The Bible does not exaggerate when it declares that there was a *great* multitude present. There was a boat in the sea, near to the shore. In this little ship the Lord knew he could address the crowd without being mobbed. And sound carries further across water than over a similar distance over land. Compare: "And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes" (John 21:8). This ship was about two hundred cubits from shore when this episode occurred—about 300 feet. A conversation could be held over water at that distance; there was nothing to obstruct the sound of the voices. We are not told how far from the shore this little ship was, doubtless much closer than the one in John 21.
  - e. Following his feeding of the multitudes in other situations, they were interested in the free meals. Compare: "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26). But on this occasion in our text, they were fed parables which were intended as a feast for their souls.
2. Verses 3-4: "Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up."
  - a. The Lord began using a new teaching method which enabled him both to instruct his sincere disciples and still not furnish his enemies any useful ammunition they could use against him. The word "parable" literally mean "to place alongside for comparison or measurement."
  - b. "A parable is a species of allegory. An allegory is a discourse in which an object is described by describing another which resembles it, or which is analogous to it. Parables differ from other allegories in that they are taken from actual occurrences, while most others are taken from imaginary occurrences. Every parable contains an illustrating example, and indicated certain points of resemblance between it and the subject which it illustrates....
    - 1) "In interpreting the parables of Jesus two fundamental rules must be observed: first, when Jesus himself gives an interpretation, it must be accepted as final and exhaustive; second, only those points of analogy which were certainly in the mind of the author should have a place in the interpretation.
    - 2) "The chief error to be guarded against is a violation of the latter rule; and in order successfully to guard against it, one must have a well balanced judgment and an accurate knowledge of the subjects which the parables illustrate" (McGarvey, p.116).
  - c. A parable is different from a fable. A fable is purely imaginary and often contains impossibilities, such as animals talking. But the activities included in parables either could occur or did occur in the real world.
  - d. Others besides Jesus used parables in their teaching, but the Lord's are far more memorable than the others, especially those which were uninspired.
  - e. Parables were used in the Bible for several excellent purposes:
    - 1) To *reveal* truth. "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the

ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:26-29).

- 2) To *preserve* the truth (to fasten it tightly to the heart so that it would ever be remembered). The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates this facet of parables very well (Luke 10:30-37).
- 3) To *conceal* the truth from those who would abuse it. This is the reason the Lord had to explain to the apostles why he spoke in parables:
  - a) "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matt. 13:13-17).
  - b) "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25).
- 4) To *cause men to acknowledge the truth* before they realized it applied to them: "And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Sam. 12:1-14).
- f. Coffman: "A fact of great significance is that Jesus our Lord saw in the entire world around him the analogies between earthly and heavenly things. His mightiest teachings were related to a farmer planting wheat, fishermen casting nets, the lamp, the bed, the bushel, the candlestick, the hen and little chickens, the yoke, pruning grape vines, patching old clothes, making bread, a son leaving home, a merchant seeking pearls, a shepherd finding the lost sheep, searching for a lost coin, lighting a lamp, sweeping the house, etc."
- g. This parable begins with, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." There were no farm houses in that ancient time and place; the people lived in cities and villages from which they literally went forth to work in the fields. The sowing was done by the broadcast method, in which the seed was carried in a bag, taken out by the handful, and spread from side to side as the farmer moved across the field. With practice, one can spread the seed evenly over the field, with scarcely a bare spot. When the seed

comes forth, producing plants, the ground is virtually covered with life.

- h. With all the equipment, methods, and supplies farming has greatly changed in recent years. Farms used to be small, worked by the farmer and his family, plowing and cultivating used horses and mules, and formerly seeded by hand. A practiced hand and eye were essential for the seed to be evenly spread as the farmer strode across the field.
  - i. Of course, the seed could not be placed on the ground individually, thus some fell in places where it was impossible for it to take root and grow. The fields in Palestine had pathway around them, which were hard packed by the passing of many feet, of both man and animals. The seeds which fell on these way side places were quickly consumed by birds.
3. Verses 5-6: "And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away."
    - a. The Lord said some seed fell on stony ground; this does not mean it fell on a flat rock, for that would virtually be the same as the way side. We are told that this stony ground had soil over it, but there was not much depth.
    - b. There was enough earth for the seed to take root and grow, but because there was not enough soil, the heat that followed would cause the plant to wither and die. The soil being thin, it could not hold moisture for long. Clearly, the dirt was spread over a layer of rock. The soil present would be fertile, but its thinness would not allow moisture to be retained, so that when the sun grew hot on the earth, the plants would die.
  4. Verse 7: "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit."
    - a. Some seed fell among the thorns. These unwanted plants had not yet sprung up, but were present in roots or seeds underneath the surface.
    - b. These thorns would spring up with the good plants, and choke out the intended crop. To a farmer, it seems that weeds and other unwanted plants will grow better without any care than good plants will grow with the best of care. The devil's spiritual work often progresses at a faster pace than the Lord's. His material blessings are more greatly desired by worldly-minded people than the Lord's spiritual blessings.
  5. Verse 8: "And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred."
    - a. Some seed also fell on good ground. This soil had been properly prepared, had sufficient moisture and fertility, and thus produced a good crop, in varying amounts.
    - b. Not all soil has the same richness, so different amounts are produced.
  6. Verse 9: "And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
    - a. "This warning, habitual with Jesus when he desired to direct especial attention to a speech or a remark, was necessary to prevent the people from regarding the parable as merely a beautiful and life-like description. It warns them of a meaning beneath the surface, and hidden as yet from their view" (McGarvey, p.117).
    - b. "This means that those who have faculties are responsible for their proper use; those who have powers of attention should exert them as very important lessons are about to be given" (Boles, p.287).
    - c. "This was Christ's invitation to study that innocent story for its hidden meaning. Even yet, the true and full implications of this rich narrative come only to those with perceptive minds and hearts, attuned to the detection of spiritual truth" (Coffman, pp.188f).
    - d. This command is repeated in each of the seven letters to congregations in Asia (Rev. 2-3). It is similar to a statement frequently made by Jesus in his ministry.
      - 1) Matthew 11:15: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
      - 2) Matthew 13:9: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."
      - 3) Matthew 13:43: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."
      - 4) Luke 14:35: "It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; *but* men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
    - e. The Lord taught the need to take heed how we hear and what we hear.
      - 1) Mark 4:24: "And he said unto them, Take heed **what** ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."

2) Luke 8:18: "Take heed therefore **how** ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

- f. Hearing is personal and individual; each is to hear what the Spirit says to all the congregations. Notice that the information given in Revelation is attributed to the Spirit, but the source is the Father, through Christ, by the angel, to John—and on to men.

B. Mark 4:10-20: Christ Explains the Parable.

1. Verses 10-11: "And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."
  - a. We are not told where the following conversation occurred or how he came to be alone with his twelve special disciples; also in this episode there were other people around; this is likely the seventy other disciples he had selected for a special work. "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come" (Luke 10:1).
  - b. The other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 13:10-11: "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."
    - 2) Luke 8:9-10: "And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."
  - c. "Jesus proceeds to give several reasons for speaking in parables, the first of which is that it was given to the disciples, but not to the unbelievers, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. This is merely an assertion of the fact that it was so ordered by God, without assigning a reason why he so ordered. By the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, are not meant things incomprehensible; for, in that case, the disciples could not know them; but the yet unrevealed truths of the kingdom, which were mysteries only because they were as yet unrevealed" (McGarvey, p.117).
  - d. "Mystery" is a term often used in the New Testament in reference to the unrevealed plan which God originated in eternity, and which was revealed fully only when the gospel was given.
    - 1) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
    - 2) 1 Corinthians 2:7-10: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."
    - 3) Ephesians 3:3-5: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."
2. Verses 12-13: "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?"
  - a. "Another reason for speaking in parables is given: because, when the people saw they saw not, and when they heard they heard not; that is, though they saw the miracles, they saw them not in their true light, and when they heard his words, they heard them not in their true meaning. This was a good reason for speaking to them in parables; for it showed that it was immaterial whether he spoke intelligibly or unintelligibly; and it left him free to speak as best suited the wants of his disciples alone. It may be observed, also, that he spoke more for future readers than for present hearers" (*ibid.*, p.118).
  - b. "How wonderfully were the parables designed to accomplish Christ's purpose! They were marvelous devices for the separation of his hearers and polarizing them with reference to the approaching kingdom. Those who desired and expected some worldly conqueror who would break the back of

Roman tyranny and restore secular power to the Jews were repelled by the innocent and innocuous descriptions of such prosaic and commonplace things as those which formed the basis of the parables. On the other hand, spiritually minded disciples would read the deeper meaning and know the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Coffman on Matthew, p.190).

- c. The audience could and should have been able to grasp at least the general meaning of the Parable of the Sower. Something was being sown; they were aware of the purpose of sowing seed by the farmer—the very surface of this parable addressed this operation; the seed was intended to take root, grow plants, which would produce grain, which could be gathered and used to prepare bread. This was a very common matter. Having heard the Lord present spiritual truths, they should have turned their minds in the direction of spiritual application. Closed minds cannot perceive such truths, because they have little or no interest in such truths. The worst blind person is one who will not see!
  - d. If they could not understand this simple parable, how could they expect to understand any of the other parables? Compare: “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” (Jer. 12:5). The prophet had been confronted with some relatively weaker foe, so God asked him how could he expect to successfully fight against harder opposition.
3. Verses 14-15: “The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”
- a. Matthew 13:10-15: “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”
  - b. “Christ named this parable....The parable of the Sower. The sower in this analogy stands for God, the Great Architect of redemption. The central place belongs to him. Men may or may not receive his word; but the seeds still fall, and the harvest is still produced, regardless of human failure, indifference, or opposition” (Coffman, p.192). The different places where the seed falls represent the various conditions of heart possessed by men.
  - c. The identity of the seed is plainly declared to be the word of God in Luke 8:11. Matthew describes this seed as “the word of the kingdom.”
    - 1) Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
    - 2) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
    - 3) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: “(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”
    - 4) James 1:21: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”
  - d. McGarvey:
    - 1) “The peculiarity of him who is represented by the way-side consists in the two circumstances, that he does not ‘understand’ the word, and that the wicked one catches away that which was sown in his heart. The word reaches his heart, which fact implies some favorable impressions on him; but his not understanding it, implies a want of proper attention to it.
    - 2) “Failing of proper attention, he allows the devil, by taking it away, to deprive him of the little good which he had received, and of all that he might have received in the future. (Comp. Luke
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- 8:12.) Satan catches the word away by means of all those worldly allurements through which men are led to be inattentive to the word of God.
- 3) “The class of persons represented are those whose ideas of Scripture teaching are too crude for an intelligent faith, or who allow good impression made by the word to speedily pass away” (McGarvey, p.119).
  - e. Each individual is responsible for the condition his heart develops. Worldly concerns and attitudes can cause our hearts to be indifferent, or rebellious, or in some other way, unresponsive to the message of the gospel. The warning was given in the long ago to “keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23; cf. Matt. 13:15). We can only blame ourselves if our hearts cannot accept the gospel!
  - f. The devil may steal the word from the hearts of men by various means: through their own hard attitudes; by the errors of false teachers; by the influence of family and friends; through the sins or thoughtless words and actions of the brethren.
4. Verses 16-17: “And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.”
- a. “The rocky ground hearers are the emotional type; they are touched by the gospel, but only superficially so. They do not understand what a commitment to Christ involves; and, having no root in themselves, they quickly fall away when difficult and unpleasant situations arise. Premature action will not ultimately succeed. High pressure methods in many modern revivals may cause people to accept religion gladly, but as soon as the meeting closes, the evangelist leaves, and they return to normal life, their religion vanishes” (ALC, 1959, p.137).
  - b. There are many hearers who are easily touched with the gospel story; there are many who sincerely desire to have God’s approval. But these often want an easy religion and are not willing to undergo the struggles and efforts necessary to develop genuine commitment to the Lord. They want to hold on to the Lord with one hand and cling to the world with the other. Christ said such was impossible: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).
  - c. Neither a shallow emotional response nor a half-hearted commitment will suffice. Faith and repentance are key words in this connection. If one genuinely believes the gospel, it will change his life. If such a believer repents, he will be a changed person altogether. Repentance is produced only by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10).
    - 1) When one learns the truth and believes it, he will see his true condition; that realization will cause him to be deeply sorrowful for how he has been living. This godly sorrow will lead him to reach a major, life-changing decision (called repentance) in which he commits himself to changing his way of living; he can know he has repented if he carries out his decision in the way he now lives, the things he does, in the motives by which he operates, in the thoughts he entertains, and in the way he speaks.
    - 2) Repentance is a major undertaking: it cannot be lightly or easily done. Therefore, we ought to give the most earnest attention to our lives, for if we sin willfully, thinking we can quickly repent tomorrow, our hearts may become hardened, no godly sorrow is produced, and thus no repentance is possible—and we remain in a lost condition.
  - d. The Lord, in his interpretation of this part, says that this describes those who will fall away when hardship or persecution arises. They obey the gospel in fair weather, and remain faithful while the way is easy, but quickly show their weak faith when the going gets tough. Every great cause has its “summer soldiers” and its “sunshine patriots,” but the Lord requires men and women, young and old, who are committed to him regardless of outside circumstances.
    - 1) Matthew 10:22: "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
    - 2) Philippians 4:11-13: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
    - 3) 2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
  - e. The term “offended” means “to be made to stumble.” “There is nothing in tribulations and perse-
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cutions to make one feel ‘offended’ at the word; but there is, to cause him to stumble, as when his foot is caught in a snare” (McGarvey, p.120).

- f. “The shallow soil, overlaying rock, produced quick but impermanent results. The sun’s scorching heat in the analogy stands for tribulations and persecutions because of the word. The shallowness of the ground represents impressionable, easily influenced persons, who have little stability” (Coffman, p.192).
5. Verses 18-19: “And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”
    - a. This describes a case where an individual hears and obeys the gospel, but because of the cares of the world, he is overtaken again and becomes unfruitful. This plainly and undeniably teaches that one can become a Christian and then fall away and be lost. If it be said that nothing is said about being lost, it only needs to be noted that if this one described is not lost, then people who are filled with the cares of this world, deceived by riches, and who have the word choked from their hearts, are going to heaven!
    - b. “This represents a class of hearers which may be described as capable of salvation, possessing many excellent qualities, but who subordinate the most important things to secondary considerations and are thus robbed of eternal life. Cares, riches, and pleasures are not, in and of themselves, evil; but a well may be as effectively choked and stopped with a load of flowers as by a load of rotten carcasses” (Coffman, pp.192f).
    - c. “Those represented by the thorny ground, do not, like the first class, allow Satan to catch away the word, nor do they, like the second, allow persecutions to cause them to stumble; but, while retaining the word, they allow ‘care’ about worldly matters, and the deceitfulness of riches—that is, the deception which love of riches causes men to practice on themselves—or both these combined, to render the word unfruitful....The great majority of the disciples of every age and country have been more or less chargeable with the sin of this class” (McGarvey, p.120).
      - 1) Mark 10:24: "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"
      - 2) Luke 21:34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares."
      - 3) 1 Timothy 6:9-10: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
    - d. “The seed is good, the soil is good, the growth is genuine, internally everything is right; but while all is going well within there are difficulties without, which in time prove fatal” (Boles, p.294).
  6. Verse 20: “And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.”
    - a. “The man represented by the good ground differs from the wayside man in that he ‘understands’ the word, and does not allow Satan to take it from him. His understanding it is the result, not of some natural superiority, but of the superior attention which he gives to it. He differs from the stony ground character, in that, though assailed by tribulation and persecution because of the word, and often more violently assailed than his vacillating neighbor, he overcomes them....He differs from the thorny ground character, in that he endures the cares of life so patiently, and resists the deceitful influences of riches so successfully, that the word of God in him triumphs over both. Finally, he differs from all, in that he alone ‘beareth fruit’” (McGarvey, p.120).
    - b. He had an honest heart which caused him to examine the message sincerely (cf. Lk. 8:15). “He is willing to be guided by the truth of God and is satisfied with that truth...” (Boles, Matthew, p.295).

#### C. Mark 4:21-25: Take Heed What Ye Hear.

1. Verse 21: “And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?”
    - a. The purpose of a candle is to give light to a room. As the Lord here stated, we do not put a lighted candle under a basket or under a bed. It would serve no purpose, and indeed might be dangerous.
    - b. Matthew 5:14-16: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither
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do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

- 1) This passage implies that the world is in a state of darkness. This is the first plank in the Christian's platform. If the world was not in trouble, our great mission would be meaningless (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eccl. 7:10; 1 John 5:19; Luke 19:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 2:1-12).
  - 2) The first step in bringing a lost soul into Christ where light and salvation are found, is to get him to see that he is lost. This is difficult enough in heathen societies where nothing is known about the gospel. But it is more difficult in cases where people have accepted a counterfeit gospel and think they are saved. Before the truth can be profitably planted in such hearts, their error must be shown. Often they allow their prejudices to keep them from the truth.
  - 3) The world is in darkness but boasts of its great enlightenment. People in the industrialized nations are better educated in secular knowledge than ever before. During the 18th century an age of so called "enlightenment" began with the emergence of skepticism which began pressing grievous attacks against the Bible. A very great many scholars, preachers, priests, rabbis, men of medicine and science, and other well-educated men and women, have accepted human philosophies and theories which stand in opposition to the Bible. If the Bible appears to contradict some precept of modern philosophy or theory, the Bible is deemed to be wrong. Those who are highly educated in worldly wisdom are nevertheless in darkness and need the gospel! (Rom. 3:23; Eph 2:12; Rom 1:16-17; Heb.4:12).
  - 4) Worldly knowledge pertains to that which is material, mechanical, biological, and therefore temporary. It is a one-sided education, and even much of that is wrong because it stands on man's prejudiced theories instead of truth. Many people have been willingly convinced that they are just another form of animal life, thus have begun to live out their convictions! Why is there so much crime, strife, and moral decadence? It is because many do not know, believe, or follow the absolute standard of the Bible. Possessing knowledge of genuine earthly truth is good, but that only enlightens in matters of an earthly nature. God's spiritual truth governs the affairs of the soul, of human relationships, of moral behavior, and of preparing for death and eternity. A secular education is at best incomplete. The best education is that which incorporates sufficient secular information to enable one to get along well in this world, and enough information about the Bible to bring him into Christ, cause him to loyally serve the Savior, and thus be prepared for his real goal—eternal life in heaven!
- c. Faithful Christians are the only ones who can really give light to the world (and this is the reflected light of Christ!). The world of the first century was in utter darkness as is shown by the crime, strife and sin which were so prevalent. The great Greek philosophers (Plato, Socrates, Aristotle) had given their wisdom and influence to the world but the world was still steeped in spiritual darkness.
- 1) In the face of the failure of the earth's great men (philosophers, political and military leaders, religionists, *et al*), the Lord announced in this passage that those lowly Jewish disciples (fishermen, tax collectors, etc.) would be the world's hope for light! The great thinkers have been baffled by this.
  - 2) The ordinary Christian who knows little or nothing about philosophy and other human wisdom, knows and understands more about life than the greatest worldly experts. This is possible because he knows the Book, which gives us all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet.1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12; Acts 20:32; John 10:10; Matt. 5:1-12; 5:13-7:29).
  - 3) "The world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21, ASV). About 35 years after the Lord's church was established, Tacitus (the Roman historian), wrote with astonishment: "This pestilent superstition, thou checked for the time being, broke out afresh, not only in Juda, where the mischief started, but also at Rome, where all manner of horrible and loathsome things pour in and become fashionable" (see Marlin, p.69). This unbelieving scholar could not understand how the flame of Christianity could go on burning. God's truth is not based on worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 1:26-29).
2. Verses 22-23: "For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."
    - a. McGarvey:
      - 1) "Nothing in the counsel and purpose of God concerning man. To some extent these had hitherto
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- been hid and kept secret, but now all that had been hid was to be made manifest, and all that had been kept secret was to come abroad.
- 2) “Let him hear.—This admonition is appropriate. Dropping the figure of the lamp, and returning to the word which it represented, those who have ears to hear are advised to hear it. If it was to make manifest what had hitherto been hidden, and to bring abroad what had hitherto been kept secret in the mind of God, it was becoming in every man who had ears, to use them in hearing it. Nothing that ever struck the human ear is so worthy of being heard as the word of God” (pp.285f).
- b. Ephesians 3:4-5: “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”
- 1) Verse three affirms the fact that God's eternal plan, which was kept secret through the centuries, had been revealed to him. It was essential that that fact be stated, but inspiration couched it in such a way that the glory was given to God and not to Paul.
  - 2) The Greek term from which *mystery* is translated [from *musterion*] which denotes information which cannot be known unless it is revealed by the originator. In this case, God had a plan which he kept secret for a long time, reserving its full revelation until the coming of the New Covenant.
  - 3) Paul had already given this information to them concerning the revelation of the mystery (Eph. 1:9-10). Other key passages in which God's secret plan is discussed include the following:
    - a) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
    - b) 1 Corinthians 2:7: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."
    - c) Ephesians 3:9: "And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."
    - d) Colossians 1:26: "*Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."
    - e) 1 Peter 1:10-12: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."
  - 4) In verse four, Paul showed that the revelation he received of God's plan has been set forth in the written word; when they read it, they would have the same knowledge of the plan that the apostle had. Since that is so, then the mystery was no longer a mystery! “Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3, ASV).
  - 5) In previous ages of time, men did not know what the plan of God was. He had developed the plan in eternity, and after mankind fell into sin, he began piecemeal to give faint hints and indications of the plan he had in mind. Various promises and prophetic pictures were given during the Old Testament ages, but the wisest of ancient sages, and even the angels of heaven, did not know the plan. [See 1 Peter 1:10-12]. Catholic authorities assert that even now the common man cannot understand the revelation. God used the apostles of Christ and the New Testament prophets to reveal the details of his plan. They were able to learn it only through the work of the Holy Spirit who revealed it. Paul told the Ephesian brethren that they could understand it when they read it.
3. Verses 24-25: “And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.”
- a. We are told to take heed to what we hear. We are to be careful what we hear—what we accept as our authority. Corrupt or misguided men can lead us astray; the writings of men can misdirect us.
    - 1) There are many creed books and other productions of humans which purport to be sanctioned or
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revealed to them by Heaven. We would do well to follow the Lord's injunction given here.

- 2) Teachers, writers and preachers very often and continually present to their auditors a vast amount of untruths, perversions of the truth, and at least an incomplete version of the truth.
- b. In Luke's account, the Lord cautioned us to take heed how we hear: "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18). We are to hear with an open and testing mind; we are to take heed what we hear and how we hear it. Compare: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).
- c. Coffman:
  - 1) This is no high-handed injustice of robbing the poor to enrich the affluent; but it is the statement of an eternal law, applicable in context or out of it.
  - 2) In context: To the diligent student of divine truth more of divine truth shall be revealed. The slothful student shall not only learn no more, but shall even forget what he already knows[27] In another context: Jesus applied this law to the judgment of the one-talent man from whom the one talent was taken and given to the man who had ten talents (Matthew 25:19-28). Barclay has a sermon which develops the thought of this law thus: (1) it is true of knowledge; (2) it is true of skill or craft; (3) it is true of effort; and (4) it is true of the ability to bear responsibility.[28]."
- d. Barnes:
  - 1) "*With what measure ye mete, &c.* You shall be treated according to the use you make of your opportunities of learning. If you consider it well, and make a good improvement of what you hear, you shall be well rewarded. If not, your reward shall be small. This is a proverbial expression. The meaning here seems to be, he that diligently attends to my words shall increase more and more in the knowledge of the truth; but he that neglects them and is inattentive shall become more ignorant; the few things which he had learned he will forget, and his trifling knowledge will be diminished.
  - 2) "*Hath not.* Does not improve what he possessed, or does not make proper use of his means of learning.
  - 3) "*That which he hath.* That which he had already learned. By this we are taught the indispensable necessity of giving attention to the means of instruction. The attention must be *continued*. It is not sufficient that we have learned some things, or appear to have learned much. All will be in vain unless we go forward, and improve every opportunity of learning the will of God and the way of salvation. So what children are taught will be of little use unless they follow it up and endeavor to improve themselves."

#### D. Mark 4:26-34: The Kingdom Further Described.

1. Verses 26-27: "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."
  - a. N.B. Hardeman's masterful sermon, *The Evolution of the Gospel*, traced the development of the gospel through five stages: he thought it was parallel with our text. He made some excellent points; his lessons have much in common with the parable.
  - b. Illustration of farmer and the crop:
    - 1) Crop exists first in seed—in mind of farmer;
    - 2) Commits to plant crop;
    - 3) Predicts outcome;
    - 4) Seed planted, crop grows;
    - 5) Crop harvested.
  - c. Illustration of business world:
    - 1) Idea to establish business;
    - 2) Commit to plan;
    - 3) Announce plan for business;
    - 4) Take preparatory steps;
    - 5) Bring plan to completion.
  - d. God's eternal plan:

- 1) Plan to save lost by gospel;
  - 2) Commitment;
  - 3) Made promises;
  - 4) Preparatory steps;
  - 5) Brought the gospel into existence.
- e. There never was a time when the gospel did not exist in some form.
- 1) It existed in eternity in the mind of the Almighty—Plan.
  - 2) It then existed in the commitment to bring it into reality—Purpose.
  - 3) It then existed in the promises made regarding its coming—Promise.
  - 4) It existed in the preparations God made to bring it about—Preparatory.
  - 5) The gospel came into actual existence—Perfection: Mk 4:26-29.
2. Verses 28-29: "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."
- a. McGarvey:
- 1) Although the sower knows not how the seed grows, and remains not to see its growth, still it grows. From sowing time till harvest the man has nothing to do: no intermediate cultivation is required. This is true of the "corn" (wheat and barley) referred to, though not of our Indian corn.
  - 2) The kingdom of heaven is like this (verse 26), in that the seed of the kingdom, which is the word of God, when sown in a community, even though the sower go away and neglect it, will spring up of itself and bear fruit, and will be ready at a future day for the harvest.
  - 3) This is often exemplified in the labors of the evangelist. He preaches in a community faithfully, and apparently without success, for a length of time, and then, after a lapse of months or years, returns to the same place, and with comparatively little exertion reaps an abundant harvest.
  - 4) The parable teaches, what observation abundantly confirms, that such an adaptation exists between the human soul and the word of God, that when the latter is once implanted a future harvest will usually be the result.
- b. 1 Corinthians 3:6: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Paul and Apollos were merely the tools the Lord used to bring the Corinthians into a knowledge of the gospel. These preachers could not even claim the credit for their ability to impart that information. The information had been given to them by revelation; and the talents (however many or few, great or small) they used in the operation, were from God.
- c. Paul planted the gospel in their hearts when he preached it to them; Apollos watered the planted seed; but it was God who brought forth the fruit. Paul preached the gospel to the Corinthians, speaking the words the Lord gave him to present; Apollos worked with them to encourage their obedience; but it was God who provided the power (the gospel) by which they were saved.
- 1) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"
  - 3) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
  - 4) James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
- d. God used Paul and Apollos as essential elements in the conversion process; they did the planting and watering. But they used the seed which God provided (Luke 8:5; Rom. 1:16-17); God gave them the ability and opportunity to preach and teach the gospel; God placed in the gospel all the information and motivation that men need in order to believe and obey.
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3. Verse 30: “And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?”
  - a. Christ used various parables to describe the promised kingdom. At the time of these efforts, what better method could he have used to address the subject of the kingdom of God?
  - b. The Jewish leaders were not willing to accept what the Lord came to reveal; his success would mean their loss of prestige, power and financial profit. Compare: “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:47-48).
4. Verses 31-32: “It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”
  - a. Luke 13:18-19: “Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”
  - b. Luke said that the mustard seed was planted by a man in his garden. If this is the same plant many in our country know, it could be eaten. Mark says that birds could lodge under the shadow of it.
  - c. In Palestine, the mustard seed was the smallest of seeds. Yet it produced a large plant, so substantial that birds used it as a lodging place: “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matt. 13:31-32).
  - d. The kingdom is likened to the tiny mustard seed which grows into a large plant. Among the seeds commonly sowed by the ancient Jews, the mustard seed was the least. It is not the least of all seeds in the world. This limitation is to be understood also in the Lord’s description of the size of the mustard plant: it was the largest of the herbs which the Jews cultivated. We remember that the Lord is showing certain truths about the kingdom of God.
    - 1) “As the emphasis, in this parable, is placed on the smallness of the seed and the greatness of its subsequent growth, we must take these as the points of significance and resemblance. The kingdom of heaven, like the seed, was very small in its beginning on the day of Pentecost, but afterward it became a very great kingdom. The parable is prophetic, and is still in process of fulfillment” (McGarvey, p.121).
    - 2) The birds lighting in the branches may suggest the indirect benefits which those outside the kingdom derive from it. Some think that since birds are used to represent evil men, then it may have that meaning here, representing evil men who seek to do harm to the church; but this is not apt to be the meaning.
5. Verses 33-34: “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”
  - a. Mark alludes to other parables which the Lord related to the multitude gathered on the shore. Matthew 13 reports on some of these. During this period, Jesus used parables as his primary tool. They were able to grasp some of what he said. “....And the common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37).
  - b. When Christ and his disciples were alone, after leaving the presence of the multitude, he explained to them the meaning of the parables.

E. Mark 4:35-41: A Great Storm at Sea.

1. Verse 35: “And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.”
    - a. We remember that the previous episode took place near Capernaum, at the shoreline; the Lord had entered a boat belonging to Peter, which was a short distance from land. From that location, Jesus taught the multitude. See Luke 5:1ff.
    - b. When evening came, Christ expressed the desire to go to the far side of the Sea of Galilee; that would be of course the eastern side.
    - c. Christ here proposed a crossing to the eastern side of Lake Galilee. This beautiful lake was surrounded by at least a dozen towns in the time of Christ and was the most densely populated area
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of Palestine. It is thirteen miles long, six miles wide, pear-shaped; and the surface lies 700 feet below sea level. Steep mountains rise along both the western and eastern shores. It is fed by the Jordan river which enters at the north end and exits at the south where it resumes its course to the Dead Sea. The water is fresh and sweet, abounds with fish, and is edged with sparkling pebbly beaches. Due to its depression below sea level and the bordering mountains, it is subject to very severe and sudden storms, such as the one related here. [See Coffman].

2. Verse 36: "And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships."
  - a. The Lord was already aboard, so they began the trip. Notice that there were other little ships in their company, all headed to the eastern side of the lake.
  - b. Another significant point is that all of these boats were assailed by the strong storm which came down from the mountains and struck the sea.
3. Verses 37-38: "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?"
  - a. Johnson: "Let us learn, in the first place, that Christ's service does not exempt His servants from storms. Here were the twelve disciples in the path of duty. They were obediently following Jesus, wherever He went. They were daily attending on His ministry, and hearkening to His word. They were daily testifying to the world, that, whatever Scribes and Pharisees might think, they believed on Jesus, loved Jesus, and were not ashamed to give up all for His sake, Yet here we see these men in trouble, tossed up and down by a tempest, and in danger of being drowned."
  - b. Carest thou not that we perish ... Turlington said that "Both Matthew and Luke soften the disciples' outcry, so that they do not appear to reproach Jesus";[45] such a comment being quite fashionable among the scholars who have decided that Mark was prior to Matthew and Luke, that Matthew and Luke did not consider Mark dependable at all and therefore felt free to "correct" him, and that, moreover, their motive in so doing was to protect the disciples' reputation as regarded their conduct toward the Master! We reject this view as demeaning to the gospels, unreasonable, speculative, imaginative, and totally unreliable. Matthew even recorded that Jesus called Peter "Satan" (Matthew 16:23); why, then, should Matthew have been embarrassed to record such an understandable remark as this? It is far more likely that the explanation lies in the fact that this is what Peter said, Mark's close connection with that apostle accounting for his record of it here. See Coffman.
  - c. Other accounts of this tempest:
    - 1) Matthew 8:23-27: "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"
    - 2) Luke 8:22-26: "Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee." [This last verse shows that they crossed from the west side of Galilee to the east side].
  - d. A violent storm endangered the boat; the text calls it a "great tempest." "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full" (Mark 4:37). Much water was now in the boat, causing debilitating fear in the twelve.
    - 1) "Many travelers to Palestine have commented on the violent storms which so often lash the Sea of Galilee, their intensity augmented by the steep mountain gorges that rim its shores, and by the greater density of the atmosphere so far below sea-level. Such storms are common, still; but that this was no ordinary storm is evident from the terror it struck into the hearts of these bold men who were so familiar with the usual character and intensity of such disturbances" (Coffman, p.112).

- 2) "Small as the lake is, and placid, in general, as a molten mirror, I have repeatedly seen it quiver and leap and boil like a caldron, when driven by fierce winds from the eastern mountains" (Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. ii, p.59; quoted by Barnes, p.90).
  - e. Our Lord was unconcerned about his own safety during the storm; he was at the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. Was he aware of the storm? Undoubtedly. He knew there was no danger. He even rebuked the disciples for their lack of trust.
  4. Verse 39: "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."
    - a. He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea. Mark records him saying, "Peace, be still" (4:39). Instantly the storm ceased! What modern "miracle-worker" would attempt this? The winds did not taper off—they completely stopped instantly.
    - b. On the Lord "rebuking" the wind, Trench says: "To regard this as mere oratorical personification would be absurd; rather there is here, as Maldonatus truly remarks, a distinct tracing up of all the discords and disharmonies in the outward world to their source in a person, a referring them back to him, as to their ultimate ground; even as this person can be no other than Satan, the author of all disorders alike in the natural and in the physical world" (p.156). Whether Satan is behind all the storms, etc., of nature, we may not be able to know, but it appears that his handiwork is behind this particular storm, for if he could cause the untimely death of Christ in a storm, he would have defeated God's plan. But the Lord demonstrated his superiority over even the forces of nature.
  5. Verses 40-41: "And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"
    - a. Christ rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. Fear and faith are opposites.
      - 1) "And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40).
      - 2) "And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him" (Luke 8:25).
    - b. This report from the inspired Mark emphasizes one of the great purposes of this account, to show the marvelous strength and power the Lord possessed.
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**Mark 5****A. Mark 5:1-10: A Man With an Unclean Spirit Who Lived in the Tombs.**

1. Verses 1-2: “And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.”
  - a. Matthew’s account: “And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts” (Matt. 8:28-34).
  - b. Luke’s account: “And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him” (Luke 8: 26-39).
  - c. Different names are applied by the inspired writers to this location. “The reason of the difference is not certainly known; but the conjecture of Alford, that the country of the Gergesenes was a part of the country of the Gerasenes, Matthew using the more specific designation, and Mark and Luke the more general one, is highly probable. (See Alford on Matt. viii. 28.) The place designated was in the still larger district called Decapolis” (McGarvey, p.289).
  - d. The area was on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. The Lord and his disciples had left the western side, near the city of Capernaum at evening the previous day, and after their stormy passage, they came safely to the eastern shore.
  - e. Johnson:
    - 1) The demoniac may have belonged to Gadara, but have met Jesus in the vicinity of Gergesa. Gadara was one of the ten confederated Gentile cities which, with the district in which they were located, were called Decapolis (The Ten Cities). Though they were located in Palestine, yet in the time of Christ they had a Gentile instead of Jewish population. Matthew speaks in the parallel passage of the Gergesenes. The Gadarenes and Gergesenes were simply two different names for the same people. Gadara and Gergesa were in the same district.
    - 2) Mark and Luke, in this account, speak of the Gadarenes, while Matthew calls the people the Gergesenes. This difference for a long time caused a difficulty to biblical students and caused rationalists to throw a doubt over the whole narrative. Gadara is three hours’ journey south of the

lake and it is not likely that the miracle was wrought there. The discovery of Gergesa, now called Gersa, on the eastern shore of the lake and on the borders of the district of Gadara, has made all plain. **This discovery, made by Dr. Thompson (Land and Book, Vol, 11, pp. 34, 35),** reconciles every difficulty.

- 3) Two of the writers, writing for Gentiles, mention Gadara, one of the best known Gentile cities of Palestine, in the territories of which it occurred, while Matthew, a tax-gatherer on the shores of the lake and familiar with every locality upon its borders, mentions the obscure village, right on the shores, where it took place. The modern Gersa, or Chersa, is within a few rods of the shore. A mountain rises immediately above it, so near the shore that the swine rushing madly down could not stop, but would be inevitably driven into the sea and drowned; the ruins of ancient tombs are still found on this mountain side, and Capernaum was in full view "over against it" (Luke 8:26) on the other side.
  - f. Just as they were landing, a man possessed by an unclean spirit immediately met him. Perhaps he came rushing up to the Lord. We are told that the demon in the man had turned him into a vicious and very dangerous person.
  2. Verses 3-4: "Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him."
    - a. "Mark and Luke say that they dwelt in the tombs. The sepulchres of the Jews were frequently *caves* beyond the walls of the cities in which they dwelt, or excavations made in the sides of hills, or sometimes in solid rocks. These caves or excavations were sometimes of great extent. They afforded ... to insane persons and demoniacs a place of retreat and shelter. They delighted in these gloomy and melancholy recesses, as being congenial to the wretched state of their minds. Josephus also states that these sepulchres were the haunts and lurking places of those desperate bands of robbers that infested Judea..." (Barnes, p.92).
    - b. The problem these demoniacs had was not some mere illness or insanity; rather they were being afflicted by the demons possessing them. These were exceedingly fierce and dangerous men. Their strength was not bound by the normal bodily restraints. When one is in a great state of agitation or terror, he is capable of lifting huge weights; so also are those who are not in their right minds; and so also in this case of demon-possessed men. "Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones" (Mark 5:3-5). Fetters were foot shackles.
    - c. Johnson: The dark tyrant-power by which he was held clothed him with superhuman strength, and made him scorn restraint, Matthew (8:28) says he was "exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way." He was the terror of the whole locality [J.F and B]. Chains had been plucked asunder. This is nowise incredible; for there are still some forms of mania in which the sufferer, notwithstanding the constant exhaustion of mind and body, gains a daily increase of muscular strength, and is able to break the strongest bonds and even chains.—Kitto.
    - d. The people of this area had overcome this violent person, and bound him is the best way they had, thus to offer some measure of safety to those who might pass by. There was enough morality about the population to refrain from killing him. Perhaps his being there in that sorrowful condition was meant to serve as a means of exalting the mighty power the Lord possessed.
  3. Verse 5: "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."
    - a. Matthew reports that there were two of these demoniacs; Mark and Luke describe only one man, the one which was the fiercer of the two. The fact that there were two of them made this location an even more dangerous place.
    - b. This man's extreme wretchedness (McGarvey) brought upon him the tragic condition Mark describes here—he spent day and night crying, roaming the tombs and the mountains, crying and afflicting himself with sharp stones. This dreadful state was not the man's fault, but was due to the presence of the demon. [We are soon to be told that there were other demons in the man].
    - c. Compare a similar case: "And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how
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long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour” (Matt. 17:14-18).

4. Verses 6-7: “But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.”
  - a. Other versions:
    - 1) ASV: “And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him; and crying out with a loud voice, he saith, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not.”
    - 2) NKJ: When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."
  - b. The demons used the word adjure in requesting the Lord not to torment them: "to cause to swear, to lay under the obligation of an oath" (*horkos*, Mark 5:7; Acts 19:13). (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)
  - c. The demon [s] in the man caused [?] him to rush up to Jesus and bow before him and cry out to him. Though the demons had caused them man to afflict himself and represented a real danger to anyone who passed the tombs, they knew they could not harm Christ.
  - d. “The demon-possessed seem always to have been able to recognize Christ. The man's worshipping Jesus is a reference to his falling down before him; and, in view of the man's behavior after he was healed, it must also have included (on the man's part, if not the demon's) an adoration of the Lord spiritually. The effect of his possession was that of splitting the personality, making it impossible, in each instance, to distinguish between what was done by the demon and what was done by the man” (Coffman).
  - e. In Matthew’s account, the demon asked the Lord whether he had come to torment him before the time. The demons, speaking through their host’s mouth, cried out to Jesus, asking if he had come to torment them prematurely; in Mark's account they also implored him not to torment them at all. The time of their torture was not to begin, according to their thoughts, until the day of Judgment.
  - f. We learn from 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 that sinful angels were cast down to Tartarus, and delivered "into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." This Tartarus is undoubtedly the same place to which the sinful rich man of Luke 16 was consigned and is being punished in the dreadful fire of that awful place. Thus, if these angels which sinned are identified with these demons, they are likewise even now being tormented, and will continue in that state subsequent to the "judgment of the great day."
  - g. These demons knew the identity of Jesus, and thus called him the "Son of God." "Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
    - 1) Acts 16:17: "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."
    - 2) James 2:19: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." [The present episode in the study above is one case where the demons were greatly afraid of what Christ was able to do to them].
  - h. Coffman: *Adjure thee by God, torment me not ...* This petition of the demon seems here to have been predicated upon God's prior promise that the demonic world would be vanquished at some time certain in the future, hence his invoking God's name in the request. "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" as in Matthew, carries the same implication .... A glimpse of God's ultimate plan of destroying evil, surfaces here in the demonic knowledge that such a destruction is in store for them and that an appointed time for it has already been determined. See Acts 17:31, also Zechariah 13:1,2. To adjure is to entreat solemnly, as if under oath, or the penalty of a curse. This is the language of the demon, not of the man; not a mere blasphemy, but a plausible argument. Nothing is more common than swearing by God, on the part of the ungodly, the infidel, and even the atheistic. Torment me not. In Matthew, “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?”, *i.e.*, we implore thee to deal with us as God himself does; not to precipitate our final doom, but to prolong the respite we now enjoy. —Alexander. [See Johnson].
5. Verses 8-10: “For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much

that he would not send them away out of the country.”

a. McGarvey:

- 1) *What is thy name?*—This question naturally followed the entreaty of the demon. The case was so unusual that Jesus chose to develop it to the multitude, before commanding the demon into silence. The answer, “My name is legion, for we are many,” at once brought the fact that not a single demon, but a multitude of them, had possession of the man.
- 2) A legion was a division of the Roman army, composed, when full, of six thousand men, but varying in number, like the brigades of a modern army, according to losses experienced in the service. The amazing fact is therefore developed in this case, that some thousands of evil spirits had crowded into this one unfortunate man [p.291].

b. The words came through the possessed man, but the demons made the request. These demons entreated the Lord not to send out of the country, i.e., into perdition. “Let us enter into some other body, a bird, beast, or even a reptile; do not send us into the place which is our eventual destiny!” They were aware of the awful punishment awaiting them— “Do not torment us now.”

c. McGarvey:

- 1) Luke has it, “ that he would not command them to go out into the deep” (abussos), the abyss. The abyss, rendered “the bottomless pit” in Revelation ix. 1, 2, 11, and in other places, was their proper abode.
- 2) To be expelled from a man, under ordinary circumstances, was to be driven back into this abode, and consequently, to be sent away “out of the country.” How they had managed to escape from the abyss and get into this man, is one of the unsolved mysteries of the spirit world. Knowing so little as we do of that world, we need not be surprised that we know not this. [*ibid.*].

B. Mark 5:11-20: Jesus is Asked to Leave the Area.

1. Verses 11-12: “Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.”

a. Coffman:

- 1) The destruction of the swine was necessary in order that Christ might thereby show what is the true intent and purpose of Satan. If people desire to know what Satan is and what he will do to them who permit his evil domination, let them behold the example of these swine. Look what Satan did to the family of Job in a single day; solely because he had God's permission to do it. From the gates of Paradise to the present hour, Satan has had one invariable purpose, that of the total destruction of man.
  - 2) The example of the swine is an instructive example of Satan's perpetual intent. But what about the property issue? Christ did not destroy the swine; the demons did. Christ's permission of such a thing is no more than God's permission of all natural disorders like earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, droughts, and tornadoes, etc., which kill millions of people (not swine alone); and yet all thoughtful persons find no difficulty reconciling this with God's love and justice.
2. Verses 14-15: “And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.”
    - a. "And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought *him* that he would depart out of their coasts" (Matt. 8:33-34),
    - b. The swine-keepers reported these events to the owners, who promptly asked Jesus to leave their land. The physically and spiritually sick of that area did not receive the healing hand of the Master. They thought more of their hogs than they did of the two demoniacs or their own benighted countrymen.
  3. Verses 16-17: “And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.”
    - a. There is a fine harmony between the statement that the demoniac was now clothed, and the statement in Luke that before the Lord cast out the demons, he was unclothed (8:27). The contrast of the man's former condition sets off to advantage the marvel of his present condition.
    - b. Perhaps we could draw this parallel: One who is not in his normal condition, can go around without clothes and be unashamed; what is the condition of one who apparently is in his normal condition of mind and yet is unclothed [for the most part]?

- c. The inhabitants requested that the Lord leave their land. There is no record that Christ ever returned to that place. Impulsive decisions can result in spiritual disasters. We might wonder what their future brought to them, having rejected the Lord.
  4. Verses 18-19: “And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”
    - a. The man who was formerly possessed by demons, asked the Lord to allow him to go with him. No doubt he could have served Christ well had he been admitted into the group of disciples.
    - b. But the Lord directed him to go home and be in company with his friends. He could be of greater service by telling his friends what Christ had done to him. This testimony could undoubtedly have had a great influence on them. And they could have spread that information to others. Also, this man most likely was a Gentile, and could not innocently fit into the Lord’s company of Jewish apostles; his presence would have had a strong negative effect upon the Jewish population.
    - c. The apostles were later told that they would go to various parts of Judaea and Samaria. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Their work would have included this present location.
  5. Verse 20: “And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”
    - a. The Lord does all things well! He picked the right man to become a preacher in his behalf, among his own friends and countrymen. We would like to think that when the gospel began to be spread in earnest, that there were a sizeable number who had been made ready to receive it where this man lived.
    - b. Acts 8:1, 4: “...And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles .... Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” Did these men also go to Decapolis?
    - c. Compare: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21). Did some of these preachers go to the area on the eastern side of the Jordan River?
- C. Mark 5:21-34: The Case of the Ruler’s Daughter and the Woman With an Issue of Blood.
1. Verses 21-22: “And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet.”
    - a. Other versions:
      - 1) NKJ: Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live."
      - 2) ASV: “And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat unto the other side, a great multitude was gathered unto him; and he was by the sea. And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he falleth at his feet, and beseecheth him much, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death: I pray thee, that thou come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live.”
    - b. Other accounts:
      - 1) Matthew: “While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples” (9:18-19).
      - 2) Luke: “And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his
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- house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him” (8:40-42).
- c. The Lord and his disciples had not tarried long on the south-eastern side of Galilee. When they returned to the other side, a large multitude was there, awaiting his arrival. These folks were patient, not to say insistent.
  - d. Mark's record appears to give the greatest detail. Matthew's account merely describes the man as a ruler, but the other accounts say he was a ruler of the synagogue. Matthew's record indicates that the daughter was already dead, while the others show that she was at the point of death. When Jesus arrived at his house, the daughter was indeed dead. Luke points out that the man's name was Jairus, that this was his only daughter, and that she was about twelve years of age.
2. Verse 23: “And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”
    - a. Jesus arose and started toward Jarius' house with him. When Jairus left home his daughter was then at the point of death; she lay dying. He could properly say that by now she was dead.
    - b. Resurrections in the Bible are found in 1 Kings 17, 2 Kings 4, 2 Kings 13:21, Luke 7, Matthew 9, John 11, Acts 20, and Acts 9.
    - c. Notice the strength of this man's faith in the Lord. He fully expected that his daughter would be dead, but he also entirely believed that Christ could raise her from the dead.
  3. Verses 24-26: “And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.”
    - a. Matthew 9:20-26: “And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.”
    - b. Luke 8:43-48: “And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”
    - c. The ailment of the lady was beyond the medicine of the day. There were physicians then and now who willingly do their work without hope of pay. There are others then and now who demand pay when they do their work. One fairly prominent doctor stated privately to another doctor, “I have a gold-mine, here!” When we call for an appointment seeking medical service, the first question is often about your ability to pay: “What insurance do you have?” We understand the need to finance their business. But covetousness and selfishness lie at the heart of most sins and crimes in our world.
    - d. As the Lord made his way in the midst of a crowd of people, the lady who suffered from an “issue of blood” for twelve years was near him. Her ailment would be the obvious problem. The physicians had not been able to bring improvement for the woman, but the malady grew worse.
    - e. Coffman:
      - 1) The gospels are so human, despite their divinity, that the interplay of human personality often reveals little touches or glimpses of pleasantries, or even humor. Mark gave here a rather brutal description of the experience this poor woman had received from many physicians. The doctors had taken all of the woman's money, prescribed many useless and ineffective remedies, none of which did any good; and all the while the patient only got worse!
      - 2) Notice however, that Luke, himself a good physician, gave the essential facts a little differently, not contradicting Mark in any way whatsoever, but with a different emphasis, saying “(she) had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any” (Luke 8:43). The inherent
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- implication in Luke is that perhaps the physicians had done the best they could, but the malady was beyond their power to heal.
- 3) He omitted the reference of Mark to the sufferings the poor woman had endured through the application of outlandish remedies, and the implication, though not clearly stated in Mark, that the physicians had made the woman worse.
  4. Verses 27-28: "When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole."
    - a. Having known of the supernatural powers the Lord exercised, and perhaps having seen them in action, the lady had great faith in his ability to help others.
    - b. With the throng of people pressing around Jesus, it appeared impossible to directly make a request for aid; she reasoned that if she could only touch his garment, she could be healed. Somehow, she was able to draw near to the Lord.
    - c. She reasoned within herself that if she could but touch the hem of his garment she could be healed. The hem or border of the garment literally means "a tassel of threads suspended from each of the four corners of the upper garment; it means the fringe worn on the border of the outer garment." (Boles, p.211).
    - d. Numbers 15:38: "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue."
    - e. "She was a heathen living at Caesarea Philippi, near the sources of the Jordan. Her house is shown in the city...and at the gates of which, on an elevated stone stands a brazen statue of a woman on her bended knee, with her hands stretched out before her like one entreating. Opposite to this is another statue of a man, erect, of the same materials, decently clad in a mantle, and stretching out his hand to the woman. This statue, they said, was a likeness of Jesus Christ" (Eusebius). [This ancient writer, who was not inspired, lived from about 260 to 340 A.D.].
  5. Verses 29-30: "And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?"
    - a. When she touched the Lord's garment, instantly her disease was healed; she fully knew the symptoms of the malady and could feel her return to health.
    - b. Mark and Luke tell that Jesus demanded to know who it was that had touched him. Peter and the others were incredulous at such a question, since there were so many people around them. But Jesus was not asking for information; he looked at the woman; she was very fearful and trembled at what she had done, and told the Lord all. Her faith had brought her to Christ, to touch him, and by that faith she was healed.
    - c. Jesus perceived that "virtue" had gone out of him. This word references the power to heal which the Lord possessed. This does not imply that this power was limited.
  6. Verses 31-32: "And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing."
    - a. Johnson:
      - 1) The following from Farrar's Life of Christ gives a bird's eye view of the whole incident and its meaning. Among the throng there was one who had not been attracted by curiosity to witness what would be done for the ruler of the synagogue. It was a woman who had suffered for twelve years from a distressing malady, which unfitted her for all of the relationships of life, and which was peculiarly afflicting, because, in the popular mind it was the direct result of sinful habits. In vain had she wasted her substance, and done fresh injury—to her health in the direct effort to procure relief from many different physicians, and now, as a last desperate resource, she would try what could be gained without money and without price from the great Physician.
      - 2) Perhaps, in her ignorance, it was because she no longer had any reward to offer; perhaps because she was ashamed in her feminine modesty to reveal the malady from which she was suffering; but from whatever cause, she determined, as it were, to steal from him, unknown, the blessing for which she longed. And so, with the strength and pertinacity of despair, she struggled in that dense throng until she was near enough to touch him; and then, perhaps all the more violently from her extreme nervousness, she grasped the white fringe of his robe. It was probably the tassel that she touched, and then feeling instantly that she had gained her desire and was healed, she shrank back unnoticed into the throng.
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3) Unnoticed by others but not Christ, who stopped and asked, "Who touched me? .... She perceiving that she erred in trying to filch a blessing that would have been graciously bestowed, came forward fearing and trembling, and, flinging herself at his feet, told him all the truth. All her feminine shame and fear were forgotten in her desire to atone for her fault. Doubtless she dreaded his anger, for the law expressly ordained that the touch of one afflicted as she was, caused ceremonial uncleanness until the evening. But his touch had cleansed her, not hers polluted him.

7. Verses 33-34: "But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

a. NKJ: But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

b. This he said, not to obtain information, for he had healed her, and must have known on whom the blessing was conferred; but he did it that the woman might herself make a confession of the whole matter, so that the power of her faith and the greatness of the miracle might be manifested to the praise of God. [See Barnes].

c. Coffman:

1) Jesus knew already who had touched, had already judged her faith, and had by his own volition healed her. We should not fall into her superstition by supposing the tassel did it! Nor should we fall into the guilty error of ascribing ignorance to Jesus as the reason for his asking the question. Was God asking for information when he inquired, "Adam, where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9), or when he asked of Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" (Genesis 4:9).

2) The reason for the question was resident in the fact that Jesus desired to bestow upon the woman a greater blessing than mere healing. He would not permit her, in a sense, to steal a blessing, but would provide it for her openly, and before all.

d. The woman saw instantly that nothing was hidden from the Master, and, fearful that he might be displeased with her actions, she fell in worship at his feet and poured out the entire story of her twelve years of wretched sorrow, spent resources, frustrated applications to physicians, and of her desperate resolve to find at last in Jesus the healing of her shame. It is a matter of the utmost discernment and tenderness with regard to human sensibilities that Jesus had not required such an outpouring of the inmost secrets of her life while her pitiful condition still sat upon her; but, at a moment after she was fully restored to health, the Lord permitted the confession then. How beautiful: how tender, how so like Christ, and unlike men, is the tender regard of the Lord for this woman. Her condition was one with overtones of great sorrow. As McMillan said, "Not only was there a depressing physical problem, but such a condition would also have prohibited her participation, in any full sense, in the religious rites of Judaism (Leviticus 15:25-30)." [See Coffman].

e. Following the Pentecost of Acts Two, when the gospel was presented to a massive audience in the city of Jerusalem, which was soon followed by the expanding spread of this gospel, we can easily suppose that this good woman would be attentive to that wonderful message of salvation!

1) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

2) Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

#### D. Mark 5:35-43: The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus.

1. Verse 35: "While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?"

a. Mark is now guided to return to the report of the ruler who sought the Lord's help: "And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live" (5:23).

b. At this very point of the healing of the unfortunate woman, news came that the ruler's daughter had died. Those bringing this report suggested that he no longer trouble the Master. They had given up hope for the little girl's life.

c. The worst dread of Jairus was now reported as a reality! The cold finality had stricken this good man in the death of his daughter.

2. Verse 36: "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe."
    - a. When this hard news was told, Jesus spoke to the ruler of the synagogue: Do not be fearful. Let faith fill your heart. In other words, your daughter shall live again!
    - b. If Jairus had taken the counsel of the messengers, he would have been bereft of the little girl, and she would have remained dead. Faith had brought him to the Lord, being fully persuaded that the Lord could heal his daughter; he was told to retain that faith.
    - c. Johnson: Belief is in one sense the only thing needful, because it is the one condition on which we can receive salvation and grace from the Lord. But what does the Lord here mean by "only believe?" Only believe what? Why, evidently, that "I have power after death, that My might reaches beyond the grave." If the man believed that his daughter was dead, and the Lord bid him "fear not," it must mean "fear not, but that I will give her to you again."
  3. Verses 37-38: "And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly"
    - a. When Jesus came to the house of Jairus, he allowed only Peter, James and John to enter with him. This was one of the several episodes in which these three disciples were chosen to be present. Peter filled an important role from Pentecost onward; James was to be first of the twelve to be martyred; John was to outlive all of the apostles.
    - b. Compare:
      - 1) Matthew 17:1-2: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."
      - 2) Matthew 26:36-38: "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."
    - c. NKJ: At the house, the people who were gathered there were making a tumult. And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."
  4. Verses 39-40: " And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying."
    - a. Matthew 9:23-25: "And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose."
    - b. Luke 8:52-56: "And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done."
    - c. After the episode of the woman, the great company arrived at Jairus' house; the news that the daughter was dead greeted their ears. The minstrels (flute-players, ASV) were present; these were the professional mourners that those who were affluent could hire. "Minstrels in a house of mourning would be incongruous according to western taste. But among the Jews it had been customary for ages to call to their service, on funeral occasions, certain women who were professional mourners, and who, by continual wailing and plaintive instrumental music, intensified the grief of the family and friends of the deceased" (McGarvey, p.85).
      - 1) Jeremiah 9:17: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning *women*, that they may come."
      - 2) Ezekiel 24:17: "Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men."
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- 3) Amos 5:16: "Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing *shall be* in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing."
- d. That the little girl was dead is evident from the fact that the professional mourners were already plying their trade. We do not call the undertaker until we know that our loved one is dead. All those present knew that the girl was dead, and were shocked when Jesus said she was only sleeping. They laughed him to scorn. Death is often figuratively described in the Bible as sleeping, a figure growing out of the appearance of the body in death. Some have mistakenly make a literal application of this figure of speech. To take this view forces one to the position that there is no consciousness after death, a view that is contradicted by the story of Lazarus and the rich man, and Paul's experiences he related in 2 Corinthians 12:1ff.
5. Verses 41-42: "And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment."
- a. "At the command of Jesus the crowd left the room and Jesus in the presence of Peter, James, and John and the father and mother 'took her by the hand; and the damsel arose.' In the presence of these five persons who could be witnesses to the miracle Jesus brought the damsel to life; the noisy crowd and minstrels were excluded from the presence of so sacred a scene. Jesus did not take her by the hand to raise her up, but accompanied his miracle with some outward act... 'The damsel arose' shows that Jesus did not raise her up; according to Mark and Luke, Jesus had said, 'Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise,' and 'Maiden, arise.' 'Her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately'; Jesus then commanded that food be given her" (Boles, p.213).
- b. McGarvey: "Just five persons were permitted to go with him into the room where the dead lay—the father and mother of the child, and the three chosen disciples. This was to guard against misconceptions and false reports. If the room had been crowded with an excited mass of men and women, only a few could have seen clearly what was done, or could have heard distinctly what was said; and, as a consequence, many incorrect stories might have gone abroad. But with only five besides himself, all could stand about the bed in full view of the damsel, all confusion was avoided, and a correct report from the lips of each one present was secured" (p.296).
- c. Jesus took the young girl by the hand, and she stood up and walked. That she was dead, was known by all. That she was not alive again, all could now know.
- d. Mark tells us that she was twelve years of age. She was old enough to bear witness on her own, in days following; she would not be able to give any report of anything she might have seen or heard during the time she was dead. Compare: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:2-4).
- e. When the child was seen alive and well, walking and eating, the derision of the mourners and the incredulity of the messengers were turned into astonishment. The astonishment was great in proportion to the previous incredulity, and to the novelty of the event itself; for this was the first person whom Jesus had raised from the dead. No doubt, at the final resurrection of all the dead, those most astonished will be those who in life have "laughed to scorn" the promise of Jesus that "all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth." [See McGarvey, p.297].
- f. They were astonished with great astonishment. Robertson: "Amazed [*exesteesan*]. We have had this word before in Matt 12:23 and Mark 2:12, which see. Here the word is repeated in the substantive in the associative instrumental case ... with a great ecstasy, especially on the part of the parents (Luke 8:56), and no wonder."
6. Verse 43: "And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat."
- a. "And he charged them much that no man should know this: and he commanded that something should be given her to eat" (ASV).
- b. "That is, no man except those of the multitude who were present. It was not to be expected that all, or even any of them, would be entirely silent in reference to the event, but this charge would have a restraining influence, and would prevent much of the popular excitement which might otherwise result. It is remarkable that we read not of a single instance in which Jesus was requested to raise the
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dead: and the fact may be accounted for in part by this charge of privacy, indicating that he did not wish to be importuned for this exercise of his power” (McGarvey, p.297).

- c. It was the raising of Lazarus, at a later date, that precipitated the crucifixion; and too great a confirmation and publication of this miracle could possibly have interfered with the divine schedule of the Lord's death. It was not the time to confront the religious hierarchy with a miracle they could not deny; nor was this the place. It would occur in Jerusalem, not in Capernaum, and at the time of the fourth Passover, not upon this occasion in the home of Jairus. In line with this was the instruction recorded in Mark 5:43. [Cf. Coffman].
  - d. This was fairly early in the Lord's public work; to avoid to some extent being thronged by multitudes of the curious and the demanding, who would interfere with teaching the people, he firmly charged them to keep this special case quiet. This young lady was the daughter of a prominent man, and every time she was seen by others would bring to their memory that she had been dead but was alive again.
  - e. Jesus knew that the little girl would be hungry; she had been seriously ill for some period of time. Food would be the first thing she would need. When Peter's mother-in-law was healed from their illness, she arose from the bed of affliction and began to serve those in the house (Matt, 8:14-15). This girl stood up, walked and ate.
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**Mark 6****A. Mark 6:1-6: The Lord Returns to Nazareth.**

1. Verse 1: “And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.”
    - a. “There is no real reason for identifying this visit to Nazareth with that recorded in Luke 4:16-31 at the beginning of the Galilean Ministry. He was rejected both times, but it is not incongruous that Jesus should give Nazareth a second chance. It was only natural for Jesus to visit his mother, brothers, and sisters again. Neither Mark nor Matthew mention Nazareth here by name, but it is plain that by *patrida* the region of Nazareth is meant. He had not lived in Bethlehem since his birth” (Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament, Electronic Database).
    - b. Matthew 13:54-58: “And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”
    - c. Johnson: From Capernaum the Savior went to “his own country,” to Nazareth, where he had been reared, not far from twenty miles to the southwest of Capernaum. Being there rejected a second time, he went into the villages “round about” in the vicinity of Nazareth, teaching. From one of these, what one is unknown, he sent the apostles out on their mission.
  2. Verse 2: “And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?”
    - a. McGarvey shows that the Lord went from “...from Capernaum, where the ruler's daughter had been healed. (See note on v. 21.) That he went ‘into his own country’ from Capernaum, shows that this visit to Nazareth is different from the one mentioned by Luke; for the latter occurred immediately after his departure from Judea into Galilee, and before he took up his abode in Capernaum. (See Luke iv. 14-16, 31.)
    - b. The ones who spoke are scornful toward the Lord. They had watched him grow up, possibly have had him do work for them in Joseph's carpenter shop, and likely had watched him and their children play together in their early years.
    - c. Mark's record shows this took place on the Sabbath. Having taught them in their synagogue, they were astonished at his wisdom and mighty works. They held him in contempt (cf. Luke 4:29); they were offended at his claims. They knew his father, mother, brothers, and sisters; they had known him from childhood, and until lately, he had not exhibited such powers.
    - d. “They were filled with envy that he should suddenly be lifted so high above themselves and above his humble origin. Their extreme familiarity with his humanity made them blind to the evidences of his divinity, while their unwillingness to admit his divinity made them incapable of answering their own question; and so from that day to this, the words and miracles of Jesus have proved an unsolved mystery to all who deny that he was literally the Son of God” (McGarvey, p.127).
  3. Verse 3: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.”
    - a. For a full discussion of whether these young people were the siblings of the Lord, that is, the offspring of Mary and Joseph, see the information at the end of this chapter.
    - b. Catholic theologians assert that Mary remained a perpetual virgin, that she never had any more children. That this is a faulty conclusion is shown by the plain statement of the text. Mary had four other sons and at least two daughters. Jesus was her *firstborn* (Matt. 1:25); her husband Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first son. "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS" (Matt. 1:25).
    - c. He and his disciples went to Nazareth, the town where he had been reared from childhood and had lived until he was thirty years of age. Whether his mother still lived in Nazareth is a matter of conjecture. Cook says: “The works wrought in the interval (since his first rejection, nine months before, April, A.D. 28), the effects of his personal influence, the progress made in spite of all opposition, might be expected to work upon the minds of the Nazarenes so far as to prepare them for
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listening to him, notwithstanding their former rejection. Natural sympathy would draw him thither. His sisters, probably married to Nazarenes, still dwelt there.” His disciples follow Him. The twelve apostles are meant. They now constantly attended his footsteps. The presence of the Lord and his companions at Nazareth would, no doubt, produce a strong effect. His fame had extended over all Israel. [see Johnson].

- d. “And they were offended in him. They took it ill that one brought up amongst them as a carpenter should set himself up as a prophet and a teacher; just as there are those in every age who are apt to take it amiss if they see any one spring from a trade into the doctor's chair. But these Nazarenes knew not that Jesus was the Son of God, who of his great love for man vouchsafed to take a low estate, that he might redeem us, and teach us humility by his example. And thus this humility and love of Christ, which ought to have excited their admiration and respect, was a stumbling-block to them, because they could not receive it, or believe that God was willing thus to humble himself. (Pulpit Commentary).
- e. Coffman has these thoughts:
  - 1) The true reason for Mark's reference to "carpenter," as distinguished from Matthew's "son of a carpenter," lies in the obvious fact that the villagers freely gossiped about the Lord, using both expressions; and Mark, writing in 65-70 A.D., at a time when Joseph was dead, and having omitted from his narrative the record of the virgin birth of our Lord, consciously selected the particular form of the villagers' gossip which could not have been construed as a denial of that essential tenet of Christianity.
  - 2) Matthew, on the other hand, writing at a much earlier date than Mark (44 A.D.), and having fully spelled out the particulars of the virgin birth, and having also as his objective the establishment of Jesus' right of kingship over Israel (a right that depended upon his legal sonship of Joseph) found it more natural to record the common gossip of Nazareth in its other form. There is no way to deny that the gossip existed in both forms as recorded by Mark and Matthew.
4. Verse 4: “But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”
  - a. The parable of Matthew 13:57 is general in nature. His power to work miracles was not limited by their unbelief but their unbelief made it fruitless for him to do so. They had already rejected the truth the miracles were designed to prove.
  - b. “A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, etc. One reason for this is that it is almost natural for persons to hold of less account than they ought, those with whom they have been brought up and have lived on familiar terms. Prophets are commonly least regarded, and often most envied, in their own country. However unworthy may be the feeling, the inhabitants of a district, or members of a community, do not like to see one of themselves put above them, more especially a junior over a senior, or a man of humble origin over a man well born. But it should be remembered that God abhors the envious, and will withhold the wonders of his grace from those who grudge his gifts to others. The men of Nazareth, when they saw Christ eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and working at his trade, like others, despised him when he claimed respect and reverence as a Prophet, and especially because his relations according to the flesh were of humble condition; and Joseph more particularly, whom they supposed to be his real father, for they could not imagine or believe that he was born of a virgin, and had God alone for his Father.” (Pulpit Commentary).
  - c. Coffman:
    - 1) “Satan has long sponsored the lie that unbelief is sophistication, intellectuality, erudition, and ‘smartness’! But in this original pilot-project for the rejection of the Christ, the truth is evident. Unbelief is not a courageous rejection of ancient dogma; it is not a brilliant conclusion of philosophical intelligence, and could lay claim to no particular power, culture, or worth of any kind that could have endowed their rejection with any semblance of justification or honesty.
    - 2) “Those who fancy that the rejection of Christ is the result of comparing all religions let them know that at Nazareth there was no study, no comparison, no investigation, precious little information, and a dreadful suspicion of intellectual mediocrity, if not indeed downright stupidity.
    - 3) “It is clear as the sun at perihelion that the blighting unbelief of Nazareth which blinded their eyes against the only Person who saved that town from oblivion—their unbelief was not intellectual superiority, nor moral courage, nor logic, nor philosophy, nor honest doubt. What was it? (1) It was unworthiness...(2) It was egotism...(3) It was mental laziness...(4) It was illogical...(5) It was moral cowardice...(6) It was the opiate of the people...(7) It was unbelief....The epic falsehood of the devil that unbelief is any form of intellectual activity is surely and certainly destroyed by a

careful analysis of this classic example of it at Nazareth!

- 4) "...Helvidius, the most ancient commentator on this passage, said that they [the brothers and sisters of Jesus] were all the children of Mary and Joseph, born after Jesus was born. It was only in ages after men had invented religious doctrines incompatible with the obvious truth of Matthew's words, that ingenious interpretations were devised to relieve the embarrassment. All such efforts fail in the light of the simple, obvious, and necessary meaning of Matthew 13:55,56 [*And in our text in Mark—bw*]. The truth was built into the passage by the Holy Spirit and is incapable of destruction. As the noted Adam Clarke so ably expressed it, 'Why should the children of another family be brought in here to share the reproach which it is evident was designed for Joseph the carpenter, Mary his wife, and their son Jesus?' Cousins or lodge brothers simply do not fit into the picture here at all, nor would their being pulled in have aided the reproach in any way. No, the reproach was directed at Jesus and his immediate family; those others named were his literal brothers and sisters...."
  - 5) "This rejection at Nazareth occurred on the second visit of Jesus, the first being described in Luke 4:16ff. This second rejection, recorded also by Mark (6:1-6), was final and determinative. Mark's words, 'He marveled at their unbelief,' show the shock and amazement which attended the conduct of the people of Nazareth. Christ himself was made to marvel at it.
  - 6) "Christ quoted this same proverb [Matt. 13:57-58] on his other visit to Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff). The human side of Christ's dual nature was foretold by Isaiah who noted that the Messiah would be 'despised and rejected of men.' (Isa.53:3). Nazareth provided the first in a series of rejections; but it should be remembered that this was precisely what was prophesied, the very unbelief of the people becoming, therefore, a further testimony of his divinity" (Coffman, pp.209-212).
5. Verse 5: "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them."
    - a. He did not do **many** miracles there due to their unbelief. Mark shows that he healed a few sick people. It would have been fruitless to perform many miracles there because of their extreme prejudice. They had already rejected Jesus as the Messiah.
    - b. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." "This implies that he performed *some* miracles. Mark tells what they were: 'He laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them.' (Mar. 6:5)...It would have been useless to the great purposes of his mission to have worked miracles there. We are not to suppose that his *power* was limited by the belief or unbelief or men; but they were so *prejudiced*, so set against him, that they were not in a condition to *judge of evidence* and be convinced. They would have charged it to derangement, or sorcery, or the agency of the devil....He gave *sufficient* proof of his mission, and left them in their chosen unbelief without excuse" (Barnes, p.150).
  6. Verse 6: "And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching."
    - a. The condition of mind of these people caused amazement in the Lord. He departed from that little city, and never returned [as far as we know]. This was their second and last opportunity. "Opportunities unused are often forever lost."
    - b. Compare: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:9).
      - 1) Paul describes his opportunities as "a great door and effectual." We often see problems very clearly, but fail to perceive the opportunities. We often lack the wisdom to see opportunity, or the courage to seize an opportunity, or do not have the knowledge, zeal, faith, or skill to use our opportunities properly.
      - 2) The Bible speaks strongly about opportunities:
        - a) Acts 14:27: "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."
        - b) Colossians 4:2-3: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."
        - c) 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you."
        - d) Revelation 3:7: "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

- e) 2 Corinthians 2:12-13: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia."
- 3) Each opportunity seems also to be accompanied with difficulties or dangers. At Ephesus, Paul was given a great and effectual door of opportunity, but there were many enemies.
  - a) A reading of Acts 19:8-41 will give a picture of the dangers the apostle saw. So grievous were those difficulties that he described the trouble as fighting with beasts (1 Cor. 15:32).
  - b) However, there was great success! "And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:17-20).

#### B. Mark 6:7-13: The Apostles Are Sent Out on the Limited Commission.

1. Verse 7: "And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits."
  - a. Matthew's account: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. 10:5-15).
    - 1) The apostles were sent only to the Jewish people; they were to announce that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, a fact that the descendants of Abraham could appreciate. This truth would be of little interest to the Gentiles or the Samaritans. It was God's plan that the gospel first be given to the Jewish people (cf. Rom. 1:16-17).
    - 2) Compare: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever: (Dan. 2:44; cf. Isa. 2:2-4).
    - 3) Luke 21:30-31: "When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh **at hand**." The term here is *eggus*: near, nigh, here (of time).
    - 4) The point in the message was to announce the nearness of the time for God's kingdom to appear. The statement could not be construed to refer to a time 2,000 years in the future. Those hearing the promise of Matthew 3:2, 4:17, and 10:7 would naturally and properly conclude that the kingdom of Daniel 2:44 was to appear in the very near future. Compare: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:9).
  - b. Luke's account: "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where" (Luke 9:1-6).
  - c. This commission is commonly called "the limited commission." They were limited to carrying the message only to the Jews. They were specifically barred from going to the Gentiles or Samaritans. When the Great Commission was given, these other groups would be included, for the gospel was for everyone.
    - 1) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

- 2) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
  - 3) Luke 24:47-49: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
  - 4) Colossians 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."
- d. He empowered them to perform a wide range of miraculous feats to confirm the truth of their message. They had not been charged for this power, and they were to dispense freely the benefits of this power. They were forbidden to receive any monetary compensation for these miraculous powers.
- 1) These apostles were common people; they were not learned men, or men with any great or special talents; they were not men of wealth with which to bribe men to accept their message; they were not powerful men so as to compel men to believe. But they were just average men, the kind that make the best witnesses in a court of law; men of good sense and character; men who were entirely convinced that their message was truth. They were fully prepared to suffer opposition, deprivation and shame in behalf of their message.
  - 2) These facts, coupled with the exercise of supernatural powers, were sufficient to convince any fair-minded person that their message was truly from God. Today, we have their confirmed word, accompanied with a clear record of their willingness to suffer for the truth they preached; this is more than enough to convince fair-minded people today of the reliability of their message.
  - 3) This was the first bestowal of miraculous power on the apostles. "The Lord has never asked people to believe his word which was meant for their salvation in the absence of sufficient evidence that it was from on high. Cf. Mark 16:19,20. But after the kingdom of Christ was set up and the message confirmed, there was no further need for the exercise of miraculous power by man. Cf. I Cor. 13:8; Eph. 4:11-14; Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-9" (ALC, 1959, p.121).
  - 4) He empowered them to perform a wide range of miraculous feats to confirm the truth of their message. They had not been charged for this power, and they were to dispense freely the benefits of this power.
- e. Christ sent them out in pairs, which was logical and wise. One man alone might become discouraged or fearful; one could encourage and support the other. Mark is the only writer on this operation to mention their going out two-by-two; Luke's account includes this point in reporting the sending out of the seventy other disciples on another occasion (Luke 10:1).
2. Verses 8-9: " And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats."
- a. Matthew offers more details: They were forbidden to take gold, silver or brass along for money. Brass coins were the lesser pieces of money; our pennies are made of copper; the greater coins were made of more expensive metal, just as in more modern times.
  - b. "The prohibition is against procuring the articles mentioned before starting, and at their own expense. They were to thus procure neither money to pay expenses; nor script (provision bag) which would enable them to carry cold provision..." (McGarvey, p.89).
  - c. These prohibitions made it necessary for them to place their trust in God to provide their necessities. This mission was a proving and training experience for their later and greater mission of taking the gospel to the entire race. Without learning to trust God, they could not perform their mission. And neither can we!
  - d. They were not to take an extra coat, extra shoes (sandals), or a second staff. (Note: a stave is a staff; cf. Matt. 26:47). Mark's account tells them to take a staff; Luke's appears to tell them to take no staff at all; Matthew's account resolves the "problem" by saying they were not to take an extra staff.
  - e. "The workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt. 10:10). God has always required his people to support his special servants as they go about their duties. Provisions for the support of the Levitical priests were made; provisions for the support of the apostles and gospel preachers, and certain elders (I Tim. 5:17) have been made (cf. I Cor. 9:7; Luke 10:7; Gal. 6:6; John 13:20; I Thess. 4:8; 5:12). God would see to it that the apostles would be provided for by means of the "worthy" Jews to be found in many of the cities.
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3. Verse 10: "And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place."
    - a. We are not told how they were to find lodging, but it must have been the way Paul and his company did. They likely entered a synagogue on the Sabbath. Their presence would naturally lead to discussions with the local Jews who were there.
    - b. They would have opportunity to give the message: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Some would take interest in this announcement, and the apostles would be given hospitality. As long as they remained in that city, they had a place to live.
    - c. Clearly, they would seek out individuals and groups in that city to whom they could present their message. There would be certain ones in that place who were ill, possessed by demons, and with other ailments. The apostles were empowered to tend to those needs with the supernatural power the Lord had given them. Their message would therewith be confirmed.
  4. Verse 11: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city."
    - a. In cases where the messengers were not received or had their message rejected, they were told to leave that place, and shake the dust from their feet as a means of marking them as unworthy.
    - b. If they were directed to a family that turned out to be less than claimed, who did not wish to show them hospitality, they were to shake off the dust of that house, or of that city if no one in the city was worthy, and go on to another house or city. It is twice recorded that Paul did this very thing:
      - 1) Acts 13:51: "But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium."
      - 2) Acts 18:6: "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."
    - c. "It has been said that the Jews considered their land so peculiarly holy that when they returned home from any heathen country they stopped at the borders, and shook or wiped the dust from their feet, so that the holy land might not be polluted by it. The Lord's injunction here...shows that the Jews who rejected the Lord's message...were no longer holy, but were on the level with the heathen..." (ALC, 1959, p.122).
    - d. "By this symbolical action they vividly shook themselves from all connection with such, and all responsibility for the guilt of rejecting them and their message. Such symbolical actions were common in ancient times, even among others than the Jews. More tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen. 13:13; chaps. 18, 19. The cities that stood out in the history of the world, as most conspicuous for their infamy, were yet less guilty (as sinning less against light and knowledge) than those who rejected the messengers of the King" (Johnson).
    - e. Men are judged according to their opportunities. The wicked people of Sodom, though they were exceedingly evil, did not have the opportunity those Jews under consideration had; hence, the judgment on the Sodomites would be more tolerable (more easily borne) than that judgment to be experienced by these Jews. "Though the sin of these Jews in rejecting the apostles was not of so gross a character as the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, it was more inexcusable on account of their superior opportunities" (McGarvey, p.90).
      - 1) Matthew 11:20-24: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."
      - 2) Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
      - 3) James 3:1: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."
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- f. The way one treats a gospel preacher or an elder who is performing his work for the Lord, is the way that person treats Christ.
- 1) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
  - 2) John 13:20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."
5. Verses 12-13: "And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."
- a. McGarvey:
    - 1) Omitting the long speech of instruction and prophecy which Jesus at this time addressed to the twelve (Matt. x. 16-42), Mark states what Matthew omits—the manner in which they executed their confirmation. They "preached that men should repent." This single duty, enforced by the solemn fact that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. x. 7), constituted the substance of their earnest and simple appeal to their Jewish brethren.
    - 2) The anointing of the sick with oil was not expected to contribute to the cure; for, apart from its inadequacy as a remedy, it could not, in the nature of the case, contribute to a miraculous cure. But the Jews were in the habit of anointing their hair and their faces every day, and especially when they went out among their fellows. This anointing was omitted when they were sick, and when they fasted. (See 2 Sam. xii. 20; Matt vi. 16, 17.)
    - 3) When an apostle stood over a sick man to heal him by a touch and a word, he was about to send him out of his sick chamber; and just before the word was spoken the oil was applied. It meant no more than that the sick man was from that moment to be confined to his chamber no longer. (Comp. Jas. 5:14.) This practice is the breadth of the heavens apart from the Romish practice of extreme unction, which is a pretended imitation of it. This was the anointing of a man who was about to be cured; that, of a man who was given up to die: this was preparatory to going forth once more into the enjoyments of life; that, to the passage of the departing soul through the fires of purgatory. A fair specimen, this, of the manner in which the Scriptures are wrested by the Mother or harlots.
  - b. The apostles fulfilled their job. See Johnson:
    - 1) "The brief, unambitious narrative of the first apostolic tour of the apostles. Going out from the Lord's presence, or the place where he delivered these instructions, they proceeded to fulfill them, not at random or confusedly, but on a systematic method, going about or through the country and among the villages, or from town to town. Men should repent. The same message which had been already brought by John the Baptist and by Christ himself ....
    - 2) "They cast out many devils. In this verse we have the other half of the evangelist's report of the first apostolic tour. Anointed with oil. To suppose that the oil was used medicinally, is contrary to the whole tenor of the narratives. It was 'the vehicle of healing power committed to them' an external sign such as our Lord sometimes used to connect himself and the person cured. —Schaff.
    - 3) "The apostles anointed a sick man when about to heal him with a word and send him forth. It meant that the patient was able to go out among his fellow-men."
- C. Mark 6:14-28: The Death of John the Baptizer Revisited.
1. Verse 14: "And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him."
    - a. Some background to this story:
      - 1) "The Herod of this lesson was known as Herod Antipas. He was the son of Herod the great and Malthace, a Samaritan, which means that he was not a Jew by blood. Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee (Lk. 3:1) and Peraea. The name of this Herod is mentioned in the New Testament more often than any other. Antipas was the Herod which Jesus referred to as "that fox" (Luke 13:32), because of his skulking treachery. This Herod was incestuously married to his niece, the former wife of his half-brother Herod Philip. Her father was Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great, thus making her the grand-daughter of that wicked king. Heriodas deserted Philip for Antipas, and the latter, in turn, divorced his wife to marry Herodias. This evil, permeating influence of Herod Antipas was characterized by Jesus as 'the leaven of Herod' (Mark 8:15.) He was deposed as tetrarch by the emperor Caligula in A.D. 39" (ALC, 1959, pp.146f).
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- 2) “John the Baptist was one of the most unique characters of the New Testament. His was a strange combination of gentleness and fire. The same man who could and did conduct himself with utmost self-effacement in the presence of Jesus, could stand before the multitude and shout, ‘Ye offspring of vipers...’ (Luke 3:7-9)...He leveled his attack upon the tetrarch, and denounced Herod for living with Herodias....There were three basic reasons why the marriage of Antipas and Herodias was unlawful, and John therefore was on solid ground when he warned the tetrarch of his sin. The reasons were: (1) Herod himself was legally married to another woman; (2) Herodias was the legal wife of Philip; and (3) the law of Moses forbade the marriage of people who were close of kin. See Lev. 18:6-18. Thus the marriage of Antipas and Herodias was both adulterous and incestuous, and John therefore had correctly said, ‘It is not lawful for thee to have her’” (ALC, 1959, p.147).
  - 3) “The forsaken wife of Antipas was a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia who resented the insult to his family and throne, and marched upon Herod Antipas shortly after this murder of John the Baptist, and routed him with great slaughter” (Boles, Matthew, p.309).
  - b. The Galilean ministry of Christ was at its height; John had been dead for some time. Antipas heard of the great miracles of Jesus and thought, as did some Jews, that this was John raised from the dead (cf. Luke 9:7-9; Matt. 16:14). “So tragic an end as had befallen John, in early manhood and in the midst of so brilliant a career, was well-calculated to startle the imagination, and the guilty conscience of Herod was ready to second any suggestions which might spring from the superstition of the people. His conception was not, as some have supposed, that John’s spirit, according to the doctrine of transmigration of souls, had been born again in the person of Jesus; for John had but recently died, and Jesus was nearly as old as he; but it was the conception, as expressed in the text, that Jesus was John risen from the dead. There was a prevalent idea among the ancients that departed spirits were endowed with superhuman powers; hence Herod’s conclusion that the supposed resurrection of John would account for the mighty works in question” (McGarvey, p.128).
  - c. John worked no miracle (John 10:41), but Herod accepted the common superstition noted above, and thus concluded that Jesus must be John whom he had killed. He had been made a coward by a guilty conscience.
  2. Verses 15-16: “Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.”
    - a. Elijah had disappeared from the earth in the ancient days; his body was not found. “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven....And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not” (2 Kings 2:11, 17). He later appeared with Moses and Jesus in the Transfiguration, in his real identity, thus had not been annihilated (Matt. 17).
    - b. Doubtless there was much wondering and speculation about the fate of Elijah, thus some suggested to Herod that Jesus was really the reincarnation of Elijah. Others alleged Jesus might be one of the prophets of old, or perhaps was like one of those Old Testament prophets. They were just as wrong as was Herod.
    - c. Herod had not wanted to arrest or behead John the Immerser. He should have gone by what he knew was right. He openly admitted that he had this great man executed.
  3. Verses 17-18: “For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.”
    - a. Mark tells us that the king had arrested John and kept him bound in prison. To be incarcerated was bad enough, but he even had John bound. Paul and Silas were bound during their confinement in prison at Philippi (Acts 16).
    - b. Herod had arrested John because of the hatred of Herodias. We are not told how much time had elapsed between John’s murder and the time of the present events of Matthew 14.
      - 1) “Herod had put John in prison where he remained probably a year. John was imprisoned soon after Jesus began his public ministry; John’s ministry and Jesus’ ministry overlapped about six months” (Boles, p.310). Josephus says the imprisonment was in the castle Macherus, located a few miles east of the Dead Sea. Matthew had previously alluded to John’s imprisonment (4:12).
      - 2) John was impartial and fearless in exposing sin: he rebuked the common people, the religious leaders, and even the king. No man is worthy of being called a gospel preacher who will condemn sin only in safe settings or before those who can do him no harm, and wink at sin on the part of
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- those in high places. Herod claimed to be a believer in the law of Moses; the law forbade the marital situation he was in; but he would not repent of his evil. When John plainly said, "It is not lawful for you to have her," the king bound him and threw him into prison, "for Herodias' sake."
- c. Antipas was minded to kill John; the fear of a popular uprising prevented it. The purpose was already in his heart, even though he respected John highly.
    - 1) Mark 6:19-20: "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."
    - 2) "He was restrained not only by his own respect for John, but by fear of a violent insurrection of the people—a result which would have occurred but for the refusal of Jesus to head the movement" (McGarvey, p.129).
    - 3) The people are said to have been outraged over the conduct of Herod in his marital affairs. Public opinion is powerful; the Jewish leaders were anxious to get it turned against Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:20).
  - d. Both Herod and Herodias knew John told them the truth, but when truth condemns the soul, it often arouses resentment, anger and hatred for him who speaks the truth. Paul encountered this on many occasions, even from some who were Christians (Gal. 4:16). When men are unwilling to accept the truth as pertaining to the way they live or in the tenets they believe and practice, the gospel proclaimer is in for trouble!
4. Verses 19-20: "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."
    - a. Other versions:
      - 1) ASV: "And Herodias set herself against him, and desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly."
      - 2) NKJ: "Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."
    - b. As our Lord said, when speaking of him, John was no reed shaken with the wind; he was a prophet and more than a prophet, and spoke with a prophet's fearlessness. Luke tells us that John also reprov'd all the evils which Herod had done (Luke 3:9). *Herodias laid snares*. Naturally his boldness in rebuking Herod would arouse her anger and resentment, which was all the keener because she perceived that John had a great influence on Herod, who feared John. [Herod] kept him. Preserved him from Herodias' vengeance, at least for a time.
      - 1) Herod was awed by John's virtue. He feared and esteemed him, and did many things to please the Precursor, but not the one thing against which John's rebukes were chiefly directed. Herod would not put away Herodias.
      - 2) Herod had his better moments, but he had not the courage to conquer his vices and to amend. It was easier to listen than to yield, and the many things evidently did not cost him so much as the one necessary sacrifice would have done. They were matters of less moment than his sinful marriage. In like manner, Felix coming with Drusilla (a daughter of Herodias), his wife who was a Jew, sent for Paul, and heard of him the faith that is in Christ Jesus (Acts 24:24). [See Johnson].
  5. Verses 21-22: "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee."
    - a. ASV: "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and them that sat at meat with him; and the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee."
    - b. Josephus says that Herodias was a woman full of ambition and envy, having a mighty influence on Herod, and able to persuade him to do things he was not at all inclined to do (*Antiquities*, 18,7,1, p.388). She bided her time in the case of John until the occasion of the present narrative.
    - c. Birthdays were highly esteemed and celebrated by many in the ancient world. On Herod's birthday,
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a feast was given in his honor in which his lords, high captains, and chief men of Galilee participated (Mark 6:21). The world's great men celebrate their birthdays, but our King has demanded that we remember his death!

- 1) At this feast, the daughter of Herodias danced before the revelers; Herod was greatly pleased. It is likely that her dance was highly suggestive or even vulgar, in keeping with common practices of the time. Secular records give her name as Salome.
  - 2) "Salome lived in the 1st century AD and was the daughter of Herodias and of Herod, a son of Herod the Great. Herodias herself was a granddaughter of Herod the Great and sister of Herod Agrippa I. Salome's dancing at the birthday banquet of her stepfather, Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, so pleased the tetrarch that it induced him to offer her whatever she wished, up to half his domain. At the behest of Herodias, who desired the death of John the Baptist because he had denounced her marriage to her first husband's half brother, Salome demanded John's head. It was brought to her. Salome was later married to her father's half-brother, Herod Philip the Tetrarch, ruler of areas in what is now Syria, and then to Aristobulus, ruler of Lesser Armenia. The story of Salome (whose name does not appear in the New Testament) and of the death of John the Baptist is related in both Matthew 14:6-11 and Mark 6:21-28. Salome is also mentioned in the Jewish Antiquities of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus" (Encarta).
6. Verses 23-24: "And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist."
- a. "Mother does not always know best!" So impressed was Herod over her dancing, he rashly (he was probably under the influence of strong drink at the time) promised her anything, unto half his kingdom. Mark tells us that she consulted with her mother and then made request for John's head on a charger.
  - b. A charger is a platter, a deep plate or basin; the Greek word signifies a "flat board" used for any purpose, such as a writing table; it may mean a large dish in which meat or some other food is served (Boles, p.312). This foolish young girl could have had many valuable things but listened to her hate-filled mother. Secular records indicate that Salome herself was later beheaded.
  - c. Coffman recorded some interesting facts about the women in this passage:
    - 1) HERODIAS: This woman was a daughter of Herod I's son, Aristobulus. She first married her uncle Philip who was living as a private citizen in Rome, and by him she had Salome. When Herod Antipas was visiting in Rome, she left Philip and married his brother Herod Antipas.[21] As Barclay noted: "Herodias was the daughter of her husband's brother and therefore his niece; and she was the wife of his brother and therefore his sister-in-law." [22] She was a woman of ruthless ambition, no moral restraint, utter selfishness, and implacable hatred of anyone who dared to question her conduct. When John the Baptist denounced her marriage, she never rested until she had his head on a platter. The picture of her that emerges in the sacred text is one of lust, cruelty, and uninhibited evil.
    - 2) SALOME: Herod the Great had five wives, two of them named Mariamne, and two sons named Philip, one of whom was born of Cleopatra of Jerusalem and became a tetrarch. This Philip married Salome, who as the daughter of Herodias was his niece and his grand-niece at the same time. As Barclay said, "Seldom in history can there have been such a series of matrimonial entanglements as existed in the Herod family." [23]
    - 3) No less than ten members of the Herodian dynasty are mentioned in the New Testament, their names recurring in it like a sour note in a symphony. See below for a list of these. One can have little regard for the opinions of some who question the accuracy of Mark on the premise that a royal princess would not have performed such a dance as that attributed to Salome. Such opinions are founded in ignorance of the typical conduct of the Herods.
    - 4) As Barclay wrote: The daughter of Herodias danced ... the fact that she did so at all is an incredible thing. Solo dances in that society were disgusting and licentious pantomimes ... such dances being the art of professional prostitutes. That she did so dance is a grim commentary on the character of Salome, and of the mother who allowed and encouraged her to do it.[24]
7. Verse 25: "And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her."
- a. Other versions:

- 1) ASV: "And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou forthwith give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist."
- 2) NKJ: Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."
- b. We may never have to look on a head that has been recently severed from the body of a living person. How gruesome and horrifying! A side note from the French Revolution: Two men discussed whether a severed head might retain its brain functions immediately after being severed. One of these men was soon to face this fate. He told his friend to watch his face when he was slain, and if he still had his faculties, he would wink his right eye. He did so. When the apostle James was slain by the sword, clearly he was beheaded (Acts 12). Uninspired reports claim that Paul was also beheaded.
- c. *Guillotine*, decapitating machine, named after a French physician, Joseph Ignace Guillotin, who proposed its use in 1789. It consists of two upright posts, grooved on the inside and connected at the top by a crossbeam. A sharp, oblique blade, placed between the grooves, is held at the top of the machine by a rope. On release of the rope, the blade drops onto the neck of the victim strapped to a board at the base of the machine. [Encarta © 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved]. The awfulness of this machine in action would shock all but the wicked! However, we are told by some that this means of execution is the quickest and most painless of all such tools.
- d. Because of his oath [the promise he had made to Salome], he would not refuse this horrific request. He thought that his promise was more important than the life of a wonderful servant of the Almighty! Along with Judas, Herod Antipas would live on in infamy.
8. Verses 26-27: "And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison."
  - a. Although the executioner did the dreadful execution, it was Herod who ordered it. It was Salome who requested it. It was Herodias who promulgated it. No wonder that the conscience of Herod smote him!
  - b. Johnson:
    - 1) Immediately with haste. Herodias feared delay, lest she should ultimately meet with a refusal. When Herod was sober, he might again refuse to accede to the request of Salome.
    - 2) *Struck sad*. Mark's graphic expression for denoting Herod's consternation. The original Greek word indicates great sorrow and grief. Herod feared to keep his rash oath, yet had not the manliness to break it, by refusing to commit a crime. To keep a rash oath is a sin against the Second Commandment, Herod, by keeping his oath, broke the fifth Commandment also.
    - 3) *An executioner*, literally a spiculator which signifies either (1) a scout, (2) a special adjutant, (3) a soldier of the guard, The spiculators formed a special division of the legion, and each emperor had a body of them to guard his person and execute his orders. They were often employed as instruments to execute the emperor's private vengeance. As Herod was at war with Aretas, these spiculators would be in attendance.
9. Verses 28-29: "And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb."
  - a. ASV: "And brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard thereof, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb."
  - b. Johnson:
    - 1) The crime is now accomplished. Jerome says that Herodias glutted her vengeance by piercing the saint's tongue with needles (as Fulvia did to her enemy Cicero) . Nicephorus states that Salome met with a terrible death as a punishment for her share in the sacrilegious crime. When crossing the ice it broke under her, and the fragments drifting together severed her head from her body.
    - 2) His disciples . . . took his body. Jerome tells us they buried their master in Sebaste (Samaria). Herod allowed them to perform this act of respect. They buried the headless corpse only. Matthew adds that these disciples "came and told Jesus." Possibly some of John's disciples now attached themselves to Christ, while others in outlying districts entered the Church later, through the ministry of the Apostles (see Acts 19:1-7).
    - 3) In this narrative four details are given by Mark alone:
      - a) Herodias was John the Baptist's enemy rather than Herod,

- b) Herod “kept him” for a time at least from her vengeance.
- c) Salome consulted her mother regarding the request.
- d) Herod sent a special executioner to behead John.” (Cecilia)

D. Mark 6:30-44: The Feeding of the Five Thousand.

1. Verses 30-31: “And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.”
  - a. The twelve apostles returned to the Lord when they completed the limited commission on which Jesus had sent them. They reported to him all the things that they had done and taught on this important teaching tour. No detail are reported, but they had followed the Lord’s instructions; they were thus faithful in their work.
  - b. These men, and the Lord himself, were tired from their various activities. Christ invited them to go with him into some unoccupied place so they could rest. At the present time, they had not been able even to eat, because of the press of the multitudes. Another factor was that Herod had taken notice of Jesus. On the eastern side of the Lake of Galilee, he and the apostles would be out of his authority.
  - c. “Here, and here alone between the beginning of the Galilean ministry and the week of the Passion, we have four parallel reports. John comes into parallelism with the synoptists at this crossing of the lake, and continues parallel through the record of the return, when Jesus walks on the water, though here we lose our four-fold record by the silence of Luke. John contributes a valuable note of time in the remark that the passover was at hand. The death of the Baptist occurred, therefore, in the spring, and there remained just a year of the ministry of Jesus after the death of the forerunner” (Johnson).
2. Verses 32-33: “And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.”
  - a. “Such was the popularity of the Lord, that when the multitudes saw him and his disciples get into a boat to cross over to the other side, they simply ran around the northern extremity of the lake and come together at Bethsaida Julius on the northeastern shore, the same being an uninhabited area along the shore, a beautiful grassy slope beneath a bold headland overlooking the scene” (Coffman).
  - b. The multitude perceived where the Lord was going, in crossing the sea. They were able to reach the other side before the ship got there.



3. Verse 34: “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.”
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 14:14: “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”
    - 2) Luke 9:11: “And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.”

- 3) John 6:3-5: “And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”
  - b. The Lord and his group of apostles were still unable to get any rest and quiet. Reaching the north-eastern shore of the lake, the crowd was already there. He was moved to compassion toward this large gathering; they appeared to be a flock of sheep which was bereft of a shepherd to provide for them, to guide and protect them.
  - c. What was the Lord to do? He began to teach them many things. Teaching is the source of salvation and the solution of many problems. “No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me” (dJohn 6:44-45, ASV).
  - d. McGarvey: Healing and teaching filled up the day until late in the afternoon, and the manner in which these labors are treated by the four evangelists, illustrates the striking variety of their methods as historians. Matthew says that Jesus “healed their sick” but he says nothing of teaching (Matt. xiv. 14); Mark says, “he began to teach them many things,” but he says nothing of the healing; Luke mentions both (Luke ix. 11); while John says nothing of either (John vi. 3-5)” [p.303].
  - e. Johnson:
    - 1) They succeeded in getting away, but not unobserved, Luke says they went to Bethsaida; John, that Jesus “went up into the mountain;” Matthew and Mark, merely that the place was desert.—i.e. uninhabited. The fact seems to be that they went to Bethsaida, which stood at the extreme north of the lake, where the Jordan enters it (see chap, 8 :22), and thence proceeded a little to the south-east, to some convenient point in the hills that rise from the shore of the lake, where they might hope to be alone.
    - 2) It may be that at Bethsaida itself they did not touch at all, and that Luke’s mention of it is meant only for a general designation of the locality. The distance from Capernaum to the vicinity of Bethsaida would not be more than six or eight miles, and could be traversed on foot about as quickly as by boat; if the boat was in no haste, more quickly. In the journey for rest there would be no haste, and the pursuing crowd arrived first. The people were out of all cities—i.e. from many towns in that region, especially from those that must be passed on the way.
    - 3) The crowd grew in going, John speaks of Jesus already seated in the mountain, lifting up his eyes and seeing the crowd approaching, which may be a reminiscence of the fact that they came, not all at once, but kept streaming in. John also connects the mention of the coming throng with the fact that the passover was at hand. It may be that some part of the multitude was made up of pilgrims to Jerusalem, who turned aside to see the Prophet of Galilee.
  4. Verses 35-36: “And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.”
    - a. The day was drawing toward its end. The people were no doubt tired and hungry, and were some distance from the nearest source of food. John’s account says that Philip was the spokesman for the group who asked the Lord to send the multitude away to buy food somewhere.
    - b. See Johnson on John’s account:
      - 1) This statement gives us a note of time and shows that the country was green with the freshness of spring. It was not far from April 1st, and the trees were in full leaf. The proximity of the greatest of the festivals that were celebrated at Jerusalem (the passover, which began that year A. D. 29, on April 17th), would give occasion for a large increase of visitors around Galilee, as the crowds gathered for the journey. The gathering at such a time of a crowd of 5,000 men, attracted by so famous a teacher, is not incredible. The mention of the passover is an aid to the chronology of the Lord’s ministry.
      - 2) The feast named in John 5:1 could hardly be that of Purim, for then he would not have left Jerusalem before the passover, it following only about a month later. If that feast was a passover, we have now reached a period of two years from the passover at which he cleansed the temple (2: 18). It is clear that the feast, now so near at hand, was not attended by the Savior, the only one that he seems to have omitted during his ministry. Perhaps the plots to kill him when last in Jerusalem explain his absence.
  5. Verses 37-38: “He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we
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go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.”

- a. Instead of sending the crowd away to find food, the Lord told the apostles to provide them food. But Philip, made the obvious response: “Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?” (John 6:7-9).
  - b. What about the two hundred pennyworth?
    - 1) “Two hundred shillings ... The money problem surfaced at once. A shilling was the equivalent of a day's wage in that economy; and the equivalent value in our society with a minimum hourly wage of \$5.00, making a day's wage \$40.00, would be \$8,000, a sum the apostles considered utterly beyond them” (Coffman).
    - 2) Pulpit Commentary: The penny, or "denarius," was the chief Roman silver coin, worth about eight-pence halfpenny. Upon the breaking up of the Roman empire, the states which arose upon its ruins imitated the coinage of the old imperial mints, and in general called their principal silver coin the "denarius." Thus the denarius found its way into this country through the Anglo-Saxons, and it was for a long period the only coin. Hence the introduction of the word into the Authorized Version. Two hundred pennyworth would be of the value of nearly seven pounds. But considering the constant fluctuation in the relation between money and the commodities purchased by money, it is in vain to require what number of loaves the same two hundred denarii would purchase at that time, although it was evidently the representation of a large supply of bread.
  - c. Jesus was showing the apostles how great the problem was: there was not enough food present that was sufficient to feed such a large number of people. It was obvious that five loaves of bread and two fish would not begin to feed so large of group.
6. Verses 39-40: “And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.”
- a. As always, deity does things in an orderly manner. Jesus told the apostles to arrange the people to sit down on the green grass, in ranks of hundreds and fifties.
  - b. John 6:10-11: “And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.”
    - 1) At the Lord's direction, the disciples had the men in the crowd to sit down; the men numbered about five thousand. The women and children would naturally find places to stand or sit, maybe close to their menfolks. The number of women and children may not have been as great as the males. Many of those present were from other lands and were en route to Jerusalem for the Passover activities.
    - 2) Jesus gave thanks for the bread, which was distributed to the disciples who passed the food to each one in the great audience; he did likewise for the fish. Each person took as much of the food as he wanted; there was more than enough to go around.
  - c. Matthew 14:15-19: “And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”
7. Verse 41: “And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.”
- a. Notice that Christ “gave thanks” for the food. In Matthew's account [also in Mark] we are told that he “blessed” the food. To give thanks is to bless; to bless is to give thanks.
  - b. The five loaves and two fish [obviously cooked] were enough to feed even this huge crowd! How was this possible? The Lord was able to multiply the amount of food.
  - c. Compare: “And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto
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the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD” (2 Kings 4:43-44).

- 1) This was an event that occurred on yet another occasion, and reports on a miracle God wrought through Elisha. A certain man from Baalshalisha bought twenty loaves of barley bread and full ears of grain to the prophet. The items brought represented the firstfruits of the new harvest. The previous passage reported that a famine was on the land; this passage indicates that the famine was about to end since the new crop was now being harvested.
  - 2) “Elisha ordered this present to be given to the people, *i.e.* to the pupils of the prophets who dwelt in one common home, for them to eat; and when his servant made this objection: ‘How shall I set this (this little) before a hundred men?’ he repeated the command, ‘Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus hath the Lord spoken: They will and leave’” (Keil, p.316).
  - 3) The prophet knew some things ahead of time. He knew that God would multiply the loaves so as to feed all of those present, and there would still be food remaining. This miracle was a forerunner of the greater miracles Christ wrought in which he fed thousands of people.
8. Verses 42-44: “And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.”
- a. The amount of food was sufficient to fill all those in the crowd; they did not eat a mere morsel, but ate until they were full. There was more food after this miraculous meal than there was before the meal. A great multiplication of the loaves and fish had occurred.
  - b. Notice that the Lord did not let the excess food go to waste. Also, that the men in the crowd numbered five thousand, plus the women and children who were present. To say the least, this expansion of food was far beyond the power of a mere mortal! Think of all the resources which are wasted to produce such things as liquor, beer, wine, tobacco, etc. These are used to the detriment of humanity. A nation’s natural resources can be squandered for the financial profit of a few. Think of all the fine farmland that is being destroyed today to build super-highways, unnecessary shopping centers, huge buildings for banking enterprises (which are paid for by consumers), night-clubs, gambling casinos, great temples used in the destruction of countless precious souls, etc.
  - c. “It eludes our grasp. It is best simply to behold in this multiplying of the food, both the bread and the fishes, an act of Divine omnipotence; not indeed now, as at the beginning, a creation out of nothing, for here there was the nucleus of the five loaves and the two fishes, but an act of creative development of the food in its best kind; for all the works of God are perfect .... It was in his hands that the miracle was wrought, and the food continually multiplied. [Pulpit Commentary].
  - d. This verse is mentioned by many commentators as an example of the "more vivid detail" found in Mark; but where is it? Luke also mentioned their sitting "in companies"; Matthew mentioned the grass and the "women and children," who probably numbered in the thousands; and John alone related that the loaves were "barley loaves." A careful study of the gospels reveals that each of the sacred authors made invaluable contributions to our full understanding of what occurred. Is Mark's "green grass" any more vivid a detail than the "women and children"? Mark indeed supplied beautiful, vivid, and significant touches in his narrative; but so did they all. [See Coffman].

E. Mark 6:45-52: The Lord Walks on the Water.

1. Verses 45-46: “And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.”
  - a. Matthew’s account: “And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone” (Matt. 14:22-23).
    - 1) The Lord had started for the seclusion of the deserted place earlier in the day; his aim was interrupted by the multitude; following the miraculous feeding of the great crowd, the Lord now “constrained” the apostles to enter the ship and return to the other shore.
    - 2) “Constrain” is a strong word and implies that they were reluctant to leave him. If they had just returned from their limited commission, as it appears, then it is clear why they were hesitant about leaving him so soon. They longed for his company.
    - 3) But also they may have thought he was about to do something vastly important. Some in the

crowd had just attempted to take him by force and make him king in Israel. John the Baptizer had been murdered. His followers looked to Jesus as a literal deliverer. The concept of Israel and the apostles was that the Messiah would be a ruler in the same sense as were David and Solomon. Perhaps Jesus could take control of the government and miraculously drive away the oppressive Romans! This possibility lurks in the background of the scene.

- 4) "Following so closely upon the rejection at Nazareth, this enthusiastic desire of a vast concourse of people to make Jesus king by force must have been a genuine temptation to Christ" (Coffman, p.219).
- b. Compare: "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:14-15).
  - 1) The Old Testament had foretold of the coming of the great prophet, who is also known as the Messiah.
    - a) Deuteronomy 18:15-16: "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of Jehovah thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Jehovah my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not."
    - b) John 1:21: "And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No." John denied that he was that prophet, but pointed to Jesus as "the lamb of God" (John 1:29).
    - c) Acts 3:22-23: "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me. To him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." Jesus of Nazareth is that great prophet, the Messiah.
  - 2) There were about five thousand men present who witnessed the great miraculous feeding; they were convinced that Jesus must be that prophet of whom Moses wrote. The taste of the supernaturally-produced food was still in their mouths; that had both seen and tasted the miracle. One aspect of their twisted notion may have been if they made him king, he could provide for all of their material needs by supernatural power; work could have been dispensed with; diseases could have been dissipated; their lives would be without toil, trouble, or pain.
- c. Having dismissed the multitude and constrained the disciples to depart in the boat, the Lord now goes into the mountain to pray.
2. Verses 47-48: "And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them."
  - a. Matthew's account: "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea" (Matt. 14:24-25).
  - b. John adds another point: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15).
    - 1) Our Lord perceived the plan these men had conceived in their minds, to take Jesus by force, and cause him to be placed on a throne. Since the Passover was at hand, perhaps they intended to carry him to Jerusalem, where in the midst of a huge gathering of Jews, to manipulate him into a position of great leadership. This may give us the reason why the Lord did not go to Jerusalem for this Passover.
    - 2) Nothing good could have come from such an operation. His rule was never to have been on earth over a material kingdom. Had such an effort been made to force him to take the rule, what would the Romans have done? His life would have been in danger, along with his disciples, a great tumult would have developed, forcing the Almighty to take action that was not intended.
  - c. The Sea of Galilee is only about six miles in width, and no more than ten miles at its greatest length. The disciples, after many hours of rowing against the wind, were only about halfway across, struggling against the stormy winds. Jesus saw their distress (Mk. 6:48), and came to them during the fourth watch, walking on the boisterous waves. The Roman watch-system was divided into four parts: 6-9 p.m. (1st); 9-12 p.m. (2nd); 12-3 a.m. (3rd); 3-6 a.m. (4<sup>th</sup>).

- d. Great storms are common on the Sea of Galilee, coming from the mountains of Lebanon to the north, or following the Jordan River valley from the south, to swoop down upon the lake. McGarvey gives this report in his *Lands of the Bible*: “Suddenly, about midday, there was a sound of distant thunder, and a small cloud, ‘no bigger than a man’s hand,’ was seen rising over the heights of Lubl’eb to the west. In a few moments the cloud appeared to spread, and heavy black masses came rolling down the hills toward the lake. At this moment the breeze died away, there were a few minutes of perfect calm, during which the sun shone out with intense power, and the surface of the lake was smooth and even as a mirror. Tiberias, Mejdell, and other buildings stood out in sharp relief from the gloom behind them; but they were soon lost sight of as the thunder-gust swept past them, and, rapidly advancing across the lake, lifted the placid water into a bright sheet of foam.” [The original report was from a certain Captain Wilson].
- e. Woods offers this information: They had rowed about 25-30 furlongs into the sea which was about 3-3½ miles out, and were in the midst of the lake.
  - 1) “The strong winds greatly agitated the waters of the sea of Galilee and the waves were becoming higher and higher. It was evidently a sudden storm, not uncommon for that lake; cold air from the highlands often moved down the valleys and collided with the warm air above the lake, thus producing stormy winds and tempestuous seas where shortly before the waters were quiet and tranquil. Though they had now been on the bosom of the lake for some hours, they had covered no more than twenty-five or thirty ‘furlongs,’ approximately three or three and a half miles.
  - 2) “Mark says Jesus saw them, perhaps from the mountain where he prayed, though it was no less a miracle if he were on shore, because they were in darkness and too far from land to have been normally in view.
  - 3) “How we should rejoice in this wonderfully consoling and reassuring fact! Alone, or with others; troubled or in peace; ill or in good health; in darkness of the night or the brilliant light of a beautiful day, he sees us and is wholly aware of us and ready to come to our aid. It is comforting to know that we are never out of his sight nor beyond the scope of his care” (Guy N. Woods, *John*, p.121).
3. Verses 49-50: “But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”
  - a. Matthew’s account: “And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matt. 14:26-33).
    - 1) “Suddenly, Jesus appeared near the boat, walking on the water. It was in the fourth watch of the night (Matt. 14:25), shortly after 3 a.m. The effect of this remarkable event on the disciples was immeasurable. They see one approaching the boat, walking on the water as on a paved street, whom they have not yet recognized and their amazement gives way to terror and they become exceedingly afraid, having concluded that a phantom, a strange apparition, was drawing near out of the eerie darkness of the stormy night to confront them” (Woods, p.121).
    - 2) They saw him as he neared the boat and cried out in fear; to calm their fears, he identified himself. Peter wanted to walk out to meet him; Jesus assented. Peter’s faith turned to fear and he started to sink, before reaching the Lord. The Savior lifted him up. The wind ceased immediately on their entering the boat. This so impressed them they confessed his divinity.
  - b. “The incident shows that fear is a source of doubt and an enemy of faith; and it illustrates the fact that those who possessed miraculous gifts could only succeed in working miracles when their faith was in lively exercise” (McGarvey pp.132f).
    - 1) They quickly recognized his voice though his form was indistinct at first. By simply saying, “It is I; be not afraid,” he dispelled their fear. “From this warm and encouraging message to them the disciples lost their fear and rejoiced again to be in the presence of their Saviour” (Woods, p.121).
    - 2) John 6:21 says, “Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was

at the land whither they went." "Though the boat was in the midst of the sea and about three and a half miles from shore, no sooner was Jesus in it until the vessel and its occupants were in Capernaum—immediately transported there by miracle" (Woods, p.122).

- c. Knowing of their fear, he told them to dismiss their fright, for it was their Lord they saw. The sound of his voice offering comfort and courage quickly quieted their fear. They welcomed him aboard the ship, and we are told that immediately the ship was at the landing site toward which they were heading. They were about half-way across the sea when the Lord entered the ship; immediately they reached their intended destination. This was another miracle. Coffman:
    - 1) However, this sign is a whole complex of supernatural occurrences: (1) Christ's knowledge of the disciples' condition, (2) his "seeing them" at night in a storm (Mark 6:48), (3) Jesus' walking on the sea, (4) Peter's walking on the sea, (5) Christ's rescue of Peter, and (6) the sudden cessation of the wind. This interpreter supposes that it is fully in keeping with the whole episode to construe this place as teaching that the boat instantaneously, or nearly so, came to its appointed haven. One more supernatural element in an episode with so many others could do no harm.
    - 2) "This wonder contrasts dramatically with another wonder of stilling the tempest (Matthew 8:23-27). In that situation, Christ was on board; here he was not. There he was asleep; here he was in the mountain praying. There they were afraid of the winds and waves; here they were afraid of Jesus. There he rebuked the winds and waves; here they responded to his will without an audible command. In both situations, the only safety of the disciples was in the will of Christ."
  - d. Matthew includes another event that took place during this episode: "And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:26-33).
4. Verses 51-52: "And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened."
- a. We are told of the fear that had gripped the disciples. The storm was enough to create a measure of terror on their part. But now that saw some person walking on the mighty waves, drawing near to the ship. Perhaps they could see him in the flash of lightning.
  - b. "In the present instance they tell us, that they regarded His Form moving on the water as 'a spirit,' and cried out for fear; and again, that the impression produced by the whole scene, even on them that had witnessed the miracle of the previous evening, was one of overwhelming astonishment. This walking on the water, then, was even to them within the domain of the truly miraculous, and it affected their minds equally, perhaps even more than ours, from the fact that in their view so much, which to us seems miraculous, lay within the sphere of what might be expected in the course of such a history" [Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Edersheim].
  - c. McGarvey: "Here is one of Mark's graphic touches by which he adds vividness to the description. It pictures Jesus as walking in a direction which would have missed the vessel—a circumstance which made his appearance the more mysterious to the disciples. They lacked that impressibility by which, having seen former miracles, they would have been prepared for those that came after. But for this, they would have so considered the miracle of the loaves as not to be amazed at the walking on the water. For other remarks on this miracle, see the notes on the parallel in Matthew, and for other details not supplied by either of these writers, see the parallel in John." [p.305].
- F. Mark 6:53-56: "Multitudes Again Gather.
1. Verse 53: "And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore."
    - a. The ship and its passengers passed safely to the western side of the Lake of Galilee, and entered into the area known as Gennesaret. "It is probable that the disciples left the eastern coast of the sea to go to Capernaum on the western coast, but the storm had driven them out of their course and they landed south of Capernaum" (Boles, Matthew, p.322). The Lord had sent them off in the boat to go to a place near Bethsaida and Capernaum (Mark 6:45; John 6:17).
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- b. "The land of Gennesaret was a [plain] at the northwest curve of the lake of Galilee, which Josephus describes as about thirty furlongs in length by about twenty in average width, and bounded on the west by a semicircular line of hills. It was exceedingly fertile, and was thickly set with cities and villages. Capernaum was near its northern extremity, and near the southern was the city of Magdala. The lake itself was sometimes called, from the name of this [plain], the sea of Gennesaret" (McGarvey, p.133).
  2. Verses 54-55: "And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was."
    - a. The multitudes kept a watchful eye out for the Lord. There had been a large number of people with him when he feed the five thousand, plus the women and children. They had not seen such a miracle.
    - b. As soon as the Lord and his apostles stepped on shore, large crowds of people quickly began to appear. They ran to the place where he was, bringing their sick folks in their beds.
    - c. They knew of the power Jesus possessed to heal the sick; many of them knew of his ability to feed a multitude by multiplying food. We can understand their desire for his healing of the sick, and even for getting fed a good meal! There are always people in need of sustenance and of medical help. "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" (Matt. 26:11). One of our former leaders developed a "war on poverty," thinking he could wipe out this common trouble of mankind. Those who knew this verse from Matthew, were aware of the futility of this program.
  3. Verse 56: "And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole."
    - a. "The prompt action of the people in sending out into every part of the [plain] for the sick, was the result of their previous acquaintance with Jesus, and their faith in his power and goodness. That the touch of the hem of his garment made many perfectly whole, was the surprising reward of their implicit faith" (McGarvey, p.133).
    - b. "Those who touched were not merely helped; they were made perfectly whole. No efficacy in his garment is implied; not the garment, but Christ healed. He needed no staff, as did Moses; he needed no mantle, as Elijah; he required no instrument except himself. His word alone cast out demons, stilled the tempest, changed the water into wine, and raised the dead!" (Coffman, p.223). There was no exception; he healed all who touched his garment; he never met with failure in healing!
    - c. John 6:22-23: "The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks)."
      - 1) The next day, the people who had been on the eastern side of Galilee, knew that the only boat on that side of the sea was the one in which the Lord's disciples had taken the evening before. They also knew that Jesus had not gone with them in the ship.
      - 2) Tiberias was located on the southern end of Lake Galilee, not far from where Jesus fed the big crowd. Boats had come from that city, following the feeding of the five thousand. In these vessels, many of the previous day's multitude were transported across the sea to Capernaum. These extra boats may have come to find passengers; or they may have just been late getting to the place where Jesus taught and fed the people.
      - 3) Tiberias was the largest city on the sea, built by Herod, and named after Tiberius Caesar. Herod Antipas usually occupied it as his capital. It was a place the Lord never entered, though often near it. It is explained that vessels came from there to the place where Christ had fed the five thousand, by which many of them returned to Capernaum. [See Johnson, p.102].
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## McGarvey on the Brothers and Sisters of Jesus

We are here especially confronted with the question whether the four young men, James, Joses, Juda, and Simon, called his brothers, were actual brothers of Jesus and sons of Mary, and whether the young women called his "sisters" were actually his sisters. The question has importance chiefly on account of its bearing on the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary; and this doctrine is of no consequence at all except as it constitutes one of the pillars to support the idolatrous homage paid to Mary by the Roman Catholics. The conclusive Scripture evidence on the subject (and there is no other evidence worthy of attention), as it appears to my mind, is as follows:

1. It is stated that when the angel of the Lord commanded Joseph to take to himself Mary his wife, he "did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son." (Matt I.20, 24, 2d.) Here the exceptional fact of abstinence from sexual intercourse between the husband and the wife is mentioned, and the duration of it is expressly limited by the time preceding the birth of Jesus. It is most clearly implied that after this event this event it did not continue, and no adequate reason could have appeared to Joseph's mind why it should, especially as the holy angel had actually bidden him to become a husband to Mary, and to make her his wife.

2. While the terms brother and sister were sometimes used in Hebrew style for more remote relationships, it is unquestionably true that their ordinary significance among Jewish writers was the same as with us. When, therefore, these terms occur, they must be understood in their ordinary sense until proof to the contrary is discovered. On him who denies their literal sense in this case falls the burden of proof.

3. The persons in question are invariably mentioned in connection with Mary, when mentioned in connection with any woman at all. It was "his mother and his brothers" who had come to him when he made the remarkable speech beginning, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" (Matt xii. 46-48; Mark iii. 32, 33.) In the passage before us the Nazarenes are represented as decrying Jesus because he was the son of Mary, and the brother of these four men and of these sisters whom they knew. And again, when both Mary and these brothers are mentioned the last time in the New Testament, they are mentioned together; for, after naming the apostles in the first chapter of Acts, Luke adds, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." (Acts I. 14.)

These evidences appear sufficient to settle the question beyond all doubt or cavil; but some objections have been urged against their conclusiveness, and two of these we will consider briefly:

1. There was a Mary who was "mother of James and Joses" (Matt xxvii. 56), who is supposed to have been the wife of Alpneus, because he was the father of James and Judas (Luke vi. 15, 16); and who was, according to a doubtful interpretation of John xix. 25, a sister of the Virgin Mary. Now, if this supposition is correct, Jesus had these cousins with the same names as three of the men who are called his brothers, viz., James, Joses, and Juda or Judas. But the supposition has no proof in its favor whatever, and it depends on the highly improbable assumption that the two Marys were sisters. And even if it is correct, it proves nothing, in point, for the two sisters might each have had three sons with the same names, and this is the more likely to have been the case if their own names were the same. Indeed, all three of the names, James, Joses, and Judas, were very common in Jewish families.

But a second, and fatal objection to this supposition is the fact, that the James and the Judas who were sons of Alpheus were apostles (Luke vi. 15, 16), whereas the persons called "the brothers of the Lord" were unbelievers after the call of the apostles (John vii. 5), and they are uniformly mentioned in the later history as distinct from the apostles. (See Acts i. 14, where "his brothers" are mentioned after the names of all the apostles; and 1 Cor. ix. 5, where Paul asks the question, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as the other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?").

Finally, as is well remarked by the writer on this question in Smith's Dictionary (Art. Brother), "It is quite unaccountable that these 'brethren of the Lord,' if they were only his cousins, should be always mentioned in conjunction with the Virgin Mary, and never with their own mother Mary, who was both alive and in constant attendance on our Lord."

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2. Another supposition has been, that these brothers were sons of Joseph by a former marriage, and really the step-brothers of Jesus. But this supposition has not a shadow of support in the Scripture narrative, and bears the evident mark of having been invented to save the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity.

We conclude that there is no reason for a serious doubt that Mary was the mother of four sons besides Jesus, and of not less than two daughters. For other reflections on the incident recorded in these verses, see the notes on Matthew xiii. 54-67.

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## Mark 7

### A. Mark 7:1-13: Trouble With the Pharisees;

1. Verses 1-2: “Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.”
    - a. Jesus was probably in Capernaum when this company came to him from Jerusalem. “The career of Jesus in Galilee, together with the two visits which he had made to Jerusalem (John 2:13; 5:1), had arrested the attention of the leading minds in that city. The scribes and Pharisees here mentioned were in all probability sent up by their associates in Jerusalem to counteract his influence. They expected to put him to a severer test than had been applied by the less cultivated scribes and Pharisees of Galilee, and they entered the contest with confident hope of success” (McGarvey, p.133). There were two classes of scribes: civil and ecclesiastical. They are also called lawyers or doctors.
      - 1) Matthew 22:35: “Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying.”
      - 2) Luke 5:17: “And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.”
    - b. Certain scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem came to Jesus. “In this passage is the first raindrop in a gathering storm of opposition from the heads of the Jewish nation. This opposition by the powerful party of the scribes and Pharisees was launched against Jesus by the raising of what seems to be a very small and petty quibble about washing hands; but this opposition, so mildly stated here, was vicious and unrelenting and would never cease for an instant till these men would shout in a frenzy of hatred, ‘His blood be on us and our children’” (Coffman, p.225).
    - c. In modern times, we have learned the good hygiene of washing our hands before eating, but we also remember the days growing up on the farm, that this practice was not always possible. The religious leaders of this context were binding the washing of hands as a spiritual imperative. It had been started years before by the rabbis and handed down to following generations as though it had been bound by God.
    - d. When these trouble-makers saw some of the Lord’s disciples eating bread without washing their hands, they found fault. **The easiest thing in the world to find is *fault!*** Nitpickers can always point out something negative about almost anything you do or say. First they bind something which God did not bind, or loosen a matter which God did bind.
    - e. The reference to eating with unwashed hands is not to eating with dirty hands, but to a ceremonial washing which the traditionalists of the time thought was mandatory to remain spiritually pure. The objection the investigators raised with Jesus was over the fact that his disciples had violated the traditions of the elders by eating with unwashed hands. If the disciples were following Jesus’ word, it could be supposed that the Lord had permitted this violation, hence the charge was also directed toward him. This was the best means at their immediate disposal to attack Jesus.
    - f. “The tradition that a man should not eat without first washing his hands, was an extension by human authority of the Mosaic law of uncleanness. Other traditions belonging to the same category are mentioned in Mark 7:3,4. It could not be denied that the disciples transgressed this tradition, and as the accusers held the traditions to be equal in authority to the written word, they thought they had certainly convicted Jesus of allowing this transgression” (McGarvey, *ibid.*, 134).
    - g. The elders were the men of learning of the past who had passed down their interpretations of the law. “The Pharisees taught that when Moses received the ‘written law’ he was instructed also in another law, which he was not to write down, but to deliver to the elders of the congregation. This oral law, they maintained, was the only authorized interpretation of the written law, so that a Jew could never be certain of the meaning of the written law, until he had inquired of the Pharisees the explanation of the former. These traditions or interpretations of this oral law were enforced on the common people, and punishment for violation of them was as severe as the punishment for the violation of the ‘written law’.... Their traditions said, ‘He who eats bread with unwashen hands is as bad as if he were to commit fornication.’ Jesus drew a distinction between ‘the law of Moses’ and ‘the tradition of the elders’” (Boles, Matthew, p.324).
  2. Verses 3-4: “For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many
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other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.”

- a. NKJ: “For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.”
- b. The Lord tacitly admitted that his disciples had violated the tradition on washing hands. He justified them by attacking the rightness of tradition—this tradition and all others. He charged these errorists of having transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition. Thus he showed that the tradition itself was sinful; and since the tradition was wrong, the violation of the tradition was not wrong.
- c. “The genius of Christ is that he always referred issues to their highest level. Not their tradition, but the word of God, that was the truly important obligation; and Christ ignored their tradition and challenged them for their own disregard of God’s commandments. Nor did he stop with a theoretical charge; he named cases and gave examples of their lapse” (Coffman, p.226).
- d. Barnes: “*Tables*. This word means, in the original, *beds* or *couches*. It refers not to the *tables* on which they ate, but to the *couches* on which they reclined at their meals. See Notes on Mat. 23:6. These were supposed to be defiled when any unclean or polluted person had reclined on them, and they deemed it necessary to purify them with water.” [Barnes, a Calvinist, then perverts this passage to manufacture an argument in favor of sprinkling, instead of immersion, for scriptural baptism].
- e. Coffman: These two verses are a parenthesis containing Mark's explanation of Jewish religious customs for the benefit of his Roman readers. John mentioned the six water-pots at the wedding in Cana which apparently formed part of the standard equipment in every Jewish home and were used for the numerous washings here mentioned. Significantly, the words "bathe" and "washings" in this passage are from Greek words meaning "baptize" and "baptizings" (English Revised Version (1885) margin), indicating that the pots, etc., were not merely sprinkled but plunged into water. All of the customs or rules in view here were part of the oral traditions advocated by the Jewish leaders. "The elders" refers to the ancient authors of such observances.
- f. Johnson offers the following discussion on the passage:
  - 1) The parenthetical passage (verses 3, 4) is wholly peculiar to Mark and is devoted to the explanation, for the benefit of Gentile readers, of the custom of the Pharisees, shared by the Jews in general, about ceremonial cleansings.
  - 2) *The Pharisees, and all the Jews*. A loose popular expression to show that this custom of the Pharisees was widely received; not to be pressed, as if it declared absolute unanimity. Many, of course, had no time for these practices, and the Pharisees despised all who neglected them for that reason or for any other, and thought there was scarcely a hope for them. (See John 7:49 for an utterance of this feeling.)
  - 3) *Except they wash their hands oft*, or diligently, *pukna*. Literally, “with the fist.” Probably descriptive of the washing of one hand by rubbing it with the other. The Sinaitic Manuscript alone has *pukna*, “frequently,” which Tischendorf alone among editors adopts. And when they come from the market, where in the crowd defilement might most easily be contracted.
  - 4) *Except they wash, they eat not*. The word is *baptizo*, *ean me bupntisontai*. So in Luke 11:38 the Pharisee wondered that Jesus had not first bathed himself (*ebupntisthe*) before dinner. It is not the baptizing of their hands, but of themselves, or, strictly, the being baptized or bathed, that was thus insisted upon. The word “baptize” is used precisely as in 2 Kings 5:14, where it is said of Naaman, “He dipped himself seven times in Jordan.” From the strict literal signification, to “immerse” or “submerge,” it comes naturally in certain connections to acquire the sense “to wash by immersing,” “to cleanse,” of course only in cases where the dipping is into clean water. So Grimm, N. T. Lexicon. “Bathe” is an admissible translation in this connection, and any difficulties about giving the word its proper meaning here are purely imaginary.
  - 5) In verse 4 the word for “washings,” in washings of cups, etc., is from the same root, *baptismous*, a derivative of *baptizo*. But it is not the word that is used to denote the Christian rite, which is a neuter word, *baptisma*, while this is masculine, a form that is found only here and in Heb. 6:2; 9:10. Its signification is properly given by *Liddel* and *Scott* in their Greek and English Lexicon, “a dipping in water.” It indicates sometimes, in certain connections, a thorough cleansing by water, which would naturally be made, in the case of the objects here mentioned, by dipping, according to the literal signification of the word.
  - 6) The *cups* (*poteria*) were drinking-cups. —As for the *pots*, the Greek word *xestia* is a corruption

of the Latin *sextarius*, a pot that held about a pint. These were ordinarily wooden vessels. —The *brases* - or properly bronze - *vessels* were for similar purposes with the wooden. The law provided, at least in certain cases of defilement, that earthen vessels should be broken, and that wooden ones should be rinsed in water (Lev. 15:12).

- 7) The word translated *tables* (*klinon*) cannot possibly mean that; it is “beds” or “couches,” and may refer to the platforms on which they reclined around the table, which must often be thoroughly washed for fear of defilement, or to the cushions, which would need washing quite as much, and very likely would be washed oftener.
- g. Notice what McGarvey wrote:
- 1) Here again the term “washing yields a wrong sense. It was not peculiar to the Pharisees to wash cups, pots, brazen vessels, and couches; for every body did this, and every body does it yet. Surely Jesus did not reproach them for keeping clean their drinking and cooking vessels and their couches. But it was immersing them when they needed no washing, immersing them for an imaginary religious purification, for which he condemned them. Such is the meaning of the word (baptimous), and such the significance of the practice.
  - 2) It is objected to this, that couches (incorrectly rendered tables in the text) could not have been immersed. Even Alford affirms that “ these baptisimous as applied to couches, were certainly not *immersions*, but *sprinklings* or *affusions* of water.” No reason is given to support this assertion, and come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then: And the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with [unwashen: defiled] hands?
3. Verses 5-6: “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?” He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”
    - a. “The Jews claim there are two laws—the written law and the oral law. The written law is the Law of Moses written in the Bible; the oral law is tradition handed down, they claim, from Moses through Aaron and his sons, the elders of that time, Joshua, and the prophets—from generation to generation successively. They claim that when God gave Moses the written law, he gave him also the tradition, or oral law, as an explanation of the written law. They attached more importance to the tradition than to the law itself ... to their interpretations of the Scriptures than to the Scriptures themselves. A compilation or digest of the tradition is called the “Mishna”; comments upon and explanations of the Mishna is called the “Talmud.” Thus the Mishna explains the law and Talmud explains the Mishna.” [E.A Elam, *Class Notes*, March 18, 1928].
    - b. Matthew’s account: “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:7-9).
      - 1) In what way were these scribes and Pharisees hypocrites? “There was hypocrisy in the device of the traditionists, because in proposing to honor God by vowing to him what should go to the poor parent, there was the false pretense of doing for his honor what was really done to gratify avarice. All similar substitutions of human expedients in the place of God’s appointments are prompted by some improper desire, and are therefore liable to the same charge” (McGarvey, p.134).
      - 2) They claimed to believe the prophets, but Isaiah, one of their most beloved, condemned what they were doing by their traditions. The passage cited is from Isaiah 29:13. By substituting the precepts of men for the word of God, they had made their worship vain and unacceptable to God. “In vain” means void, empty, without purpose. Acceptable worship is based on revelation. After all, God is the object of our worship and has reserved the right to dictate what is to be offered to him in worship. When men insist on following their own precepts instead of what God has said in their various religious activities, their worship is also made vain and unacceptable. So says this passage.
    - c. “Fear toward God, if pure and rightly inspired, springs from the word of God, and not from the commandments of man. So far as it induces any worship at all, induces vain worship, and there is probably not one such addition which does not, to a greater or less degree, make some commandment void. Thus the tradition of infant baptism, to the extent that it is adopted, makes of no effect the commandment concerning the baptism of believers, by baptizing persons in their infancy; and if it should become universally prevalent, by the baptism of all persons in their infancy it would bring to

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an end forever the only baptism commanded of God” (McGarvey, p.135).

- d. Isaiah 29:13-14: “And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips to honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid” (ASV).
4. Verses 7-8: “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.”
  - a. Washing hands, of itself, is harmless and commendable, but in binding it as a religious requirement, they presumed on the authority of the Almighty. To infringe on the legislative prerogatives of God is sinful in the first magnitude. Thus, many warnings and admonitions are given in the Bible against such intrusion (Gal. 1:6-12; 1 Cor. 4:6 (ASV)).
    - 1) Revelation 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”
    - 2) 2 John 9-11: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”
  - b. Compare: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14-17).
    - 1) The apostle describes himself (and the other apostles and prophets) as manifesting the *sweet savour of Christ*. This is God's view of their work. Gospel preaching and gospel preachers are not held in high esteem by the majority in our society, but if we preach the same great message as did Paul and the Twelve, God holds our work in the highest regard! "...As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15).
    - 2) It is not the apostles as men who are so highly praised here; rather, it is the glorious message that they proclaimed. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7). This treasure is the gospel!
    - 3) What was the result when they preached to sinful men the good news of God's grace, only to have those men to utterly reject the message? It was preached to men who were dead in sin, and their condition was only worsened by their repudiation of the gospel!
      - a) 2 Timothy 3:13: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”
      - b) John 3:19-21: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”
      - c) Acts 13:45-46: "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
    - 4) Those who obey the gospel are saved by the gospel.
      - a) Mark 16:15-16: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
      - b) Acts 17:30: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men

- every where to repent.”
- c) Romans 10:9-10: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
  - d) Acts 22:16: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
  - e) Romans 10:16: “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”
  - f) Romans 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
  - g) 1 Peter 1:22-23: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”
- c. These people, when they hear the gospel presented, will receive it with gladness! Every child of God has a deep and constant longing to learn all he can from the word of God; he desires to know so that he can have more faith, more knowledge, more love and sympathy for all others.
  - d. The gospel will enable these to proceed from one degree of sanctification to a greater level of spiritual maturity; and as they continue to feast on the spiritual meat of God's word, they grow stronger. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:1-2). Ultimately, these will receive the eternal salvation awaiting the redeemed in heaven.
    - 1) Romans 5:8-9: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."
    - 2) 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
5. Verse 9: “And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”
- a. NKJ: He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.”
  - b. It is the case of whether we will heed the word of God or the traditions of man; to follow the traditions of men is to reject the commandment of God. It is as serious as anything could be! It does not matter how sincere one may be in conforming to man’s traditions.
    - 1) Acts 23:1: “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” But Acts 26:9-11: “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”
    - 2) Romans 10:1-3: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”
    - 3) Compare: “And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him” (Luke 7:29-30).
6. Verses 10-12: “For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do
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ought for his father or his mother.”

- a. Matthew’s account: “For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (15:4-6).
- b. To sustain his charge against them, he brings up their tradition involving the support of indigent, aged parents. God commanded that father and mother were to be honored; he specified capital punishment against one who cursed father or mother. In this regard, notice that Christ says God is the author of the Old Testament law containing this ordinance. Jesus also placed his stamp of approval on capital punishment. Compare: “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (John 10:34-36)
- c. God said one thing in his law while the Jews had developed a tradition which violated it. “The commandment, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother,’ requires a son to support his parents when they become dependent. And the statute, ‘He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death,’ required the death of any son who would practically curse his aged parents by casting them off into beggary or starvation. But they had taught that a son could say of that part of the estate by which his parent might be profited, it is a gift; that is, a gift to God (*Corban*, Mark 7:11), and thereby free himself from the obligation. Thus the commandment was made of no effect by freeing from it every ungrateful son who was mean enough to desire such freedom. This example did not touch the question of uncleanness, but it proved that tradition was an unauthoritative and mischievous guide, and as the objection of the scribes was based on the authority of tradition, it destroyed the force of the objection” (McGarvey, p.134).
- d. “‘Corban’ means a thing solemnly set apart by a formal vow to the sacred use of the service of God, hence it could not be used by or for any other person....From that time he could not apply any of his property to the support of his parents because, said the Pharisees, he broke a vow to God; but he was not bound nor expected actually to devote it to God he was only bound by it *not to support his parents*. *He might use it freely upon himself*” (Boles, Matthew, p.325).
- e. “The Pharisees were making a secondary duty the excuse for denying a primary one, a device observed continually in all ages. By dedicating his properties to the temple, the selfish man, by reserving a life estate in his possession, could legally deny any aid or support to needy parents, thus thwarting completely God’s will relative to honoring father and mother” (Coffman, Matthew, p.227).
- f. “What’s wrong with tradition? Only one thing: it vitiates God’s word. Any harm in it? Well, take the case presented here, relative to washing hands ceremonially, which was the basis of the Pharisees’ assault on Christ. That ceremony was harmless in a sense, perhaps even helpful as cleanliness or hygiene; but it had been forced into the worship of God, solely by human authority, and eventually blinded the eyes of men so completely that they could not even see the Son of Righteousness!....God accepts only those things as worship which he himself has authorized and commanded. Furthermore, given a choice between the word of God and the human tradition, the universal experience of the human race is to the effect that the tradition wins acceptance and the word of God is violated. Mark’s account of this place has the words, ‘Full well do you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition (Mark 7:8,9)....Behold the life-cycle of tradition:
  - 1) “First appears the innovation, something new, clothed with specious plausibility, riding the crest of some unusual occasion, some exceptional circumstance, or emergency.
  - 2) “It is repeated and moves into a place of acceptance as something *allowed*, occasionally at first, invariably afterwards.
  - 3) “It becomes appreciated as an ‘aid’ to the worship, something helpful.
  - 4) “Eventually, it is stressed and emphasized to the detriment of what is supposed to ‘aid.’
  - 5) “It achieves, through long usage, a status of equality with God’s word.
  - 6) “It is finally performed, occasionally, but later, always, *instead* of God’s commandment.
  - 7) “Finally, it blooms as a presumptuous, rebellious contradiction of God’s word, and is constantly honored in place of it” (Coffman, pp.227f).
- g. In the light of the foregoing statements, consider the substitution of affusion for baptism, instrumental music in worship, the use of missionary societies to do the work God gave the church to do,

Christmas pageants and operettas in place of scriptural worship, the use of choirs, and other such innovations. Some congregations are putting on drama presentations in place of scriptural worship. Many hire human organizations to do their work of helping the needy.

7. Verse 13: "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."
  - a. ASV: "Making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do."
  - b. Making void: literally, depriving it of its authority, annulling. In Gal 3:17 the same word is rendered "disannul." By your traditions; the traditions, that is, by which they taught children to say "Corban" to their parents. Observe the words, "your tradition", your tradition, as opposed to those Divine traditions which God has sanctified, and his Church has handed down from the beginning. And many such like things ye do. This is added by Mark to fill up the outline, and to show that this was only a sample of the many ways in which the commandment of God was twisted, distorted, and annulled by these rabbinical traditions. [Pulpit Commentary].
  - c. The word translated making of none effect (*ukuroountes*) is found in the New Testament only in this discourse and at Gal. 3:17: it means "to deprive of authority or lordship," and so, of a law, "to annul." It implies more than neglect: it tells of actual nullification." [See Johnson].

**B. Mark 7:14-23: What Comes From a Man's Heart is What is Important.**

1. Verses 14-16: "And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."
  - a. Matthew's account: "And he called to him the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man. Then came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit. And Peter answered and said unto him, Declare unto us the parable. And he said, Are ye also even yet without understanding? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever goeth into the mouth passeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man." (Matt. 15:10-20, ASV).
  - b. Food does not defile the soul. Certain meats were forbidden in the law to school the Jewish mind and prepare them for the higher and nobler law of Christ. But they had so grossly perverted the teachings of the law that they thought that there was something innately sinful about the flesh of certain animals.
  - c. The Lord gives a broad principle that sin does not lie in food. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). Jesus placed in contrast to each other that which goes into a man's digestive system and that which comes out of a man's heart. A man's moral actions, words, and motives are expressions of his will and intent; this is what defiles a man's soul, if it is not governed by the will of God.
  - d. Matthew includes the statement the disciples made about the Pharisees being offended by what the Lord had said. "The disciples were pained at the offense given to these highly respectable strangers from Jerusalem; for, like many Christians of the present day, their respect for the feelings of men was greater than their zeal for the truth. The 'sayings' (*logon*) which had given offense was the entire speech. He had proved that by their tradition they were nullifying the word of God; he had charged them with hypocrisy; he had declared that all of their worship based on the authority of tradition was vain worship; and he had swept away the entire fabric of their traditionary law of uncleanness, by declaring that a man is not defiled by that which goes into his mouth. He had not only defended himself, but he had turned their own weapons with irresistible effect against them, and it is not surprising that they were offended" (McGarvey, pp.135f).
  - e. Christ called on the audience to listen and heed what he was about to say; and in the same passage told them that each who had ears to hear, should hear. He was emphasizing strong and important truths that must be and could be understood.
2. Verse 17: "And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable."

- a. We are told in Matthew's account that it was Peter who worded the request for an explanation of the parable. When they had entered the house (Mark 7:17), Peter asked the Lord to explain this "parable." Strictly speaking, it was a proverb, a short pithy statement filled with spiritual truth. In response to the request, Christ mildly rebuked them by his question: "Are you so without understanding also?"
  - b. "Here the Christian idea of uncleanness is fully stated, and the disciples were the better prepared for it by the gradual manner in which it was approached. In this entire paragraph Jesus treats of that which the uncleanness of the law typified, and not of legal uncleanness itself. Although, according to the law of Moses, eating with unwashed hands did not defile a man, yet some things entering into the mouth did have this effect. (See Lev. 11:40.) But the Pharisees, confounding the type with the antitype, taught that the *soul* was defiled by that which caused only legal uncleanness. Jesus corrects this mistake, and in giving the true significance of the type, gives the true conception of uncleanness under the Christian dispensation" (McGarvey, pp,136f).
3. Verses 18-19: "And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?"
- a. NKJ: So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"
  - b. He chided the apostles with his question. He told them that food that enters into a man through the mouth cannot defile his heart [his soul, spirit]. What we eat enters into our digestive system and then proceeds through the intestines and is afterward removed from our body. The Lord gave a depiction of the process in a clear and inoffensive way.
4. Verse 20-23: "And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. So He said to them, Are you thus without understanding also? For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."
- a. NKJ: And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."
  - b. It is not what enters into our digestive process that defiles the heart; it is what comes from the heart of an individual which stains him. "From within, out of the heart of men, which they boast of the goodness of, and think is the best part of them, thence that which defiles proceeds, thence comes all the mischief. As a corrupt fountain sends forth corrupt streams, so doth a corrupt heart send forth corrupt reasonings, corrupt appetites and passions, and all those wicked words and actions which are produced by them" (Matthew Henry).
  - c. The mouth is the body's instrument for food and talk; that which enters the mouth proceeds through the digestive system. But that which comes from the mouth (words) has its origin in the heart. Food does not defile the soul, but evil motives, thoughts, words and actions do defile the soul. The Lord specifies evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.
  - d. The heart is the inner man, the soul, the spirit.
    - 1) Mark 7:21: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders."
    - 2) Luke 11:39: "And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness."
    - 3) Romans 2:29: "But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God."
    - 4) Romans 7:22: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."
    - 5) 2 Corinthians 4:16: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day."
    - 6) 1 Peter 3:4: "But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."
  - e. Since that which enters the mouth cannot defile the soul, then nothing entering the mouth can sanctify and bless the soul. Of course, alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs must not be taken into the body; these have definite harmful effects and are sinful. To this we have this prohibition in Acts 15:20: "But
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that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood.”

- 1) Forbidden also was the eating of things which had been strangled, and the eating of blood. Eating animals that had been strangled violated the precept of eating blood, since strangling did not usually lead to the removal of blood from the animal.
  - 2) This restriction predates the Law of Moses, going back to at least Genesis 9. When Noah and his family left the ark, God emphasized the preciousness of blood and forbade the eating of blood (Gen. 9:1-6). Blood transfusions do not violate this precept since it is not eating blood.
- f. Christ names several items:
- 1) Evil thoughts:
    - a) Internal considerations; dwelling on thoughts which are wicked; filling the mind with unholy thoughts.
    - b) Vine on: *huponoeo* (NT:5282), "to suppose, conjecture, surmise," is translated "deemed" in Acts 27:27, KJV (RV, "surmised"); in 13:25, "think ye" (KJV); RV, "suppose ye"; in 25:18, supposed. See SUPPOSE, THINK.
    - c) Compare: "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, **evil surmisings**" (1 Tim. 6:4).
    - d) Such a person dotes on questions and words which engender strife. One of the things God hates is the sowing of discord among brethren: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). There are some members of the church who seem to glory in promoting dissension. Woe be to them!
    - e) Evil surmisings.
      - (1) This includes the imaginations of a twisted mind which sees in words or acts of another, some evil intent directed toward himself; it also includes the placing of the worst possible construction on the acts and words of others, attributing evil to others without full knowledge, or in spite of knowledge. We should give the other person the benefit of any doubt.
      - (2) "Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth
  - 2) Adultery: Adultery [*moichao*].
    - a) This is a form of fornication. It is sexual conduct between one who is married with another who is not his (her) spouse. "So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Rom. 7:3).
    - b) Matthew 15:19: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
    - c) John 8:3: "And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst."
  - 3) Fornication.
    - a) The gospel of Christ introduced sexual purity into a world which was steeped in all kinds of sexual misconduct. Fornication of every kind was not only condoned by the ancients, but was regarded normal and necessary in their way of life.
    - b) There is no morality associated with animals; they bear no sense of guilt; this was the way God made them. But he did not make man thus; we have been given an awareness of right and wrong, and a law which prohibits some things and requires other things. That law says that we sin against our own body if we commit fornication (1 Cor. 6:18). Fornication is the only ground for divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:9). God requires that we keep ourselves pure from this sin, and permits sexual relations only by a man and a woman who are scripturally married to each other.
    - c) "Fornication" is from *porneia*, which means "illicit sexual intercourse" (Vine, Vol. 2, p.125). It is defined by Thayer as "illicit sexual intercourse in general" (p.531f). A noun form of the word is used to identify a prostitute. One is guilty of the sin of fornication for money or for
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lust. The Greek term is used as the name for the entire category of sexual sins: adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, bestiality, etc., are types of fornication.

- 4) Murders:
  - a) Willfully taking the life of another human being. Where the Old Testament list of the Decalogue says not to kill another, Christ more exactly defines this as murder: "He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, **Thou shalt do no murder**, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness" (Matt. 19:18).
  - b) All violent deeds under this heading are proscribed; but, as is clear from the Sermon on the Mount, anger and insulting language against a fellow-mortal are equally blameworthy, being in fact murder, according to Jesus' own definition (Matthew 5:21,22). [See Coffman].
- 5) Thefts: "Scholars tell us that there are two words in the Greek text for theft, [*leptes*] and [*lestes*], the first meaning "pilferer" and the other "a brigand." Barabbas was the latter, Judas the former. [*Kleptes*] is the word here and thus includes the most petty and the tiniest acts of thievery without excluding the more audacious robbery practiced by a brigand. All such conduct defiles" (Coffman).
- 6) Covetousness:
  - a) Henry: "*pleonexiai*—immoderate desires of more of the wealth of the world, and the gratifications of sense, and still more, still crying, Give, give. Hence we read of a heart exercised with covetous practices, 2 Peter 2:14.
  - b) Compare: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: **an heart they have exercised with covetous practices**; cursed children" (2 Pet. 2:14).
  - c) Vine: *pleonexia* (NT:4124), "covetousness," lit., "a desire to have more" (*pleon*, "more," **echo**, "to have"), always in a bad sense, is used in a general way in Mark 7:22 (plural, lit., "covetings," i. e., various ways in which "covetousness" shows itself); Rom 1:29; Eph 5:3; 1 Thess 2:5. Elsewhere it is used, (a) of material possessions, Luke 12:15; 2 Peter 2:3; 2 Cor 9:5 (RV, "extortion"), lit., "as (a matter of) extortion" I. e., a gift which betrays the giver's unwillingness to bestow what is due; (b) of sensuality, Eph 4:19, "greediness"; Col 3:5 (where it is called "idolatry"); 2 Peter 2:14 (KJV, "covetous practices"). See EXTORTION.
- 7) Wickedness:
  - a) Vine: *poneria* (NT:4189), akin to *poneros* (see above, No. 1), is always rendered "wickedness" save in Acts 3:26: see INIQUIY, No. 4.
  - b) Acts 3:26: "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his **iniquities**."
  - c) Notice that the stated purpose of his coming was not (1) to set up an earthly kingdom or (2) give them material prosperity and advantage, but to save them from their sins. This is the preeminent design of the gospel (Jn. 3:16; Lk. 19:10; Mk. 16:15-16).
- 8) Deceit:
  - a) Vine: *dolos* (NT:1388), primarily "a bait, snare"; hence, "craft, deceit, guile," is translated "deceit" in Mark 7:22; Rom 1:29. See CRAFT, GUILLE, SUBTILTY. Notes: (1) *Plane*, rendered "deceit" in 1 Thess 2:3, KJV, signifies wandering (cf. Eng., "planet"), hence, "error" (RV), i. e., a wandering from the right path; in Eph 4:14, "wiles of error, KJV, "to deceive." See DELUDE, ERROR. (2) For *doloo*, "to use deceit," see C, No. 4.
  - b) Compare: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, **neither was guile found** in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:21-22).
    - (1) Despite being so harshly and criminally treated, our Lord did not commit sin by retaliating or by using any deceitful speech. He did not resist those who arrested him, scourged him, insulted him, and falsely accused him. He rebuked Peter for using a sword in an attempt to defend the Lord: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him" (John 18:10-12).
    - (2) In his arrest and trials, the Lord did not commit a single act of sin, and neither did he resort to guile in trying to deliver himself. But he was totally without sin and guile

throughout his public ministry; neither did he do any sin or speak any guile before he began his ministry. His life was sinless; his teachings are all truthful. This could not be said about any other accountable person!

- 9) Lasciviousness:
- a) The Greek word (*aselgeia*) is translated "wantonness" (Rom. 13:13; 2 Pet. 2:18) and "lasciviousness" (Mark 7:22; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19).
  - b) Thayer defines the word as, "Unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence....wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females..." (pp.79f).
- g. Four more:
- 1) An evil eye:
    - a) Vine: *ophthalmos* (NT:3788), akin to *opsis*, "sight," probably from a root signifying "penetration, sharpness" (Curtius, Gk. Etym.) (cf. Eng., "ophthalmia," etc.). is used (a) of the physical organ, e. g., Matt 5:38; of restoring sight, e. g., Matt 20:33; of God's power of vision, Heb 4:13; 1 Peter 3:12; of Christ in vision, Rev 1:14; 2:18; 19:12; of the Holy Spirit in the unity of Godhood with Christ, Rev 5:6; (b) **metaphorically, of ethical qualities, evil, Matt 6:23; Mark 7:22** (by metonymy, for envy); singleness of motive, Matt 6:22; Luke 11:34; as the instrument of evil desire, "the principal avenue of temptation," 1 John 2:16; of adultery, 2 Peter 2:14; © metaphorically, of mental vision, Matt 13:15; John 12:40; Rom 11:8; Gal 3:1, where the metaphor of the "evil eye" is altered to a different sense from that of bewitching (the posting up or placarding of an "eye" was used as a charm, to prevent mischief); by gospel preaching Christ had been, so to speak, placarded before their "eyes"; the question may be paraphrased, "What evil teachers have been malignly fascinating you?"; Eph 1:18, of the "eyes of the heart," as a means of knowledge.
    - b) Matthew 6:23: "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"
  - 2) Blasphemy:
    - a) Vine: *blasphemia* (NT:988), either from *blax*, "sluggish, stupid," or, probably, from *blapto*, "to injure," and *pheme*, "speech," (Eng. "blasphemy") is so translated thirteen times in the RV, but "railing" in Matt 15:19; Mark 7:22; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 6:4; Jude 9. The word "blasphemy" is practically confined to speech defamatory of the Divine Majesty. See Note, below. See EVIL SPEAKING, RAILING.
    - b) Usages:
      - (1) Matthew 15:19: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, **blasphemies.**"
      - (2) Ephesians 4:31: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and **evil speaking**, be put away from you, with all malice."
      - (3) Colossians 3:8: "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, **blasphemy**, filthy communication out of your mouth.
      - (4) Jude 9: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of "Moses, **durst not bring against him a railing accusation**, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."
  - 3) Pride:
    - a) This is the principal characteristic of unregenerated man. It is the glorification of self .... when the Lord named seven things which are an abomination in his sight, a proud look headed the list (Proverbs 6:16). It is the absence from the heart of the awareness of God. Consciousness of the existence, presence, and power of God produces humility in the heart, inevitably convicting men of their own sin and unworthiness. Pride is the opposite of such consciousness of God.
    - b) Vines: *alazoneia* (NT:212), the practice of an *alazon*, denotes quackery; hence, "arrogant display, or boastings," James 4:16, RV, "vauntings"; in 1 John 2:16, RV, "vainglory"; KJV, "pride." See PRIDE, VAUNT.
      - (1) James 4:16: "But now ye glory in your **vauntings**: all such glorying is evil."
      - (2) 1 John 2:16: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the **vain glory** of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

## 4) Foolishness:

- a) Foolishness ... As Barclay said, "This describes, not the man who is a brainless fool, but the man who, as we say, is playing the fool." [10] The foolishness meant here is the kind of living that is not guided by moral principle nor related to any sacred standards.
- b) Vine: *aphrosune* (NT:877), "senselessness," is translated "foolishness" in Mark 7:22; 2 Cor 11:1,17,21, "foolishness," RV (KJV "folly" and "foolishly"). Note: *Morologia* denotes "foolish talking."
- c) Foolishness: *aphrosune*: imprudence, inconsideration; some understand it especially of vainglorious boasting, which Paul calls *foolishness* (2Co\_11:1, 2Co\_11:19), because it is here joined with *pride*; I rather take it for that rashness in speaking and acting, which is the cause of so much evil.

C. Mark 7:24-30: The Syrophenician Woman.

1. Verse 24: "And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid."
    - a. Matthew's account: "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matt. 15:21-28).
    - b. The coasts of Tyre and Sidon are the regions in which those cities were situated. Jesus was now in the Gentile land northwest of Galilee known as Phoenicia. The events of this passage took place during the Lord's third year of ministry (ALC, 1959, p.151).
    - c. To avoid the interference of, and untimely controversy with, the Pharisees, the Lord withdrew to these border areas. Mark 7:24 indicates the Lord was seeking refuge where he could have some solitude for a while. He was unable to find it. "And from thence he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it; and he could not be hid" (Mark 7:24, ASV).
  2. Verse 25: "For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter."
    - a. "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (Matt. 15:22).
    - b. A woman of that place came to the Lord with a request for help. She is called a "woman of Canaan" by Matthew; Mark describes her as a Greek (Gentile), a "Syrophenician by nation." "That country was taken by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and those cities, in the time of Christ, were Greek cities. This woman was therefore a Gentile....She was by birth a Syro-Phoenician, born in that country, and descended, therefore, from the ancient Canaanites" (Barnes, p.163).
    - c. This woman approached the Lord with a tender request: Have mercy on me. The request was actually in behalf of her daughter who was grievously vexed with an unclean spirit. Mark indicates that the daughter was quite young. The fame of the Lord had spread even to this area, and possibly far beyond. She knew of his healing powers and besought him for her daughter.
    - d. Notice that she called him "son of David," a term indicating that he was the Messiah. She was not ignorant of his identity. "These words in the mouth of a Gentile woman on Gentile soil are remarkable. They show that she was acquainted with the Jewish idea of the Messiah, and they indicate the spread of Jewish ideas and hopes among surrounding nations" (McGarvey, p.138). Matthew 4:24 shows that his fame had spread this far. "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them."
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- e. Her request plainly indicates a degree of faith and humility. More of the same is shown as the story unfolds.
  3. Verses 26-27: "But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs."
    - a. The Lord's response was "the silence of love." He said nothing at all; he was giving her the opportunity to strengthen and demonstrate her faith more fully. Perhaps also, as asserted by Coffman, he was putting the apostles to the test to see whether they would be kindly disposed to this Gentile woman. His public mission was primarily for the Jews; he was sent to them, was born as one of them, lived and worked among them, and died at their insistence. But his earthly work was in preparation for the establishment of his universal kingdom which was intended for all people.
      - 1) Isaiah 2:2-3: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
      - 2) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
      - 3) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
      - 4) Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
      - 5) Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.
    - b. In Matthew's account, the disciples besought Jesus to send her away. It is not clear whether they wanted her to be sent away with or without receiving her request. They were annoyed at her pleas.
    - c. "Christ answered not a word, perhaps hoping that the disciples might, through human love and kindness, say a word on her behalf. It was a vain hope. Christ's first reply not only confirmed the Twelve in their attitude but served the double purpose of giving the woman a chance to demonstrate her faith and prompting the disciples to express their feelings openly" (Coffman, p.233). But McGarvey says they did not mean that he should send her away by granting it (p.138).
  4. Verses 28-29: "And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."
    - a. His ministry was aimed toward the Jews (John 1:11-12), but there were cases where he extended it to include people of other nations. His statement is that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was especially directed to the woman, it appears, and was an obstacle which her faith must surmount.
    - b. The Lord's reply: "My work is with the Israelites." She acknowledged that fact, but replied that even so, the dogs are permitted to eat the crumbs which fall to the floor. In other words, she wanted the Lord to do what he could for the Jewish people, but figured there would be something left over for her daughter.
    - c. "The idea is not the uncleanness of the dogs, but rather their dependence and subordinate position. There was nothing degrading about the Lord's metaphor; he was simply emphasizing the relative positions of the Jews and Gentiles. The children first, and then their pets" (ALC, 1959, p.153).
    - d. "But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs" (Mark 7:27). This put the woman's faith to a very stiff test; most people would have given up in despair and anger over being thus rebuffed. Too many of us wear our feelings openly, and are vulnerable to all kinds of heartaches and disappointments.
    - e. The woman quickly agreed with the Lord's statement, but then turned it to her own advantage. "In her inimitable reply, 'Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table,' we know not which to admire more—the readiness of her wit, or the depth of her humility" (McGarvey, p.139).
    - f. "Jesus had suggested the order in the home by which the pets are required to wait until the meal is over before receiving their portion; but with a wit made keen by her desperate plight, the mother
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replies by adding to the well known fact that dogs under the table are permitted to eat the crumbs which fall to the floor even while the meal is in progress; thereby intimating her hope to receive aid even before the needs of the Jews had been entirely satisfied” (ALC, 1959, pp.153f).

- g. “The use of the diminutive throughout this exchange between Jesus and the woman is very interesting and suggestive. First, Jesus says that it is not meet to feed the ‘little dogs,’ that is, household pets, before the children have their portion; and then the woman replies, Yea, Lord, even the ‘little dogs’ eat of the ‘little crumbs’ which fall from their masters’ (‘little children’s’) table. Thus, with ready wit, deep humility, and abundant faith, this woman skillfully turned the Lord’s figure to her own advantage. She accepted the Lord’s evaluation of the situation, and plead only to fare as the household pets which are fed without loss to the household” (ALC, *ibid*, p.154).
  - h. She was willing for Jesus to give the Jews what he would but she desired to obtain what little “crumb” might be left over. They would not be any poorer, and she would be immensely enriched. “Jesus never did, and could not from his nature, deny any good thing asked for with such faith, with such humility, with such perseverance” (Boles, p.334).
5. Verse 30: “And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.”
- a. Recall Matthew 15:28: “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”
  - b. We can now see why Jesus did not immediately grant the woman’s request. He knew the strength of her faith, and for the purpose of having her demonstrate it for her own sake, for the disciples’ sake, and for our sake, he placed these strong obstacles before her. Being Divine, he could know her heart and thus determine the degree of faith she possessed, as well as her sincerity. Jesus had met with much unbelief, even in the face of the strongest possible evidence, on the part of many of his own nation. But with this woman he found a refreshing and bountiful supply of faith and humility.
  - c. “It has been noted that the hindrances which were thrown in this woman’s way tended only to increase her faith. The faith which was hers may be compared to a river, which becomes enlarged by dams which have been placed across it, until at last they are all swept away by the mighty stream which they helped to create” (ALC, *ibid*, p.154).
  - d. “The earnest perseverance of the faithful woman gains its point, and her mother’s heart is made to rejoice. Less love for her child, or less faith in Jesus, would have caused a failure. The entire scene is often repeated in pious households. How often a pious mother, with a child grievously vexed with the demon of sin, cries piteously and long to the blessed Savior, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ And how often does Jesus appear, for a while, to give no heed to the cry, until even a cold world begins to pity the wretched petitioner. But finally, when a mighty faith has been developed out of sorrow and weeping, the unheard answer comes, ‘Be it unto thee as thou wilt.’ The story of the Canaanite woman is a type, and it is written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world have come. It is another illustration of the Savior’s doctrine, that ‘men ought always to pray, and not to faint’ (Luke 18:1-8)” (McGarvey, p.139).
  - e. “When her attitude is contrasted with some in later generations who become offended, puffed up, and repelled by the slightest suspicion of indifference in God’s ministers, it is perfectly clear that many nominal seekers simply do not have the faith ever to be saved, or having it, are so full of egotism and pride that it can never do them any good” (Coffman, p.235).
  - f. The New Testament only records two occasions where the Lord commended anyone’s faith with such words, and both cases involved Gentile people (this woman and the centurion in Matthew 8). Among the Jews, it would appear, such faith was not often found, perhaps never found by the Lord. Among those who had been prepared for many centuries for the coming of the Messiah, surprising little faith was manifested by them. They had many benefits and advantages not owned by the Gentiles of those ancient times. “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:1-2).
  - g. The Lord granted her request; her daughter was made whole from that very hour; when she returned home she found her daughter well and lying on a bed (Mark 7:30). We are not told what the extent or the nature of the affliction caused by the demon’s presence. Some cases caused the victim to have violent reactions. In this case, the young girl was completely recovered and was on her bed resting quietly.

#### D. Mark 7:31-37: Christ Heals a Deaf Person.

1. Verse 31: “And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.”

- a. ASV: "And again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis."
  - b. "The Decapolis was a league of ten cities, hence the name, which had been formed after the campaign of Pompey in 64-63 B.C. All of these except one were east of Lake Galilee and the upper Jordan valley. Belonging to this league were Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Dion, Pella, Gerasa, and Kanatha. Damascus alone retains any importance today. It should be recalled that this area heard the publication of the news of Jesus Christ by the Gerasene demoniac whom Jesus had healed (Mark 5:20)" [Coffman].
  - c. "Jesus left Phoenicia, but did not go back into Galilee. He rather went east and came down east of the Sea of Galilee into the region of the Greek cities of Decapolis. He thus kept out of the territory of Herod Antipas. He had been in this region when he healed the Gadarene demoniac and was asked to leave" (Pulpit Commentary).
  - d. Matthew's account: "And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. 15:29-31).
    - 1) Matthew gives a summary of events which must have covered several days' journey and many hours of work and detail which are only casually covered by the text.
    - 2) They departed from the area of Phoenicia near Tyre and Sidon, and made their way to a place near the Sea of Galilee. Mark's record shows that they passed through the province of Decapolis which lies to the east and southeast of the Sea. They may have passed to the north of the Sea of Galilee, on south into Decapolis. "The last paragraph located him north-west of Galilee, and the present locates him on the opposite side of Galilee, without noting the route by which he had made the transit" (McGarvey, p.139).
    - 3) He sat down in a certain mountain, reminiscent of when he presented the "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt. 5:1ff). Again, great multitudes gathered before him. "The people on the east side of the Jordan were Jews, but they had fallen into great errors with respect to the law" (Boles, p.335).
  - e. "Only once before, when he cured the man with the legion of demons, had Jesus been in this district; and then the people had requested him to go away. (8:34.) But now, influenced partly by their own reflections, and partly by the preaching of the demoniac (Mark 5:19-20), they flock around him with their 'lame, blind, dumb, and maimed'" (McGarvey, pp.139f). However, these would not likely be the same people; the former episode occurred at Gadara; we are not told exactly where this latter event took place. The two places were in the same area, however. "Though there were also Jews in the area, this was predominately Gentile territory, and it would seem that Gentiles may have predominated in the crowds that resorted to Jesus at this time" (ALC, 1973, p.160).
  - f. Matthew gives more details than does Mark. The former identifies several maladies which were healed by the Lord, while the latter names only one, but places a greater degree of emphasis on it (see Mark 7:31-37). This is characteristic of Mark's account. For example, in the case of the demoniac the Lord healed when the unclean spirits were permitted to enter into a herd of swine. Matthew says there were two individuals from whom demons were expelled; Mark mentions only one (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1ff). The result of these miracles was that the people glorified the God of Israel. Mark says they were astonished beyond measure. Mark's report focuses on the case of the deaf mute.
2. Verse 32: "And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him."
    - a. Other versions:
      - 1) ASV: "And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him."
      - 2) NKJ: "Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him."
    - b. We are not specifically told how his ailments occurred. He could neither speak nor hear. If one is not able to hear, that naturally inhibits his ability to speak. We have known of several who had this difficulty.
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- c. Ernie Pyle told of a man who had learned to read lips when he was young. When he was close to an explosion he instantly lost his sense of hearing; but his lip-reading allowed him to communicate very well. [*Here is Your War*].
3. Verse 33: "And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue."
- a. Our Lord took this man away from the multitude for the healing process. "He took him aside ... The evident reason for this action was that Jesus was required by the man's deafness to communicate with him in sign language; and the Lord definitely did not wish to permit the multitude to have any basis for supposing that his touching the man's ears and tongue, or his use of spittle, had anything whatever to do with the man's cure, such actions being only part of the process of communication with the afflicted person. If the Lord had not done such things privately, some might have considered the Lord's healing to be accomplished magically, after the manner of Greek and Jewish magicians. [Coffman].
- b. And put his fingers into his ears. As his indistinct articulation arose from his deafness, our Lord addresses Himself to this first. To the impotent man He said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" to the blind men, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" and "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (John 5:6; Matt 20:32; 9:28). But as this patient could hear nothing, our Lord substitutes symbolical actions upon each of the organs affected. [Jamieson].
- c. The Lord touched the man's tongue and his ears, thus telling the man that he could heal his ailment. This action would at the same time indicate a question to the man: "Do you want me to heal you?"
4. Verse 34: "And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."
- a. See Johnson:
- 1) Then he stood looking up to heaven, to indicate that this was an act that depended upon a heavenly power ... Of course there had been no opportunity, because no possibility, of preaching to the man, and in his ignorance he may easily have supposed that this was some influence of a magical kind. He may not have known to what power he was submitting himself, and the reverent heavenward look of Jesus may have been intended silently to lift his heart and faith to God. How better could he show a deaf man that he was receiving a gift from above?
  - 2) Then he sighed, or rather, "groaned." The word is not used elsewhere of him, but it is found in Rom. 8:23 and 2 Cor. 5:2, where evidently no less a word than "groan" is needed to represent its meaning. This was no artificial utterance intended for effect: it was a spontaneous utterance of genuine sorrow in sympathy with human suffering. It came from the same source as the tears at the grave of Lazarus. Although the man could not hear the groan, he might be aware of it, for doubtless his eyes were busy in observing what his Benefactor was doing; and if he was aware of it, he must have felt, however dimly, that there was a deep and genuine sympathy in the Healer's heart.
  - 3) This could be no magician's performance to him: this was a deed of love, And then at last he spoke; and, though the man might not hear the word he may have known, as before, that it was spoken."
- b. McGarvey:
- 1) *Put his fingers.*—The process adopted in this case was peculiar. He first put his fingers in the man's ears, one finger in each ear. Then he spit: we are not told where, but the natural inference is that he spit on the ground. The object of the spitting we can not state; no conjecture that we have seen appears even plausible.
  - 2) He then touched the man's tongue ... looked up to heaven, heaved a sigh, and exclaimed, "Be opened," and "the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plain." The entire procedure indicates the deepest solemnity on the part of Jesus, and was calculated to strike the bystanders with awe.
- c. Johnson: *Ephphatha*, that is, Be opened. Here, as in chap. 5:41, Mark has preserved the very word in the Aramaic tongue that fell from the lips of Jesus. No other evangelist has done this, except in the case of the utterance on the cross, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.*" In the other case (chap. 5:41) the Aramaic words that Mark preserves were spoken when of the disciples only Peter, James, and John were present; and it is not unlikely that the same special three were the only auditors at this time also
5. Verse 35: "And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."
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- a. Instantly the man was able to hear and speak! There was no delay. There was no long-term of having to learn to speak and to understand sounds.
  - b. We sometimes describe someone who cannot speak (or speak plainly) as being tongue-tied. The man's healing says the string of his tongue was loosed and he could speak well. The figure pictures his tongue as having been tied with a string.
6. Verse 36: "And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it."
- a. "He ordered it to be kept very private, but it was made very public .... Christ would have had it published. But they meant honestly, and therefore it is to be reckoned rather an act of indiscretion than an act of disobedience" (Henry).
  - b. The Lord addressed this charge to the man and the others who beheld the miracle. It is difficult to keep astounding events quiet. Our human nature has a strong desire to report news, whether it is good or bad. "I've just got to tell someone!"
7. Verse 37: "And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."
- a. Those who knew of the miracle were astonished; they saw that he could do many things; in this case he caused the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.
  - b. They perceived that he could do all things well! He never spoke anything that was sinful or did anything that was evil. He kept himself under perfect control.
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**Mark 8****A. Mark 8:1-9: The Feeding of the Four Thousand;**

1. Verses 1-2: “In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.”
  - a. Matthew’s report: “Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children” (Matt. 15:32-38).
    - 1) Most of the details between this event and that of 14:15-21 are similar. In this case, the people had been with the Lord three days; their food had run out. Jesus would not dismiss them lest they should faint in the way. The disciples had forgotten about the former case or did not think it would be repeated.
    - 2) Seven loaves and a few fish were found among the multitude with which he fed the four thousand men, plus the women and children. Seven baskets of food were left over. This basket is from the same word as that basket used by Paul in his escape from Damascus (Acts 9:25).
  - b. Christ leads the apostles to see the problem. The multitude had been with the Lord for three days, and were in need of food. He stated that he had compassion for the great crowd and wanted to aid them.
2. Verses 3-5: “And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.”
  - a. Some of the crowd had come a long distance to be with the Lord; if he sent them away and thus let them take care of themselves, there would doubtless have been some who would faint as they tried to go home. They would not have the strength to complete their journey.
  - b. The apostles responded by saying that enough food for this large number of people could not be found in the wilderness where they were. Even if there were cities nearby, the stores could not supply the need.
  - c. Did it not occur to the apostles that the Lord could repeat the miracle of his feeding the five thousand? Or were they hesitant to make such a request for the present case?
  - d. Christ solved their dilemma by asking how many loaves they had. This likely was from the store of food carried by the Lord’s company.
3. Verses 6-7: “And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.”
  - a. He followed the same pattern used in the previous miraculous feeding, in the case of the five thousand. The people were directed to sit on the ground.
  - b. He took the seven loaves, and afterward the small fish which was also present, gave thanks for them and had these items distributed among the crowd.
4. Verses 8-9: “So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.”
  - a. The food items were so multiplied to feed the great crowd. The whole lot of people ate to the full. There was more than enough; indeed, seven baskets of food were left over. He dismissed the people to go about their usual activities.
  - b. Johnson:
    - 1) But the backwardness of the Apostles to believe in Christ’s readiness to feed the multitudes miraculously, is in strong contrast with their readiness to believe in His powers of healing.

- 2) May it not, in part, have arisen from the infrequency of this sort of miracle? As Theophylact says, "He did not always work miracles for the feeding of the multitude, lest they should follow Him for the sake of food."

c. Coffman:

- 1) This miracle, recorded only by Mark and Matthew (Matthew 15:29-39), is similar to that of feeding the five thousand which was recorded by all four evangelists; and yet there are very significant differences. As Cranfield noted, the ground of our Saviour's compassion in the first miracle was "the fact that the people are like sheep without a shepherd"; whereas, in this, "it is the fact that they have been so long without food." [1]
- 2) Trench called attention to the fact that the multitude here had been with the Lord three days; whereas, in the other, no such time lapse had occurred. He also stressed that "the numbers fed are fewer, the supply of food larger, and the number of baskets of fragments left over is less" than in the former miracle, drawing the significant conclusion that "Legend grows; the new outdoes the old; but here it does not even stand on an equality with it." [2]
- 3) Bickersteth pointed out that the people Jesus here fed were commanded to sit down "on the ground, not on the 'green grass' as before. It was a different season of the year." [3]
- 4) Pertinent as are all of these differences, one has to go back to Augustine for perhaps the most significant difference of all, namely, that the people fed in this miracle were Gentiles in the principal part, whereas those fed in the other were principally Jews. This key fact explains why two such miracles were performed, showing God's fairness in dealing with Gentiles as he had dealt with the chosen people; and it also explains the apostles' reluctance to suppose that Christ would do such a thing, especially in the light of their having witnessed the other miracle so recently.
- 5) The entire pattern of the Lord's ministry at this point demanded this second miracle of feeding the multitudes. He had just abolished distinctions between clean and unclean meats and extended mercy to the daughter of the Gentile woman of Syro-Phoenicia, despite the apostles' reluctance to allow it; and in this marvel of feeding the four thousand, Christ wrought a wholesale wonder for the benefit of a whole Gentile multitude, just as he had done for Jews in the other case.
- 6) The fact that both miracles were done on the same side of Galilee but with such diversity in the character of the multitudes benefitted, came about because the Jews were in that vicinity by reason of following Jesus from the west; but the Gentiles had followed from the Decapolis area in the east.
- 7) The significance of this miracle lies in the rich meaning of it for the Gentiles. Christ is the bread of life for all, not merely for Jews alone. The great overtones of the wonder which identified Christ as that Prophet like unto Moses and required all men to see in Jesus the very God himself—all these implications are as rich for the Gentiles as for the Jews.

B. Mark 8:10-13: Jesus is Confronted by Pharisees.

1. Verse 10: "And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha."
  - a. He departed for Magdala, the hometown of Mary Magdalene. Marks says they went to Dalmanutha, which was evidently in the vicinity of Magdala. Matthew simply calls the area to which they went as "the coasts of Magdala."
  - b. Magdala: "Place name perhaps meaning, 'tower.' City on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and center of a prosperous fishing operation. The town was located on a main highway coming from Tiberias. See Magadan. A certain Mary, who had been healed of demon possession by Jesus, was from Magdala ...." (Holman).
  - c. Dalmanutha: "Place to which Jesus and His disciples came following the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:10). Its location is not known. The parallel reference in Matthew 15:39 suggests it was in the area of Magdala" (Holman).
  - d. McGarvey: —Matthew says, "into the coasts of Magdala." (Matt. xv. 39.) "The coasts" (*ra opta*) of Magdala were the lands lying in the vicinity of Magdala, which was a town (*ra mira*) of Dalmanutha were the suburbs of the place, or the lands immediately adjoining it. If we suppose Dalmanutha to have been a village "in the coasts" of Magdala, and Jesus to have been in the immediate vicinity of the former, we have the exact conception furnished by the accounts when combined. Mark, as usual, is more specific than Matthew in regard to the locality. [p.311].

2. Verse 11: “And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.”
    - a. Matthew’s account: “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed” (Matt. 16:1-4).
    - b. Mark’s report, being shorter and more pointed, does not mention the Sadducees being with the other important group, the Pharisees. It was highly unusual for these two warring sects to act in accord, but in opposing their common enemy (Jesus), they were willing to set aside their considerable differences. There was hardly anything they agreed on: The Sadducees rejected the resurrection, angels, and spirits; the Pharisees believed in all of these (Acts 23:6-9).
    - c. The Sadducees were the materialists of the day; the Pharisees were the presumptuous tradition-binders.
      - 1) Acts 23:6-9: “But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”
      - 2) In the above episode, Paul perceived that the group was made up of Sadducees and Pharisees. He cried out loudly that he had a background as a Pharisee, and that it was over the subject of the resurrection of the dead that had caused him to be called into question. These two religious sects had been long divided over this very issue, plus belief in angels and spirits; the Pharisees believed all three doctrines and the Sadducees denied them all. The multitude was divided along the lines of the two groups represented. They began to bicker over the time-worn issues.
    - d. “This is the first and only time that the Pharisees and Sadducees are mentioned as acting in concert against Jesus. Their extreme jealousy toward each other, and the very different grounds on which they were opposed to Jesus, rendered concert of action almost impossible. The chief cause for which the Pharisees opposed, was his disregard of their traditions; and in this the Sadducees sympathized with Jesus, because they also denied the authority of tradition. In regard to his miracles they occupied common ground and hence their agreement in asking for a sign from heaven” (McGarvey, p.141).
    - e. Enemies have often become friends after uniting in a common opposition of a mutual foe. Herod and Pilate found friendship in disposing of the case of Christ (Luke 23:12; cf. 2 Kings 19). The warring sects of the modern era have found common cause when they joined forces in opposition to our preaching of the truth. The Baptists have gladly accepted the assistance of the Methodists in opposing us on the purpose of baptism, although these two groups have fought many battles between themselves over the action of baptism.
  3. Verse 12: “And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.”
    - a. These evil men came tempting the Lord by asking him for a sign from heaven. In Matthew chapter twelve, he had been asked for a sign which he properly refused to give. In that case, he had just performed a notable miracle which they had ignored; it would have been fruitless to do another. In the present case, they had discounted the value of the various miracles he had already done, some in their presence, so what good would another sign be?
      - 1) “They did not really wish to see a sign from heaven, that they might believe in him, or that others might believe in him; but either they wished him to fail to show a sign, or they hoped to prove to the multitude that, by his not producing a sign, he was not the Messiah, and if not the Messiah, he was an impostor and should be put to death” (Boles, Matthew, p.338).
      - 2) God had used Old Testament prophets to produce certain signs “from heaven”—manna (Ex. 16:4; Jn. 6:31); thunder (1 Sam. 12:16-18); change in the sundial (Isa. 38:8). Christ had more than equaled these signs.
    - b. False teachers will try to avoid exposure by appealing to this passage and Matthew 12:38 when they are asked for proof of their assertions. Their situation is very different from the Lord’s, thus they
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misuse the argument. They have not and cannot produce even one miraculous sign! If they could, a second would not be necessary—but there must be a first!

- c. Our Lord groaned (sighed) deeply in his heart: At human misery he sighed (chap. 7:34); at human sin amounting to criminal inability to discern the truth he sighed deeply in his spirit.—a touch of personal remembrance peculiar to Mark. This deep sigh, or groan, was the sign of the chafing of his spirit against spiritual barriers. To the physically deaf he could say “Ephphatha,” but not to these spiritually hardened and self-imprisoned Pharisees [see Johnson].
  - d. *There shall no sign be given ...* This means “no sign like they wanted” would be given and does not conflict in any way with the exceptions cited in Matthew and Luke, nor should it be supposed that the other two evangelists were reporting exactly the same incident as here. Such a demand by the Pharisees was probably made over and over. Matthew made an exception in that “the sign of the prophet Jonah” would indeed be given that generation, as did also Luke (Matthew 12:38-39; Luke 11:29-30). Mark's inclusion of this demand in a different context, strongly suggests that this Pharisaical demand was repeated. It would not have been right for Jesus to have yielded to such a demand, and therefore he refused. It would also have been utterly futile to have yielded. As Luke recorded, Jesus said, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31).
4. Verse 13: “And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.”
- a. He and his disciples entered again into the ship and headed for the other side, *i.e.*, to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.
  - b. The sea of Galilee was only six or seven miles wide at the widest place; the Lord and his apostles must have crossed it a good many times. It served as a natural barrier between Christ and the territory controlled by the Pharisees, and Jesus often found it expedient to place its sparkling waters between himself and his enemies until the time of his offering himself upon the cross arrived. [See Coffman].

C. Mark 8:14-21: Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees.

1. Verses 14-15: “Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.”
  - a. The disciples had forgotten to procure bread for their journey (which implies they customarily brought such provisions along). When Christ gave them warning against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought he was rebuking them for forgetting the bread. But the Lord was speaking of the false doctrines and practices which pertained to these people. Their “leaven” was their false beliefs and practices.
  - b. “The Sadducees were materialists, denying any spiritual life, any possibility of a resurrection, and the existence of angels (Matt. 22:30). The Pharisees were hypocrites, dealing in falsehood. Both were secular, dominated by earthly considerations exclusively. They were full of snobbery and pride and made every possible appeal to selfishness, prejudice, and bias. They even tortured the scriptures to invent arguments against him, and finally, they relied upon force to achieve their ends” (Coffman, Matthew, p.242).
2. Verses 16-17: “And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?”
  - a. Jesus rebuffed the disciples for misunderstanding his meaning and for the attendant lack of faith. “Their mistake implies weakness of faith, because Jesus had given abundant evidence of his ability to feed them whether they had with them much bread or little. If they had remembered the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand, they would not have been much concerned about bread” (McGarvey, p.142).
  - b. “How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matt. 16:11-12).
    - 1) The misunderstanding of the disciples illustrates how important it is that we take note of the exact words which are used in divine instructions. If the Lord had meant “bread” he would have used that word; instead of bread, he used “leaven.”
    - 2) Many today misapprehend plain Bible statements because they do not look carefully at the exact wording of the text, or read into the text a meaning that was not intended. Since the destiny of our

souls is at stake, it behooves us to exert the greatest possible effort, and to do so intelligently, to understand the meaning of the Bible.

- c. “As soon as they learned that he was using the term leaven in a metaphorical sense, they understood the remark, for the metaphor was simple and familiar” (McGarvey, p.142).
3. Verses 18-21: “Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?”
  - a. The fact that Christ specifically mentions both of the miraculous feedings shows beyond successful denial that these were two separate incidents, and not an error by the New Testament writers.
  - b. Johnson:
    - 1) In Matthew the final question, “Do ye not yet understand?” is expanded into a direct intimation that the warning did not refer to bread. Matthew adds also that they did at last perceive that he was warning them against the teaching or the principles of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But it is quite certain that they did not take in his full meaning, and that when the subject was dropped he knew that his utterance had not reached its aim. He had had to expend the energy that might have been given to the work of enforcing an idea in the vain effort to get it apprehended, and then to withdraw baffled by the unreceptiveness of his hearers. It was not his method to urge truth upon them faster than they were able to receive it.
    - 2) John 16:12 illustrates his real method: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now..”—Observe, again, the distinct reference in these questions to the two separate miracles of feeding—a reference which cannot possibly be removed from the passage without utterly destroying one of the most vivid and self-witnessing scenes in the whole Gospel narrative. Observe, again, too, that in referring here to the first miracle Jesus employs the word *cophinus* in mentioning the baskets, and in referring to the second the word *spuris*, preserving the very distinction that has been made in the two narratives of Mark.” (V.N.Clarke).

#### D. Mark 8:22-26: Another Blind Man.

1. Verse 22: “And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.”
  - a. Bethsaida.—This is not the Bethsaida in which Peter, Andrew, and Philip had formerly resided (see note, Matt xi. 21), but another Bethsaida, afterward called Julias, which was situated on the east bank of the Jordan, just above its entrance into the lake of Galilee. (See Smith’s Dictionary, Art. Bethsaida, 2.) This is evident from the fact that the company of Jesus had crossed from the west to the north-east side of the lake, in approaching the place. (Verses 10, 13; comp, note, Matt. xvi. 5.)
  - b. See Johnson:
    - 1) Mark here records a miracle not given in the other gospels, one of the very few passages entirely peculiar to him .... So far as his design can be conjectured, it was probably to illustrate and exemplify still further our Lord’s variety of method in the working of his cures, by stating a case (perhaps the only one) in which the cure was gradual. He cometh, or, according to the older manuscripts, they come, i.e. Jesus and his company, the twelve apostles and perhaps some others who attended him from place to place.
    - 2) To (or into) Bethsaida ... probably occasioned by the resemblance of the names, both which are compounded with the Hebrew beth (a house or place.) Bethsaida is supposed by some to be the town so called in Galilee, the birthplace of Andrew and Peter (John 1, 44); but the best interpreters and highest geographical authorities understand it of Bethsaida in Perea, on the north-east shore of the lake in a solitude near which (or belonging to it) the five thousand were fed. This Bethsaida was distinguished from the other by its Greek or Roman name, Julius, which it bore in honour of a daughter of Augustus.
    - 3) They, indefinitely, some men, certain persons, otherwise unknown; or more specifically, the man’s relatives, friends, neighbours. A blind (man), not one born blind (as in John 9:1), for he knew the shape of trees (see below, on v. 24) but blinded by disease or accident. Besought, in Greek beseech, the graphic or descriptive present being still continued.
2. Verses 23-24: “And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.”

- a. ASV: "And he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, Seest thou aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking."
  - b. Jesus led the blind man out of town. In some way, the Lord applied spit to the eyes of this blind man. It seems unseemly to us to speak of spitting into someone's eyes. In the case of the man who had been born blind (John 9), the Lord gave him sight by this method: "When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:6-7). Perhaps Christ used a similar method in our present text.
  - c. After putting his hands on them, Jesus asked the man to look up as tell what he saw. His eyesight was not entirely restored, for he said he saw men, as though they were trees, walking.
  - d. This shows that the Lord could give sight to a blind man by degrees or in stages. The complete cure of this man's ailment occurred with the span of no more than a few moments.
3. Verses 25-26: "After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."
- a. He put his hand on the man upon the man's eyes and had him took up. His eyesight was complete and fully restored! He saw men clearly.
  - b. For some good reason, Jesus instructed the man to go to his house, not to go into town.

E. Mark 8:27-33: Thou Art the Christ.

1. Verse 27: "And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?"
  - a. Other accounts of this episode
    - 1) Matthew 16:13-20: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ."
    - 2) Luke 9:18-21: "And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing."
  - b. They had crossed the sea to the northeastern shore (cf. 16:5; Mark 9:10-27). When they arrived in the area of Caesarea Philippi, he raised an important question which introduced this most important exchange.
    - 1) This city was "built by Philip the Tetrarch, situated at the sources of the Jordan, near the foot of Mount Hermon (9000'), in the midst of magnificent scenery. It was a Gentile city, often called Paneas (Not Baniyas), because the god Pan was worshiped there. The other Caesarea on the sea coast, was called, for distinction, Caesarea Palestina" (Coffman, Matthew, p.244).
    - 2) "It was built on a limestone terrace, and was strongly fortified. It was a very ancient city, and had been known by the name of Panium; but it had been recently improved by Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, and called by him Caesarea Philippi, in honor of himself and the reigning Caesar. It is the most northern point mentioned in the travels of Jesus" (McGarvey, p.143).
  - c. Jesus chose this setting in which to introduce the subject of his identity and to give utterance to the promise to build his church. Thus, the question: "Who do men say that I the son of man am?" We may be sure that he was not asking for information. The disciples had only recently returned from their limited commission, and were in a position to give the Lord a fair statement of current thought concerning himself.

- d. "The world's greatest question is the one here propounded, Who is Jesus? In answer to it the Nazarenes had said that he was only the son of the carpenter; yet they acknowledged that on this hypothesis they could not account for his wisdom and his mighty works. Throughout the other parts of Galilee it was admitted that he was something more, but what he was more than this was a matter of dispute then, and it has been ever since. Concerning Jesus alone, of all the men of history, has such a question existed" (McGarvey, p.143).
  - e. The different views that the people of the time had of him are accounted for by the circumstances of the individuals involved and the different aspects shown in his activities. "The opinion that he was John the Baptist raised from the dead, as we have already seen (Matt. 14:2), arose from the superstition of the people, and was adopted by Herod, as a natural result of his guilty fears. Some thought that he was the prophet Elijah returned again to earth, because of the boldness with which he denounced the sins of the age; while this characteristic, combined with the sorrowful tone of his speech, suggested to others that he was Jeremiah. Others, unable to decide which prophet he most resembled, thought that he was 'one of the prophets.' None regarded him as less than a prophet, and therefore all were inexcusable for not accepting the account which he gave of himself" (McGarvey, *ibid.*).
  - f. "The Jews cherished a tradition that this Elijah would come back to earth; they thought that when he did come back he would do mighty wonders; they also misunderstood the prophecies which referred to John the Baptist and Jesus as Elijah" (Boles, pp.342f).
  - g. It is amazing that none of the popular beliefs at the time identified Jesus as the Messiah; they thought he might be any of the great prophets but did not think of him as the Promised One. "Many at first recognized him as the Messiah (John 1:41; 4:30); but Satan, in the manner of the parable, had come and stolen the truth out of their hearts....This belief (that he was the Messiah) no longer existed" (Coffman, p.245).
  - h. The people nevertheless held Jesus in high esteem, identifying him with some of the greatest men of their heritage. While Elijah, Jeremiah, and other prophets were truly great men, Jesus was much their superior.
2. Verses 28-29: "And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?** And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ."
    - a. The Lord had reserved this question to the most timely moment. They had repeated the views of the multitudes; the time had come to elicit from them their views of him.
    - b. "Who do you say that I am?" This is a question which every one must answer, and do so correctly, if he is to have hope of glory. This is the real question of that discussion.
    - c. The apostle Peter quickly gave the true reply: Thou art the Christ. Matthew reports his full reply: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).
      - 1) Peter, who was usually the spokesman for the twelve, gave answer to the question with boldness and accuracy. His response was not on the same basis as those reported from the multitudes: he did not say he **thought** Jesus was the Christ, but "Thou art!" Did he fully comprehend the implications of this confession? It is clear from his statements in the latter part of this chapter that he did not properly grasp the nature of the Lord's coming kingdom, and from the upcoming transfiguration episode it appears that he did not grasp how all-encompassing was the authority of Jesus.
      - 2) Peter affirmed that Jesus is the Christ. The term "Christ" means "the anointed one." Prophets, priests, and kings received an anointing when they were installed into office. Christ is all of these at once, thus is the Anointed One of God. "Messiah" is the Hebrew term for the Greek "Christos" (Christ).
      - 3) Peter affirmed that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. "The term 'Son of God' truly denotes the deity of Christ. It implies a unity of being and nature with the Father which none other has ever possessed. When the Hebrews writer argued for the superiority of Christ, he based one of his arguments on the fact that Christ was and is superior to the angels. He sustained this fact by the following: 'Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, **Thou are my Son,** and this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?...But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever' (Heb. 1:4,5,8a)" (*Spiritual Sword*, July, 1987), p.29). The name (Son of God) identifies Jesus with the Father. He is equal with God in all respects save that of authority (John 13:16; 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).
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- d. The term “Living God” speaks volumes regarding the unlimited, timeless, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent nature of the Almighty Father. He has ever been and will always be; he had no beginning and will have no end: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14).
- 1) This is the Good Confession. It is more than the acknowledgment that Jesus is the Messiah of the Hebrews. It also affirms that Jesus sustains to the Father the relationship of Son. This confession forms the solid ground upon which Christianity is based.
  - 2) “His answer contains two propositions: first, that Jesus was the Christ; second, that Jesus was the Son of the living God. The former identified him as the long-expected deliverer of whom the prophets had written; and the latter declared him, what the Jews had not expected their Messiah to be, the Son of God. This was an intelligent confession of the whole truth concerning the personality of Jesus” (McGarvey, p.144).
- e. Our present study will properly be enhanced to consider some of the information included in Matthew’s report: “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:17).
- 1) The expression *Bar-Jonah* means “son of Jonah.” *Bar* is the Syriac for the Hebrew *Ben*, each of which means “son of.” Thus, Peter’s father was named Jonah. Peter had affirmed that Jesus was the Son of God; Jesus says that Peter is the son of Jonah. The Lord states that Peter enjoys a state of blessing because of the confession he had made. “Fortunate (blessed) indeed are those individuals who have, with the confidence and conviction of Peter, acknowledged this great truth. (Phil. 2:5-11)” (ALC, 1984, p.46).
  - 2) “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” The term “flesh and blood” refers to mankind. Peter did not learn the great truth of his confession from human sources, but from God.
    - a) Galatians 1:16: “To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”
    - b) Ephesians 6:12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Hebrews 2:14: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”
  - 3) But how had the Father shown this to Peter? Jesus did not specifically say how. “The great truth that Jesus is God’s Son is not taught by human wisdom but in that wisdom which is from above. To the contrary, human wisdom is ever active and diligent to blur and erase that truth from men’s minds and hearts” (ALC, 1984, p.247). God had revealed it through the words and works of Jesus, as well as by his own voice from heaven in Matthew 3:17: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” The proposition of his Divine Sonship is declared by what Jesus did in his public ministry: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). Peter and the other apostles, having been with the Lord for perhaps three years, witnessing his works and hearing his words, could properly draw the conclusion expressed in Peter’s confession.
  - 4) How is Christ the “son” of God, since he is Deity, an eternal being? (Micah 5:2; Heb. 1:1-8). The Second Person of the Godhead (Christ) is spoken of as the “Son of God,” but this does not imply that there was a time when Christ did not exist. If that were the case, he could not be deity; a divine person has no beginning or end. In what sense is Christ the “Son” of God?
    - a) In the sense that the Father has greater authority, as is also the case between an earthly father and his son. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him” (John 13:16). God sent Christ into the world (John 6:44); Christ sent the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). The only distinction between the members of the Godhead is in the realm of authority.
    - b) In the sense that he brought him forth into the world as a member of the human family. “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, **this day have I begotten thee?** And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Heb. 1:5). God audibly declared him to be his beloved Son on two great occasions: at his baptism (Matt. 3:15-17) and at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5).
    - c) In the sense that he raised him up from the dead.

- (1) Psalms 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; **this day have I begotten thee.**"
- (2) Acts 13:33: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, **this day have I begotten thee.**"
- d) "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, ASV).
- f. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17. "The point of comparison in 'I also' is this, Peter made a certain declaration with reference to Jesus, and now Jesus in his turn, does the same with reference to Peter. The emphasis is not on 'Thou are Peter' over against 'Thou are the Christ,' but on 'I also.' The Father has revealed to you one truth, and **I also** will tell you another" (ALC, 1959, p.158).
- 1) **Thou are Peter.** The word translated "Peter" is the Greek word "*Petros*." It is in the masculine gender, and is used as an appellation for Simon. It means "stone." It was given to Simon by Jesus (John 1:42) who anticipated correctly that Simon would go on to become a firm, rock-like force in the church of Christ. *Petros* means "a single stone."
- 2) **And upon this rock I will build my church.** The word "rock" here is from a different Greek word, *Petra* which is feminine gender. *Petros* and *petra* do not refer to the same person or thing. W.E. Vine (p.302) defines *petra* as a mass of rock, as distinct from *petros* (a detached stone or boulder, a stone that might be thrown or easily moved). To see how *petra* is used in the New Testament indicates the difference between the two Greek words.
- a) Matthew 7:24-25: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a **rock**: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a **rock**."
- b) Matthew 27:51,60: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the **rocks** rent....And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the **rock**: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."
- c) Luke 6:48: "He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a **rock**: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a **rock**."
- d) Luke 8:6: "And some fell upon a **rock**; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture."
- e) Romans 9:33: "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and **rock** of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."
- f) 1 Corinthians 10:4: "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that **Rock** was Christ."
- g) Revelation 6:15-16: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the **rocks** of the mountains; And said to the mountains and **rocks**, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."
- 3) Having seen the distinction the Bible makes between *petros* and *petra*, it is thus very obvious that Jesus did not say that he would build his church upon Peter (*petros*), but upon *petra*, something far more substantial and reliable than a stone.
- a) "Yes, the words are similar, but what of it? Similarity of words does not even imply similarity of meaning, much less identical meaning. An old rancher requested his son to take one of his favorite horses and have him *shod*. A little while later he heard gunfire back of the corral and learned to his dismay that his son had *shot* the horse! The son said, 'I'm sorry, Dad, I thought you said to have him *shot*, and I thought I could do it as well as anyone else!'" (Coffman, p.248).

- b) “To what the term **rock** refers, whether to Peter, to Christ, or to the truth which Peter confessed concerning Jesus, has been a matter of much disputation. In a highly figurative passage like this, it is important that we take into view all of the imagery employed; otherwise we are likely to overlook the significance of some parts, and to form distorted conceptions of others....
- (1) “Observe, then, that the leading image of this and following verse is that of two opposing cities, one representing the kingdom of heaven, and the other representing the kingdom of hades. The former is represented as about to be built on a rock, its builder, its gatekeeper, and its keys are mentioned, and the assurance is given that the gates of the latter city shall not prevail against it. Of the former city Jesus is the builder; Peter is the gate-keeper, for to him the keys are given; and the foundation on which its walls were to be erected, like that of Caesarea Philippi, which was close at hand and in all probability supplied the imagery, is a solid rock.
  - (2) “Now, it is impossible, without throwing this imagery into confusion, to make either Jesus or Peter the rock; for Jesus assigns to himself the position of the builder, or chief architect, and he assigns to Peter that of gate-keeper, or holder of the keys....
  - (3) “The rock, then, must represent some other object of thought in the context, and this can be no other than the truth which Peter had just confessed concerning Jesus. This truth, that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the most fundamental truth in the Christian system—it is that on which the whole superstructure depends; and it is therefore most appropriately represented by the rock in the Savior’s picture” (McGarvey, pp.144f).
- c) The words of the text are inscribed in four-foot-high gold letters inside the so-called St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The claim of this apostate religious organization is that Christ founded the church upon Peter, and that Peter became the first pope, and that papal office has passed down through the centuries to the present pope in an unbroken stream. However, none of this assertion is true; and biblical evidence uproots the whole scheme.
- d) “The well known truth that the Greek text does not allow, and indeed refutes, their contention gives rise to all kinds of speculations and appeals to the so-called Aramaic Original....
- (1) “However, it must be allowed by all that the Greek text of the New Testament is all that has come down from antiquity. Therefore, all arguments from the Aramaic should be rejected till it can be produced and authenticated. Certainly, it is evil to make an argument, upon so vital a point as this, from a version that does not exist except in theory, which has never been seen, and which, in all probability, if it were to appear, would doubtless confirm rather than deny the difference in those two words.
  - (2) “All appeals to the Aramaic are, by implication, a repudiation of *this* text; and why repudiate it if, as some say, it makes Peter the rock on which Jesus built the church? He that has eyes to see, let him see!” (Coffman, p.249).
- 4) “If it be asked, why did Jesus say ‘Thou art Peter,’ unless he intended to make him the rock, we answer, that, like the expression Bar-jona, it was a very natural re-echoing of Peter’s own mode of address. Peter had said, ‘Thou art the Christ,’ giving Jesus his official title, and ‘the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answers, ‘Simon, son of Jonah,’ ‘Thou art Peter’—the symbolical name which had long since been given him (John 1:42), and which referred to the solidity of character he was yet to acquire though he showed very little promise at present.
- a) “As for the supposition that Jesus is himself the rock, there is nothing in the context to even suggest it. It is suggested by other passages in which he is called a stone or a foundation. But in those passages it will be found that the imagery is entirely different. When Paul says, ‘Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor. 3:11), the image is not that of a city built on a natural rock, but that of a single building (verse 9), and of its artificial foundation which Paul had laid....
  - b) “When Paul says that the Gentiles are ‘built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,’ the image is that of a temple with the apostles and prophets for the layer of stones at the foundation, and Jesus for the chief corner-stone on which the two walls, Jewish and Gentile, meet, and by which they are held together.
  - c) “Again, when Jesus is represented as a stone rejected by the builders, but made by God the chief stone of the corner, the image is that of a company of men trying to build a house, but rejecting the only stone which had been cut for the chief corner, and therefore unable to go on with the work. (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-7.)
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- d) “As the imagery in all these passages is entirely different from that of the text, the former can not be allowed to control in the interpretation of the latter” (McGarvey, pp.145f). [The foundation of the church, therefore, is the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. If he is not that which Peter confessed him to be, and which he himself claimed to be, and which God Almighty affirmed that he indeed was, then there is nothing else upon which the kingdom of God could rest. Catholic theologians allege that Matthew wrote in Aramaic, and that the distinction between the words *petros* and *petra* is not made in that language. There is no proof that Matthew wrote in Aramaic].
- 5) **I will build my church.** Christ is the only one with the authority to do so. Notice that the church he planned to build was his, not John’s, or someone else’s. He paid the purchase price (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). He has all authority in the church (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The future tense is used which shows that the church did not begin during the days of Abraham, during the time of John the Baptist, or even during the personal ministry of Christ. The church is spoken of in the future tense prior to Acts 2, and in the present tense following Acts 2. All the evidence points undeniably to the Pentecost day of Acts 2 as the beginning date of the Lord’s church.
- 6) Another key word in the passage is **church**. It is translated from the Greek word, *ekklesia*. This is a compound word composed of *ek* (out or out of) and *kaleo* (to call). “The old Greeks had a pure democracy at one time, and when there were public meetings to be attended a herald was sent out to announce the occasion and call the citizens together. When they had assembled they were referred to as an *ekklesia*. Jesus selected that word as descriptive of his followers, called out of the world and into fellowship with himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit” (ALC, 1980, pp.163f).
- 7) The first time the word “church” occurs in the New Testament is in the passage now before us. The term was not coined by Christ or the apostles, but was in general use by the Greek-speaking people of that time. The word *ekklesia* (church) never had any religious significance among the Greeks; it literally meant the *called out ones* or an *assembly*, and it was applied to any body of people, called out and gathered together for any purpose. There is nothing about the original word itself which indicates the character of the assembly. It might have been religious, political, or an unorganized mob” (ALC, 1959, p.159). The context must be considered in order to determine the sense in which the word is used, for the New Testament uses the word in the several different ways:
- In a general sense, to embrace all the followers of Christ (Matt. 16:18). In a more restricted sense, to describe his disciples in a certain area such as Judea and Galilee (Acts 9:31; ASV).
  - To the disciples in a given community such as Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1).
  - To an assembly of Christians gathered for worship (1 Cor. 14:19,35).
  - The word *ekklesia* is used in reference to the Israelites in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).
  - It is used to describe the mob which gathered and demonstrated in Acts 19:32-41.
  - The context must be considered to determine the sense in which the word is used.
- 8) **The gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it.** Following are some views held by faithful brethren.
- “Many believe that this statement refers to the perpetuity of the church, but not so. If the Lord meant that the devil would never prevail against the church there would never have been an apostasy, which is too evident to argue here. Some say a clause cannot be the antecedent of a pronoun, hence, the Lord does not have reference to building the church. Wrong again. Example: ‘The little boy ran away from home and went to town and his mother did not like it.’ Like what? The little boy, or what he did? Thus, Christ is speaking of the building of the church, and is simply saying, ‘I am going to be crucified, my body is going into the tomb, my spirit is going into the spirit world, but I shall break asunder the bars of hades, be raised from the dead, and build my church in spite of it’” (Roy Hearn).
  - “As we have remarked above, hades is contemplated as a walled city waging war against the church. Its gates are made the symbols of its power, because the military forces of an ancient city always issued forth from its gates, and the gates may be considered as sending them out. All the powers by which hades, the place of disembodied spirits, assails the Church, are included in the figure, the powers of demons, of Satan, and of death” (McGarvey, p.146). The Lord’s death would not prevent his resurrection from the dead and his building his church.

- c) "Hades is the place of the dead between death and the resurrection; and the practical meaning of the passage is that death would never be able to destroy all the members of the church at any one time. Other scriptures which teach the perpetuity of the church or kingdom of Christ are Dan. 2:44 and Heb. 12:28. Meyer, in commenting on this statement by Jesus, says, 'So securely will I build my church upon this rock, *that the gates of Hades will not be able to resist it*, will not prove stronger than it; indicating by means of a comparison, the great strength and stability of the edifice of the church, even when confronted with so powerful a structure as that of Hades, the gates of which, strong as they are, will not prove to be stronger than the building of the church'" (ALC, 1959, p.159).
- d) "Jesus simply meant that though he would be crucified, buried, yet he would arise from the dead and build his church; the powers of death or the unseen world, or 'the gates of Hades,' would not be able to hold him in the unseen realm and prevent his coming out and building his church" (Boles, p.346). "Jesus was yet to die, but the 'gates of Hades' could not keep his spirit confined to Hades, whither it went at death (see Acts 2:27,31), and thus prevent his building the church; and Hades (or death) could not keep its members confined and thus destroy the church, for Jesus had the 'keys of death and of Hades (the place of departed spirits between death and the resurrection)' (Rev. 1:18), which meant he would be able to raise the dead, and would do so (John 5:28,29)" (ALC, 1980, p.167).
- e) It appears to this writer that the most logical, consistent view is that the Lord is promising that nothing, not even the hadean realm into which he would enter at death, would preclude his building the church. The subject being discussed in the verse is the establishment of the church. As brother Hearn noted, the church has indeed been prevailed against in that it disappeared from historical view during the long years of the Dark Ages.
- f) Even Jesus raised the question, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the] faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The word of God will never be destroyed; as long as the Bible remains (since it is the seed of the kingdom—Luke 8:11), the church (kingdom) will exist at least in seed form. But that does not guarantee that there will be members of the church alive and faithful on the earth during all the years from Acts 2 till the end of time.
- g) Most likely there will be, but the promise of our text does not seem to make that point. One point that appears to be against this view: the word *it* is in the feminine gender. However, it is likely this gender is necessary grammatically to modify a previous feminine word (so it has been asserted).
- g. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19).
- 1) The promise was vouchsafed to Peter. The latter promise was given also to the other apostles (cf. Matt. 18:18). But to Peter were given the "keys." One who possesses keys has certain prerogatives; he has access to the secured area beyond the lock (cf. Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1; Isa. 22:22). The promise of the keys to be given to Peter made him the porter and gave him the right to open the door of the kingdom to those who were entitled to enter it.
  - 2) He used the keys to open the kingdom to those Jews in Acts 2 who were minded to obey the gospel; he opened the kingdom to the first Gentiles (Acts 10, 11) who entered; he was also the one who revealed to Simon what he must do to be restored after having fallen from grace (Acts 8:20-22).
  - 3) These "keys" are to be understood as a figure of speech describing the inspired messages Peter was to deliver by which access into the kingdom was gained by those indicated above. Since these gates were first opened, they have never been closed, thus the keys have been used no more.
  - 4) There is no special significance to the plural (keys). The same keys used to open the door for the Jews was also used to open the door for the Gentiles. There is only one gospel, and it is for all (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13ff). All must submit to the same terms to be admitted into the kingdom.
- h. "Kingdom of heaven" is used interchangeably with "my church" of the preceding verse. These are simply two different descriptions of that special group of people who belong to Christ. "Church" describes their relationship to the world (they have been called out of the world); "kingdom" is a type of government (presided over by a king who has all authority), thus describes the method by which the Lord directs his people. The use of these terms interchangeably shows that the same organization is being described.
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- i. Many modern religious groups (the majority of Protestant groups) deny that the kingdom has been established. This denial rejects the plain implications of the text. That the kingdom of Christ and the church of Christ are identical is further demonstrated by the following:
  - 1) Christ said that the Lord's supper would be eaten in the kingdom (Luke 22:29-30); but 1 Corinthians 11:23-30 shows that it is eaten in the church (i.e., by the church); if the kingdom has not come, there is no authority for anyone to eat the Supper today.
  - 2) Peter used the "keys" to "open" the church (Acts 2); but the keys pertained to the kingdom; therefore, the church and the kingdom are the same institution.
3. Verse 30: "And he charged them that they should tell no man of him."
  - a. Christ charged the apostles to tell no man about the great truth which Peter confessed on this very notable occasion! The timing of his arrest, trials, conviction and crucifixion was paramount. He had escaped the hands of his enemies on more than one occasion. He rejected being forced upon the throne (John 6:15). The time and circumstances were not right. There were also many Old Testament prophecies which must first be fulfilled, as well as others which he had himself announced in his great mission.
  - b. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (Gal. 4:4). The foregoing material logically leads to Paul's statement here about God sending Christ into the world to redeem the lost. The apostle only mentions the Jews in these two verses, but they are representative of the whole race. God dispatched his Son into the world when the time was right. There are definite indicators that the timing of the first advent was perfect.
    - 1) Sin had been fully identified as the transgression of God's will. Universal rebellion against God had brought universal suffering and condemnation, with no hope of escape without Christ.
      - a) Psalms 14:1-4: "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD."
      - b) Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
      - c) Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."
    - 2) Both Jew and Gentile had been taught that they cannot save themselves: "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).
    - 3) God had shown man that he could not be saved by the law of Moses, and that the natural religions of the Gentiles were likewise without any saving power.
    - 4) Thinking men had learned that they needed the services of a special Savior.
    - 5) Rome had given the world an orderly system of civil law, constructed a network of roads which facilitated travel, established an empire that enabled men to travel without encountering closed borders, and ruled over a world that was presently at peace.
    - 6) The Greeks had provided a language that was able uniquely to express the message of God's word to human minds clearly and accurately.
    - 7) Morality was at a low ebb in all lands, even among the Jews. Mankind was ripe for the high standard of the gospel.
    - 8) Religion was at an extremely low point; every kind of perverted belief and practice had been invented. Many were able to see the foolishness of idolatry, and wanted something better.
  - c. God sent forth his Son. Christ bears the relation of sonship to God the Father, but that does not mean that there was a time when Christ did not exist.
    - 1) The relationship indicated by sonship is that of authority. God has greater authority than the Son.
      - a) 1 Corinthians 15:27: "For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him."
      - b) John 13:16: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."
      - c) God sent Christ (John 3:17); Christ sent the Holy Spirit (John 16:7).

- 2) Christ's sonship to God is also ascribed to the fact that the Father effected the means by which our Lord entered the world.
    - a) Psalms 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee."
    - b) Hebrews 1:5-6: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."
  - 3) His sonship is also declared in his resurrection from the dead.
    - a) Acts 13:33: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."
    - b) Romans 1:4: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."
  - 4) The sonship of Christ is also seen in the fact that God made him High Priest. "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee" (Heb. 5:5).
  - d. Jesus was "made of a woman." No man was involved in the conception of his corporal body within the womb of Mary.
    - 1) Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."
    - 2) Matthew 1:18-25: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."
  - e. The miraculous nature of his conception is undeniable to one who believes the Scriptures. His birth of a virgin was predicted seven centuries before the fact. The virgin birth is taught in the first prediction of the Messiah, in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Our Lord's physical body was produced without the seed of man; only the seed of woman was used in the miraculous conception.
  - f. The conception and birth of Christ had to do only with his physical body, which he needed in order to fulfill his earthly mission. But his existence did not begin with the formation of that body.
    - 1) Hebrews 10:5: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me."
    - 2) Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting."
    - 3) John 8:56-58: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."
    - 4) John 1:1-3,14: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."
  - g. The physical body of Christ was made during the time when the Mosaic Law was in effect. His life on earth was governed by the Mosaic Law, which he kept perfectly. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we*
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*are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15). If everyone understood the fact that he lived and died under the Old Testament law, common mistakes would be avoided.

- 1) All would know that the salvation of aliens today is not accomplished like that of the penitent thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43). The thief received pardon prior to the gospel going into effect, since the Lord had not yet died (cf. Heb. 9:15-17).
- 2) It would be seen clearly that salvation for us today is not effected after the manner in which the palsied man was forgiven (Mark 2:1-12), or after the example of the sinful woman (Luke 7:48).
- 3) The will of Christ (the gospel system) could not take effect until his death.
  - a) Hebrews 9:15-17: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."
  - b) Galatians 3:15: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto."
  - c) Ephesians 2:14-15: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace."
  - d) Colossians 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."
- 4) Without a fleshly body, he could not have become a sacrifice; in fact, he could not have died. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels **for the suffering of death**, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).
- h. The purpose of Christ's earthly mission was to redeem the lost. They are described here as those who were under the law. The context shows that the Mosaic Law is the law under consideration. But since he did not come to save only the Jews, the redemption of all is included. Of course, salvation is not obtained by all; it is offered to all, but only those who will believe and obey the gospel are redeemed.
  - 1) The Jews needed to be redeemed from the curse of the law. It had "shut up" all of its adherents under the condemnation of sin, for they all violated it if they lived long enough. As stated many times in these remarks, the law did not have the power to remove guilt (cf. Acts 13:38-39).
  - 2) The Gentiles needed to be redeemed from the curse of their religious systems. Their religions were sinful in that they honored the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18-32). Their lives were filled with all kinds of filthy deeds. This was likewise true of the non-religious. They all needed the redemption which the Savior offered.
- i. The consequence of redemption is we receive the adoption as sons. The Old Testament Jews were born into God's fleshly family (Israel); in the New Testament, we enter God's spiritual nation by means of the new birth (John 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38).
  - 1) His spiritual nation is also called the church, the kingdom, the body of Christ, and the family of God. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ....But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).
  - 2) The process by which we become Christians is the process by which we are adopted into God's spiritual family. To be a child of God is to be his heir.
    - a) Galatians 3:29: "And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
    - b) Romans 8:15-18: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be *compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

- j. The following chart lists additional comparisons between the kingdom and the church:

<b>KINGDOM</b>	<b>CHURCH</b>
Col. 1:13-14	Acts 2:47
John 3:5 (water)	Eph. 5:26 (water)
1 Cor. 15:24 (to glory)	Eph. 5:26-27 (to glory)
Heb. 12:28-29 (glorifies God)	Eph. 3:20-21 (glorifies God)
Col. 1:13-14 (saved in)	Eph. 5:23 (saved in)
Luke 22:29-30 (Lord's Supper)	1 Cor. 11:23ff (Lord's Supper)
Christ is King (Rev. 19:16; Col. 1:13)	Christ is Head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23)
Unending (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28)	Unending (Eph. 3:21)
Same Apostles (Matt. 19:28)	Same Apostles (Eph. 2:20)
Same Message (Matt. 16:18-19)	Same Message (Rom. 10:8)
Parables (Matt. 13)	Parables (Matt. 13)
Mystery (Rom. 16:25; Mt. 13:11; Eph 3:8ff)	Mystery (Rom. 16:25; Mt. 13:11; Eph 3:8ff)
Israel of God (Matt. 19:28)	Israel of God (Gal. 6:16)
Washing (Mt. 19:28; John 3:5)	Washing (Tit. 3:5)

- k. Whatsoever thou shalt bind (or loose) shall be bound (or loosed) in heaven. The idea of binding and loosing was a rabbinic expression for requiring or forbidding or permitting. What is said to Peter in this statement is extended to all the apostles in Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23. The Lord never intended and Peter never became an infallible dictator over the church as the Catholic hierarchy claims (cf. Gal. 2:11-14; 2 Cor. 12:11-12).
- 1) Peter and the other apostles did not bind and loose according to their own designs; rather they were supernaturally guided in receiving and revealing the law of Christ (Mark 13:11; John 16:12-14; 15:26; Acts 2; Gal. 1:6-12; Rev. 22:18-19).
  - 2) The literal meaning of the Greek text is, "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." "And I will give to thee the keys of the reign of the heavens, and whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens" (Young's Literal Translation).
  - 3) From these considerations it is seen that the apostles did not arbitrarily bind and loose, but God did the binding and loosing through them by directing their words. The inspired message gave them did the binding and loosing.
4. Verse 31: And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly."
- a. This is the Lord's first plain statement to his apostles about his coming death; scholars say this was about six months before his crucifixion. He had begun early in his ministry to make obscure references to it but they did not apprehend his meaning:

- 1) John 2:19-22: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."
  - 2) John 3:14: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."
  - 3) Matthew 12:38-40: "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
  - b. "He had wisely postponed a plain declaration on the subject until the faith of the disciples had taken the definite shape just indicated by Peter's confession (verse 16), and had acquired sufficient strength to endure the shock which this announcement gave" (McGarvey, p.147).
  - c. His "ministry of sorrow" began after Peter's good confession and his promise to build his church. He knew full well what he was to encounter and be called on to endure in the near future. Following this passage is the account of the transfiguration scene in which Moses and Elijah appeared. Luke 9:31 shows that the subject of their conversation was "his decease...at Jerusalem."
  - d. Who but the Lord could have known what was to befall him and thus predict his death in such detail? "This marvelous prophecy of his own death and resurrection is without parallel in human history ....For Christ did not merely say, 'I will rise from the dead.' His graphic description of what would occur included these points: His death would occur at Jerusalem. The scribes, chief priests, and elders would have a part in it. He would suffer 'many things' at their hands. He would not merely die, but 'be killed,' a far different thing. The resurrection would occur 'the third day.' Proof that this prophecy of Christ was known throughout Palestine before the events took place is manifest in the sealed tomb and posted watch to guard his body and prevent any rumors that such a glorious thing actually occurred" (Coffman, p.255f).
  5. Verses 32-33: "And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."
    - a. Peter did not understand the Lord's mission or the nature of his kingdom. His notion was the common view among the Jews: the Messiah will rule over a material kingdom just as did David and Solomon. The Lord's pronouncement of his death at the hands of his enemies shocked Peter who realized that if that occurred, then the kingdom would not be coming as they had believed and preached; their prayers and labors would have been in vain. He would not have been in such a state of dismay, and would not have made the blunder this verse reports, if he had only grasped the true nature of the kingdom and of the Lord's rule.
    - b. "The conduct of Peter in taking Jesus aside and rebuking him, shows how severe the shock which the disciples received from this announcement. Peter seems to have dreaded its effect on the other disciples, as well as on the world; for he thought that such a termination of the career of Jesus would prove that he was not the Christ. In this Peter exemplified the common weakness of human judgment in spiritual matters, and the proneness of men, through a misguided judgment, to fight against their own best interests" (McGarvey, p.147).
    - c. His intention in what he did is praiseworthy, but misguided. His ignorance made him a tool of Satan in that he was pressing the Lord not to permit what was his duty to do. The devil desired the Lord to either commit sin or fail to do what God sent him to accomplish. Of course, the devil at this time did not know that God intended for Christ to die on the cross. No doubt Satan thought that the very best thing he could do for his own cause was to bring about the death of Christ, since he had failed to get him to succumb to sin (Mt. 4). Peter presumed to instruct the Lord in this case, and even to rebuke him (Coffman).
    - d. The same Peter who but just now had made so noble and spiritual confession, and received so high a blessing, now shows the weak and carnal side of his character. This world has many Peters, who wish to be wiser than Christ, and to prescribe to him what it is needful to do. [See Johnson].
    - e. "We are astonished at the boldness of Peter so soon after his confession that Jesus is the 'Son of the living God,' yet he does not hesitate to 'rebuke him.' 'Peter took him' means that he either took him
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to one side from the other apostles or that he took him by the hand and expostulated with him" (Boles, p.349).

6. Matthew's account: "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23).
  - a. Coffman points out that the Lord was not as stern with Peter as he was with Satan in Matthew 4. To Satan he said, "Get thee hence," but to Peter he said, "Get thee behind me." In his statement to the devil, the Lord was driving him from his presence; to Peter he was telling him to forsake his role as instructor and be a follower again.
  - b. "Peter received a severer rebuke than he administered. It was impossible to serve Satan more effectually than by dissuading Jesus from the death of which he had spoken; hence the metaphorical application of Satan's name to Peter. The vehemence with which Jesus spoke is also accounted for by the fact that he instinctively shrank from the dreaded sacrifice, and needed encouragement in regard to it instead of dissuasion" (McGarvey, p.147).
  - c. "Savorest thou" is an old expression meaning "thinkest thou." "Peter was tempting Jesus not to go to the cross as Satan did in the wilderness; and in his ignorance he had placed himself as a stumbling-block across the pathway of Jesus. Bruce notes that none are more formidable instruments of temptation than well-meaning friends, who care more for our comfort than for our character. Peter had a worldly conception of the kingdom which Christ came to establish" (ALC, 1959, p.160). Peter did not see the "things of God" clearly then—he would see them clearly later.
  - d. Jesus did not say that Peter was a devil or an evil tempter, but simply rebuked him for his misguided effort. Instead of a help, he was a hindrance. Johnson: Christ saw, with the lightning glance of his spirit, in the words of Peter a suggestion not so much of his as of Satan's. This is the very temptation that fell from the lips of Satan in the wilderness when he offered to surrender the kingdoms of this world to Jesus without his suffering on the cross. The Lord when he says, with sudden vehemence, "Get thee behind me Satan!" was not speaking directly to Peter but to the prince of darkness, who had for a moment taken possession of Peter's mind and lips. Peter had been greatly elated over the Messiahship of Jesus, but still expected an earthly king Messiah after the type of David, in whose kingdom he would have a great place. To hear the Lord talk of the cross was a cruel disappointment to his ambitious hopes

F. Mark 8:34-38: Take Up His Cross and Follow Me.

1. Verse 34: "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 16:24-28: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."
    - 2) Luke 9:23-27: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God."
  - b. In serving God, a willingness to endure hardship and even death is required. This is not because God is one who delights in human suffering; rather, such is needed in order for us to be shaped and prepared to stand in his presence. Sin is so awful that God cannot countenance it (Isa. 59:1-2; Rev. 21:25; 1 Per. 1:15-16; Matt. 5:9; Heb. 12:14). Tribulations and hardships are designed to purify us as the furnace is intended to purify the gold ore by burning off the dross. Compare: "But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).
  - c. "To deny oneself is to avoid ease or indulgence; to take up the cross is to endure reproach or dishonor in the eyes of the world. The latter expression came into use from the fact that criminals who were to be crucified carried their own crosses to the place of execution. Peter had objected, as recorded in the preceding paragraph, to the contemplated death of Jesus, and now he and his fellows are taught

- that not only must this be endured, but they must themselves take up the cross and follow his example; and so must all who would be his followers" (McGarvey, p.148).
- d. "Cross-bearing is widely misunderstood. It is not old age, poverty, taxes, illness, or bad weather, or any other discomfiture of life that comes unavoidably into the lives of men. It is the acceptance, for the sake of the will of God, of some burdens, otherwise avoidable, but which are undertaken out of a pure desire to fulfill the Master's purpose. The centrality of the cross in Christ's religion was here affirmed by Christ at the very moment when one of his most beloved apostles had spoken against it" (Coffman, p.258).
2. Verse 35: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."
    - a. "These words are taken from the period of bitter persecution, when Christians were brought before cruel pagan governors or mobs, not knowing what fate would befall them. If one, under such circumstances, should deny Jesus, or [renounce] the faith of a Christian, in order to save his life, that one was not worthy of Jesus; he might save his temporal life by so doing, but he would lose his spiritual life and life eternal; but the one who in steadfastness of faith remained loyal to Jesus might lose his physical life, but would gain spiritual and eternal life" (Boles, p.351).
    - b. "In this verse there is a play on the two meanings of the word life, temporal and eternal. Whoever, by failing to follow Jesus, would save life in the one sense, would lose it in the other, and *vice versa*" (McGarvey, p.148).
    - c. One must give himself fully to do the Lord's will and be the Lord's person if he expects to be a citizen in heaven.
  3. Verses 36-37: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
    - a. Compare: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).
    - b. "The true meaning of this appears clearer in the AV which uses 'soul' instead of 'life.' Man possesses a body, but he is a soul. A soul is of more value than the whole world, as Jesus said. The truth of this appears through the application of any of the common criteria for determining value: Cost: It cost the blood of Christ to redeem one soul. Permanence: A soul will exist till the worlds have passed away. Affection: God loved the soul enough to reclaim it. Uniqueness: No two souls are identical." (Coffman, p.259).
    - c. "The solemn truth here declared was most appropriate in this connection, because Peter's opposition to his Lord's death was inspired chiefly by his expectation that the latter would establish an earthly kingdom and conquer the whole world. He is taught that something far more valuable than the whole world is to be gained by following Christ, even though it should involve the loss of life" (McGarvey, p.148).
    - d. "In John 11:25,26 Jesus teaches a similar truth with respect to living and dying. The loss of the present life is temporal death; the loss of the future life is death eternal" (Boles, p.351).
    - e. Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away." What Matthew calls "his soul" Luke calls "himself." The soul is the real individual; one does not have a soul, rather he is a soul.
  4. Verse 38: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."
    - a. "The fact here declared furnishes proof of the preceding remarks concerning the loss and gain of life. If men are to be finally rewarded according to their works, all the preceding remarks must be true. That the final coming of Christ is the coming here mentioned is evident from the three facts, that it is a coming 'in the glory of his Father;' it is to be 'with his holy angels;' and he is then to 'reward every man according to his works'" (McGarvey, p.148).
    - b. No mere man could have accurately made the statement of the text. This is a prophecy encompassing his coming, the general resurrection of the dead, and the final Judgment.
    - c. The basis of the Judgment will be the word of Christ (John 12:48) and the works of men. Our lives will be measured by the inspired word of the Lord (Rev. 20:12).
    - d. We are not told how many angels will accompany him when he comes again, but Jude says he will come with "ten thousands of his saints" (holy ones—ASV), apparently referring to angels, not men. This number could be a "perfect number" signifying an infinitely greater number (Coffman).
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Matthew 25:31: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory..." The "glory of his Father" is called Christ's glory in Matthew 25:31. See also John 17:5.

e. Compare:

- 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."
- 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
- 3) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
- 4) 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
- 5) 1 John 4:17-18: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

G. Regarding the Lord's Second Coming:

1. We should always be ready.

a. Our Redeemer showed us the importance of this also: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:44-51).

b. We will have no excuse if we are caught unprepared.

- 1) Matthew 22:11-14: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* chosen."
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober."

2. We should work diligently.

a. Each is given a talent (s) which he should use faithfully (Matt. 25:14-30).

b. If we fail to use our talents and opportunities, we will be cast forth from his presence as was the wicked and slothful servant of Matthew 25:14ff.

3. We should be charitable and benevolent.

a. As we have opportunity and ability, we ought to feed the hungry, visit the sick and other unfortunates, give water and clothing to those in need (Matt. 25:31ff).

b. To refuse to do this is to lose our souls!

4. We should be in a state of expectancy.
    - a. Our desire ought to be for the Lord's return.
      - 1) Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."
      - 2) 2 Peter 3:12: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"
      - 3) Revelation 22:20: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
    - b. The eternal reward awaits those who "love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).
  5. We should be steadfast in living for Christ.
    - a. The Bible calls on us to be patient (steadfast) in all things.
      - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
      - 2) James 5:7-8: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."
    - b. We ought to put forth every effort to remain faithful in Christ: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 Jn. 2:28).
  6. We should live holy lives.
    - a. Ample reason for so doing is given in 2 Peter 3:11,14: "*Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness.... Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
    - b. Without holiness we will not see God in peace.
      - 1) Matthew 5:8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
      - 2) Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
  7. We should have achieved full spiritual maturity.
    - a. Colossians 1:28-29: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."
    - b. 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."
    - c. 1 Peter 2:1-2: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."
    - d. 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen."
    - e. Spiritual growth is called sanctification: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Th. 5:23).
  8. We should find comfort in this hope of his return.
    - a. His coming will bring us forth from the grave in the resurrection, or if we are still alive on earth at that time, we will be instantly changed into our glorified, eternal bodies.
    - b. Christ's return will bring eternal blessings for the redeemed, including a grand reunion with our saved and beloved ones who went before: "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23).
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## Mark 9

### A. Mark 9:1-10: The Transfiguration.

1. Verse 1: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."
  - a. Compare: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 19:28).
  - b. "The coming to judge the world naturally suggested the mention of another coming which was nearer at hand, and which also had an important connection with the preceding conversation. If he were destined to die at the hands of his enemies, as stated in the preceding paragraph, it would appear to his disciples that he must fail to establish the expected kingdom; but he assures them that notwithstanding his contemplated death, some of the present company would not taste of death till they would see him coming in his kingdom. The expression 'coming in his kingdom' means entering formally upon his reign as a king, which occurred when his exaltation to the right hand of God was proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, and which they then saw by the eye of faith ... None but himself and Judas were to die previous to that time]; but he intended to be indefinite about the time, and hence the very vague expression..." (McGarvey, pp.148f).
  - c. John, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy had all announced that the kingdom was "at hand." To reassure the disciples that this promise was still valid, the Lord made this promise that some of those present would still be alive when the kingdom indeed came. Even though he would suffer and die, he would be raised up from the dead and most assuredly establish his kingdom as promised. Remember that in the same setting he promised that the "gates of hades shall not prevail against it," the setting up of the church which is the kingdom.
  - d. Other passages that speak of the kingdom include these:
    - 1) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
    - 2) Matthew 3:1-2: " In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
    - 3) Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
    - 4) Matthew 10:7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
    - 5) Luke 10:9: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."
    - 6) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins." Therefore, the kingdom has come.
    - 7) Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." The kingdom is present.
    - 8) Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." John and his brethren were in the kingdom.
  - e. See the Detailed Outline at the end of this chapter on the Establishment of the Kingdom.
2. Verses 2-3: "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them."
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 17:1-8: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And

when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

- 2) Luke 9:28-36: "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen."
- b. "The transfiguration of Christ is not to be regarded as a detached and isolated event in his earthly experience, but rather as a specific part of those demonstrations which were designed to show the divine plan in sending him to the earth" (ALC, 1959, p.162).
- c. Peter had made the confession of Jesus' identity; the Lord had revealed plainly to the apostles that he was destined to die at Jerusalem; he showed them that they must be willing to suffer for him; he spoke of the final judgment, and restated the promise that he was going to establish his kingdom during the lifetime of that generation. About a week later, this tremendous event in the Lord's ministry occurred which made a profound and lasting impression on the apostles.
- d. Matthew states that the following event took place about six days after the preceding episode. Luke says it was about eight days later. The Jews' method of counting included the first and last days of the time period indicated. According to Matthew, this occasion was after the former. Thus, no friction exists between the two accounts. Today, we would say, "six or eight days."
- e. He took with him the "inner circle" of the disciples: Peter, James and John. These three were with him at the raising of Jairus' daughter and when he prayed in the garden (Mark 5:37; Mt. 26:37). "Matthew was omitted from that inner circle of three disciples who witnessed the marvel here related, and one can find only amazement at the complete detachment and objectivity of his narrative....Peter would take the lead in establishing the church; James would be the first martyr; and John would receive the final revelation. The experience on the mount of transfiguration would better equip them for future duties and responsibilities. The Saviour's prophecy of his approaching death and humiliation had doubtless imparted some measure of shock and disappointment to the Twelve, and that event was possibly designed to lift their spirits, strengthen their faith, and lead them into an acceptance of the approaching passion of our Lord" (Coffman, p.261).
- f. We are not told the location of the impending event, only that it was "up into an high mountain apart." "The scene of the transfiguration was formerly supposed to be Mt. Tabor, a very beautiful conical mountain west of the lake of Galilee; but as Jesus was on his tour to Caesarea Philippi, which town was situated at the base of Mt. Hermon, it is now generally believed that the latter is the mountain mentioned in the text" (McGarvey, p.149). When the accounts take up the story following this episode, the setting is in the vicinity of Hermon. The top of Mt. Hermon is 9200 feet above sea level.



- g. In the note on Matt. 17:1, it has been observed that these days were probably passed in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi. To the reasons there given, it may be added (1) There is no indication of a change of place: but Mark never omits to notice our Lord's arrival at, or departure from, any place; he has a regular formula for both "He came to," "He went forth," cf. ch. 1:14, 21, 35; 2:1, 13; 3:7; 4:35; 5:1; 6:1, 32, 53; 7:24, 31; 8:10, 13, 22, 27. The beginning of the journey to this district is distinctly marked in ch. 8:27, the termination in ch. 9:30. (2) The space of six days for the sojourn is not more than might be expected, considering the special object of our Lord's journey and the novelty and paramount importance of the truths which He there prepared the minds of His disciples to receive. [Johnson].
- h. Luke reports that the fashion of his countenance was altered. "*Transfigured* means *changed in form*, yet the description indicates only a change in the appearance of his person. Though 'his face did shine as the sun,' we suppose that the features maintained their natural form; and though 'his raiment was white as light'—that is, light reflected from some polished surface—we suppose it was unchanged in other particulars. It is impossible for us to realize his appearance until we shall be like him and see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)" (McGarvey, p.150). The same word is used in Romans 12:2 to describe the change which is effected in Christians as they imbibe the principles of the gospel. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2).
- i. Mark 9:3 says, "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." "This glorious manifestation would serve to impress the disciples with the unmistakable divinity of his nature; with the illustrious majesty of the celestial world; and would give some idea of the change which will be wrought in the saved in the resurrection. See Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2" (ALC, 1959, p.163).
- j. Philippians 3:20-21: "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself" (ASV).
- 1) The second coming of Christ is affirmed in the verse. Our citizenship is in heaven, from where we look for the coming of Christ. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).
  - 2) At the coming of Christ, we will all have new bodies. Those who have died will be raised to occupy incorruptible bodies; those living at his coming will be instantly changed into immortal bodies.
    - a) 1 Corinthians 15:50-52: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:50-52). These physical bodies, marred by sin and temporary in nature, will be changed into spiritual bodies, like that one which our Savior now occupies.
    - b) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
    - c) "The present body in which we live is considered as one of 'humiliation' because, being mortal, it is subject to all the earthly woes of weariness, pain, sickness, sorrow, tears, sin, etc., and finally to the corruption of death. When we are resurrected the Lord will change all this. The words 'fashion anew' indicate in the Greek a change which is outward; that is, of the body, the habitation in which dwells man's immortal soul. The identity of the individual himself is not changed, but only his body. The fleshly body must be changed into a spiritual body so that the immortal soul will have a fit habitation in which to live in the spiritual realm of heaven. Such a refashioned body will be free from all the woes that men are subject to during their earthly state (Revelation 21:4)" (Tolle, p.63).
  - 3) The new body we shall then be given is described as being like the one Christ now occupies. His body apparently, in the transfiguration, was representatively like that which he has in eternity. Human eyes cannot see a spirit being.
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- a) "By virtue of the fact that he is able to bring all things in subjection to himself, Jesus has the super-human power to raise us incorruptibly, conforming us to the body of his glory" (Tolle, p.64). Compare: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).
- b) "The first transformation is that of our spirits. God will give bodies suited to our spirits. The only peace, the only refuge from turmoil and strife of earth, is in submission to the laws of God, and this molds into the likeness of God, of Jesus, who was God manifest in the flesh, the temporal and fleshly suffering with Jesus here works out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory and honor with him in the world to come. This reward comes through the conformation of our lives to the life of Jesus. Our bodies then will be transformed into the likeness of his glorified body there. It must be attained through practicing these laws that constitute God's code of morality for the universe, and by which all spirits must be tested and justified or condemned at the last day" (Lipscomb, p.216).
- k. "Jesus made this change of his human body visible to these three disciples; this was done to teach them the mystery of his nature (John 1:14), which he should assume after his suffering; again it would show these disciples the cessation of the authority of the law and the prophets. Such earthly splendor and glory as they beheld him suggested the supernal and eternal glory with which he was clothed before the world was, and which should be his habilaments after his ascension to the Father" (Boles, p.354).
3. Verse 3: "And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."
- a. Moses and Elijah appeared with him. The three discussed the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). We are not told how the disciples were able to recognize these two Old Testament worthies, but some commentators suppose that it was by virtue of the ensuing conversation. "It is noticeable that there had been for many centuries a mystery connected with the end of Moses and Elijah. Moses in the full vigor of his strength, was summoned to the top of Mount Nebo, where he died; no human hands buried him or knew where he was buried. (Deut. 34:6.) The Jews had a tradition that his body was buried by angels, and that evil spirits contended for it. (See Jude 9.) He was the great prophet of the law; a type of the Mediator, the one on whose name and authority the Jews especially depended. Elijah 'went up by a whirlwind into heaven.'" (2 Kings 2:11-16.)
- b. The Jews supposed that he was translated to paradise. He is a representative of the prophets. These two, Moses and Elijah, the representative of the law, and the representative of the prophets, appeared with Jesus and yielded their positions to him" (Boles, p.355).
- 1) Deuteronomy 34:6: "And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."
- 2) 2 Kings 2:11-12: "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces."
- c. The comparison may seem to modern ears somewhat strange; but it is just one which would have been used by Dante, who, like Mark, always endeavours to make his readers vividly realize objective facts, Mark, however, has a still higher aim; he would mark the difference between earthly and heavenly brightness. The "fuller on earth" restores material clothing to its natural whiteness: the heavenly Fuller gives perfect purity, Cf. Mal. 3:2. [See Johnson].
- d. Coffman: Elijah as a representative of the prophets, and Moses as the great lawgiver of Israel both appeared before the Son of God in this event and, in a sense, laid their authority at the Master's feet, resigning their commission in the presence of Christ. The theological implications of this are profound. When the bright cloud, symbolical of the presence of God himself, caught away the great prophet and the great lawgiver, leaving only Jesus visible, it was God's way of saying, "There is only one authority now, and that is Christ!" "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him!"
- e. Our inspired writer affirms that the whiteness of the Lord's appearance was far beyond the white produced by anything the professional "fullers" could produce. "Exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." This figure is taken from natural things. The first idea of 'fuller' from the Latin *fullo*, is that of one who cleanses by 'stamping with the feet.' His business is to restore the soiled cloth to its natural whiteness. The evangelist uses an earthly thing to represent the heavenly.
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The heavenly Fuller gives a purity and a brightness infinitely exceeding the power of any 'fuller on earth'" [Pulpit Commentary].

4. Verses 4-6: "And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid."
  - a. Compare: "But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." This suggests that the event took place at night for the disciples were heavy with sleep, and verse 37 says that it was the next day when they came down from the mountain. Here, Peter makes the ill-advised suggestion that three tabernacles be built for these three in the scene. Both Mark and Luke say that Peter blurted this out for he did not know what else to say. The tabernacles (or tents) were booths such as the Jews dwelled in during the feast of tabernacles. (See Lev. 23:34).
  - b. "He was proposing some kind of equality for Jesus to share with Moses and Elijah. Christ did not rebuke Peter, but what followed exposed his error in the most astonishing manner" (Coffman, p.264). He may have been suggesting the tents as a place where these three could be honored and worshiped as glorified beings.
    - 1) "There was a divine attraction in the scene, a foretaste of heaven's own glory, and no wonder that Peter exclaimed, 'It is good for us to be here'....It shows that men in the flesh are not prepared to judge of the fitness of things in the spiritual world. In all probability many of our most cherished conceptions of that world are as incongruous as that of the frightened Peter" (McGarvey, p.150).
    - 2) "The brightness described in verse two belongs to Jesus alone, but this brightness of the cloud over-shadowed all of them" (Boles, p.356). In verse 8 the two other individuals are gone. Their disappearance and the proclamation of the Father show that God, who spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets and Moses, now speaks to mankind only through his Son (cf. Heb. 1:1-2). The message of the Transfiguration is the same as that of the book of Hebrews: the passing away of the old order and the bringing in of the new.
    - 3) There are three clauses in God's statement: (1) This (Jesus) is my beloved Son; (2) In him I am well pleased; and (3) He is to be heard.
  - c. "This entire transaction, as we may safely infer from Luke's narrative, occurred in the night. (Notice, that Jesus had been praying until the disciples here 'heavy with sleep;' and that they came down from the mountain 'on the next day.' (Luke 9:28,32,37.) Out of the womb of darkness had suddenly appeared the three glowing forms of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, and now, while the disciples were trembling at that sight, there floats near to them out of the same darkness a cloud all radiant with light like that which shone from the face of Jesus, and as it begins to overhang them, they hear that voice which has never yet been heard by mortals except with fear and trembling. It came just as Peter's incongruous proposal had escaped his lips, and it is no wonder that the three fishermen 'fell on their faces and were sore afraid'" (McGarvey, p.150).
  - d. "'Hear him.' This command contains the chief significance of the entire scene. Uttered in the presence of Moses the lawgiver, and of Elijah the prophet, it meant that Jesus should be heard in preference to the law and the prophets. In the exalted pre-eminence thus bestowed on Jesus, accompanied by a change of his appearance harmonious with the glory of his position, his divine majesty was displayed in a manner never witnessed on earth before or since" (*ibid.*, p.151).
  - e. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16).
    - 1) This passage is an inspired affirmation of the truthfulness, reliability, and trustworthiness of the Biblical Record. Peter denies that he (or any of the other inspired men) had followed cunningly devised fables regarding the power and coming of Christ. Instead, they were eyewitness of his majesty. Many think that the Bible is not the word of truth that it claims to be—many of these even claim to be preachers. Several years ago, seven thousand Protestant preachers responded to the following questions in a shocking way [these statistics may be worse today]:
    - 2) "Do you believe in Jesus' literal resurrection?"
      - a) Fifty-one percent of the Methodist preachers said no.
      - b) Thirty percent of the Episcopal preachers said no.

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- c) Thirty-five percent of the United Presbyterian preachers said no.
  - d) Thirty-three percent of the Baptist preachers said no.
  - e) Thirteen percent of the Lutheran preachers said no.
- 3) “Do you believe in the Virgin Birth of Christ?”
- a) Sixty percent of the Methodist preachers said no.
  - b) Forty-four percent of the Episcopal preachers said no.
  - c) Forty-nine percent of the United Presbyterian preachers said no.
  - d) Forty-four percent of the Baptist preachers said no.
  - e) Nineteen percent of the Lutheran preachers said no.
- 4) “Do you believe the Bible is inspired of God?”
- a) Eighty-two percent of the Methodist preachers said no.
  - b) Eighty-nine percent of the Episcopal preachers said no.
  - c) Eighty-one percent of the United Presbyterian preachers said no.
  - d) Fifty-seven percent of the Lutheran preachers said no.
- 5) Christianity is based on truth, not myths, legends, or fables.
- a) John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
  - b) John 8:32: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
  - c) John 6:69: “And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”
  - d) Acts 17:1-4: “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”
  - e) Act 9:17-22: “And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.”
  - f) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
  - g) 1 Thessalonians 2:13: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”
  - h) Luke 1:1-4: “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”
  - i) The many evidences of Biblical inspiration demand the conclusion that it is the word of God, thus inspired, inerrant, all-sufficient, and fully authoritative.
- 6) Peter next addressed the Lord’s majesty, to which he and others were eyewitnesses. The next verse identifies the occasion as the Transfiguration Scene. This great scene is described in the gospel accounts [Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36].
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- a) This majestic scene was witnessed by Peter, James, and John. The reliability of their testimony is strengthened and verified by the fact that they were willing to die rather than recant. The same is true with regard to their testimony about his resurrection. Many credible eyewitnesses beheld the Lord following his resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-8).
  - b) The testimony of witnesses in a court of law is accepted; many suspects have been found guilty and condemned to prison or to death, based on that testimony. The written record of their testimony is kept on file; it is accepted by others who read that record years later. So it is with the record of the eyewitness of the Lord's transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension. The testimony of these witnesses was under the divine control of inspiration.
5. Verse 7: "And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."
- a. Peter had spoken impulsively over building the three tabernacles, one for each of the wondrous people which had been gloriously presented before the three apostles. Clearly he was overwhelmed by the impressive display. In his human reasoning, he spontaneously blurted out his statement.
  - b. A cloud overshadowed them and the voice from the Almighty expressed his will in regards to Peter's statement. As important as Moses and Elijah had been in their part in the working out of the eternal plan, they were but mere mortals. The attention of mankind is now directed to the authority of the Son of God—Jesus the Christ: **Hear Ye Him.**
    - 1) John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
    - 2) Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
    - 3) Hebrews 1:1-4: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."
6. Verse 8: "And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves."
- a. "And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid" (Matt. 17:6-7).
  - b. "The disciples were dismayed by the Majestic Voice, and were dazzled by the glory of the cloud. Their reaction to these miraculous events and visions reminds us of the similar experiences of Daniel and Saul of Tarsus. See Dan. 8:17; Acts 9:1-4" (ALC, 1959, p.164). In the Lord's personal ministry, this was but the second time God had spoken directly—Matthew 3:15-17 was the first. John 12:28-30 reports the third occasion.
  - c. Put yourself in the place of the disciples: you had heard the Lord say he must suffer many things at the hands of his enemies at Jerusalem, be put to death and be raised the third day; you had heard him speak with Moses and Elijah about this same death; then this marvelous scene unfolds before your eyes, followed closely by the awesome voice of the Almighty. This was sure to send one to his knees in the deepest kind of dread and fear. Compare: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last" (Rev. 1:17).
  - d. Then came the reassuring touch and voice of the gentle Master. We cannot today hear the Lord's voice with out physical ears, nor feel his touch in that same direct way in which he comforted the disciples, but through his inspired word he gives comfort and assurance (1 John 5:3; 4:17-18; Heb. 13:5-6; 1 Pet. 5:6-7).
    - 1) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
    - 2) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*"
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- 3) 1 John 4:17-18: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."
- 4) 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
7. Verses 9-10: "And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."
- "Jesus only' is the great lesson of the transfiguration; he is God's only spokesman to the human race today. Only that which he has authorized is binding on men today. Cf. Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22,23; Heb. 1:1-3" (ALC, 1959, p.165).
  - "Jesus *only!* This is the message humanity needs. He is the only Saviour, the only Mediator, the only Authority in heaven or upon earth. He is the only means of access to God (John 14:6), the only hope of the world, the only Judge of the world, and the only Atonement for man's sins" (Coffman, p.265).
  - "Any preaching which does not exalt Christ and point the people to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world is bad. The preacher who seeks to attract the people to himself rather than to Christ is not a faithful servant of God. His work will be for evil rather than for good to the world, in so far as he succeeds in calling after himself a partisan following of personal admirers" (Boles, p.357).
  - "They might have seen *no one* after the cloud lifted. How unhappy would have been their lot if all the glory had departed, leaving no one. In such a case, no salvation, no hope would have been indicated. They might have seen *Moses only*. This would have indicated the Law as still supreme, and forgive-ness would yet have remained impossible. They might have seen *Elijah only*. What a catastrophe that would have been. James and John could have called down fire upon the villages; Herod would have been slain like Ahab; the Pharisees would have met their match; Herodias would have fared like Jezebel. They might have seen *all three*, as suggested by Peter's rash proposal. His statement, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here,' seems to indicate that he thought it was better to be there with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, than to be there with Jesus only. At first glance, this may appear to have been an attractive possibility. It certainly was so for Peter; but such could not possibly be true. Some things bespeak better conditions by their absence than by their presence. If one were able to see the sun, moon, and stars at once, it would be a dreadfully dark day!" (Coffman, p.365).
  - Jesus charged the three when they descended the mountain to tell no man about what they had seen and heard. More harm than good would have been done if they had broadcast this information for they were poorly equipped to preach it since their faith in Christ was not yet perfected; and the people would not have been as receptive as they would later be. "But to lock up the secret in the breasts of these three was to cause them to reflect on it much and to converse with one another about it often. Furthermore, the more intensely and the longer it burned within them as a secret, the more joyously would they speak of it when the proper time arrived, and their own miraculous powers rendered credible all that they said of it. That they told it then is evident not only from Peter's words above quoted, but from its being recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, none of whom were witnesses of the event, and all of whom wrote before the publication of Peter's epistle" (McGarvey, p.151).

#### B. Mark 9:11-13: The Coming of Elijah.

- Verses 11-12: "And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought."
    - "And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:10-13).
    - The Jews understood Malachi 4:5-6 as a literal return of Elijah to the earth. The disciples' question grew out of the Lord's previous statement (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14). John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come. They had done to him what they pleased; they would treat Jesus likewise. John was the Elijah (Luke 1:17), but the Jews had without reason rejected John's testimony and baptism: "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:30).
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- c. "Just as John had been put to death, so 'the Son of man' must suffer many things and be set at naught. (Mark 9:12.)" (Boles, p.358). By saying that "Elijah is come already" the Lord plainly taught that John was the promised Elijah; the disciples properly understood that this was what the Lord meant (verse 13). No comfort is given here for the millennial notions that Elijah will precede Christ's second coming.
2. Verse 13: "But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."
- a. Compare: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 5:5-6).
- 1) A great and terrible day of judgment was in the works, but before this tremendous event occurred, God would send Elijah the prophet to Israel. Some have supposed that Elijah the Tishbite, in person, would be sent; that since he did not actually die, God has held him in readiness through the centuries to be sent back to earth.
  - 2) But, as noted under Malachi 3:1, the New Testament shows that John the Baptizer is the person meant, that John came *in the spirit and power of Elijah*.
    - a) Luke 1:13: "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."
    - b) Luke 1:17: "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
    - c) Matthew 11:7-14: "And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come."
- b. The "great and dreadful day of the Lord" is a reference to some tragic occasion in which the wrath of God would be poured out upon the unrighteous. Such an occasion was the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The greatest of such occasions will be at the second coming of Christ. Peter used similar language (Acts 2:14-21) to describe what was transpiring on Pentecost Day, with perhaps the allusion pointing to the fall of Jerusalem or the second coming of Christ.
- 1) The work of John the Baptizer is described here. In the work that great man of God did, men and women and boys and girls were turned in the right direction.
  - 2) "The mission of this Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, was to turn the affections of the people back to God and his divine law. He was to restore a right relation between parents and children and to turn the hearts of the children to the ancestral religion of their fathers. In this condition of heart they would be ready to receive the Messiah, for they would see in him the fulfillment of all God's wondrous promises and the glorious hope of their fathers" (Hailey, p.425).
  - 3) If the work of John had not been successfully accomplished, it would have been necessary for God to smite the earth with a curse.
- c. It is interesting and no doubt highly significant that the Old Testament closes with the word *curse*.
- 1) This was the final statement to issue from heaven until the arrival of John; four hundred dreary, trouble-filled years lay ahead of Israel before the coming of the Messiah's forerunner.
  - 2) "All of God's prophets had done their work, but the people had rejected them all. There was no further word that God could send. The hardened and rebellious nation would continue to exist (according to God's holy purpose); but the precious fellowship of other days was gone for ever. A hint of all this may be found in these final six verses....In the meanwhile, let the true followers of God keep the sacred Law and await the unfolding of the purpose of the Almighty" (Coffman, pp.305f).

C. Mark 9:14-29: Christ Casts Out the Dumb and Deaf Spirit.

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1. Parallel accounts are found: in Matthew 17:14-21 and Luke 9:37-43.
    - a. Matthew 17:14-21: “And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”
    - b. Mark 9:14-29: “And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”
    - c. Luke 9:37-42: “And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.”
    - d. The Lord and the three apostles who had been with him on the mountain approached the nine apostles who had not been present at the Transfiguration episode. These nine were surrounded by a great multitude, and the scribes were questioning his disciples. This was the day following the events of the previous night on Mount Hermon.
    - e. McGarvey states:
      - 1) “It is difficult to account for the amazement of the people at seeing Jesus. The conjecture that his face was still shining from the transfiguration, as did the face of Moses when he came down from the mount (see Alford, Lange, and others), is not even suggested by the text. The natural impression from the text is not that it was something peculiar in his appearance, but the fact his being seen at that particular time and place, which amazed them.
      - 2) “I infer that the people supposed Jesus to have been at a much greater distance from them than he had been, and that his return was most unexpected. If they were partaking in the doubts and suspicions of the questioning scribes, the thought of being caught by him in such a state of mind would have added much to their excitement; or if they were pained by the momentary triumph of the enemy, they would be equally excited, though from a different cause, at his unexpected return. But whatever was the cause of their amazement, its effect was to make them run to him and salute him.” [pp.316f].
    - f. In the Lord’s absence, the scribes had cornered the nine, asking them certain questions, which are not identified. They may not have at the time been equipped to handle the scribes, who were professional teachers of the law.
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- g. NKJ: "And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him" (Mark 9:14-15).
2. Verses 16-18: "And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."
- a. Christ asked the scribes about their questioning the nine disciples. Before they could reply, a man from among the crowd interrupted with the matter of his son being afflicted by an evil spirit. The effects of the demon's presence in the boy had caused grievous trouble for him. The young man was torn by the demon, was made to foam (at the mouth), gnash with his teeth, and to pine away.
- b. The father had asked the nine disciples to cast out the demon, but they could not. Could this be at the heart of the scribes' contention with the disciples? Most likely it was, as Johnson suggests:
- 1) The answer came from the most interested, and the one who had the best right to tell the story. One of the multitude. Matthew says that he "came kneeling," and Luke that he "cried out" with his request. I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit, i.e., a spirit that makes its victim dumb; so in Matt, 9:32, and 12:22. When Jesus addressed the spirit (verse 25), he spoke to it as dumb and deaf, perhaps because of what he had observed in addition to what the father told him ....
- 2) More particularly, when the demon seized the boy he tore or convulsed him, or, as some explain it, threw him to the ground; and then he foamed and gnashed his teeth, and the consequence was that he pined away or was steadily wasting .... The word "lunatic," or "moonstruck," is applied to the victim in this case, as often, probably because the attacks were associated with the recurrence of the full moon.
- c. The problem the boy had was not a simple case of a common human affliction. The sorrowful symptoms were directly caused by the presence in his body of the evil demon. Compare this case with the two demon-possessed men who lived in tombs (Mark 5:1-20). These men were given tremendous strength by the demons which inhabited them.
3. Verses 19-20: "He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming."
- a. "This lamentation, showing that Jesus had become wearied and saddened by the constant manifestations of insufficient faith among his disciples, was not addressed to the father of the youth, but to the disciples and the multitude. Some infidel writers have represented this speech as a manifestation of impatience and irritation inconsistent with a perfect human character. The rebuke itself was certainly just, and, under the circumstances, altogether proper; then why should the feeling which naturally accompanies such a rebuke, be improper? The perfection of human character consists not in the impassiveness of a statue, but in the just and harmonious exercise of all the emotions which belong to our nature" (McGarvey, p.152).
- b. "This was not so much an expression of impatience or complaint as a reproof for their being so slow to believe that he was the Messiah, notwithstanding his miracles" (Barnes, Matthew, p.179).
- c. "Here expressly, as in chap. 8:18 implicitly, he ranks his own disciples with the generation to which they belong, since he finds in them the ordinary unbelief" (Johnson).
4. Verses 21-22: "And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us."
- a. The young man had been afflicted by the demon since he was a child [from childhood]. We are not able to know just how old this boy was at the time he was healed. Clearly, a period of years is suggested.
- b. We are given other aspects of the afflictions caused by the demon: The boy was cast into the fire and into waters—in efforts to destroy him. It appears that the evil spirit was unconcerned about finding another body to inhabit.
5. Verses 23-24: "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."
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- a. ASV: "And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth. Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."
  - b. Coffman:
    - 1) These words must be understood as Jesus' rebuke of the father's lack of faith, and so the father accepted them. It is as if Jesus had said, "Look, any man who has faith will not set any limit on what the Lord is able to do." As Cranfield observed: "The father, instead of doubting the power of Jesus to help him, ought to have had a faith like that of the leper in Mark 1:40."
    - 2) Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Who is he who cannot identify with this distraught parent in his experience of faith with an admixture of doubt? Unbelief is never very far away from faith; and their name is legion who, like Peter of old, walk over tempestuous waves one moment and sink into faithless despair the next. This doubting believer properly appealed to the Lord as the only source of strengthening his faith.
  - c. His tears expressed his anxiety for his son, and his words declared the weakness of the faith on which the cure was now to depend. The contradictory answer, "I believe; help thou my unbelief," can have sprung only from a heart distracted between a burning desire and a weak faith. It can not have been invented by Mark. Having said, "I believe," he feared that he had gone too far; he calls his weak faith unbelief and begs Jesus to help it. How different this from the conduct of the scribes who were resisting the force of evidence and struggling to maintain a stubborn unbelief! [See McGarvey].
  - d. *All things are possible to him that believeth.* There are those who take this statement as a literal truth—that if one can generate sufficient faith, anything under the sun is possible. This is an extreme view. There are some things which even God cannot do.
    - 1) He cannot make a square circle; he could turn a cube into a hoop, but a hoop cannot at the same time be a cube. There is no such thing as a married bachelor. A man can be one or the other, but he cannot be both at the same time. God could not turn him into being both at the same time.
    - 2) The context of the statement is that in which Jesus was about to heal the man's demon-possessed son. In this case, the father must have faith before the miracle was to be done. When the disciples tried to cast out the demon, they did not possess enough faith to get the job done. The Lord later told them that faith and fasting were required; by fasting [which would include meditation] their faith could have been strengthened.
    - 3) The crippled man in Acts 3 had no faith in the two apostles to heal his infirmity. Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up. His feet and ankle bones received strength—immediately! The beggar had no faith in Jesus; he had no anticipation of being healed, so no requirement of faith on his part was necessary. This miracle was not done to test the lame man's faith, but to demonstrate to the people who would shortly learn of it that the power of God was in the apostles.
6. Verse 25: "When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him."
- a. ASV: "And when Jesus saw that a multitude came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." The foul spirit in the KJV is unclean spirit in the ASV. Either word speaks of this demon as being morally and spiritually corrupted.
  - b. The Lord rebuked this unclean spirit to come out of the boy; he did this as the multitude came rushing up. They would know the miracle had been done, that the boy was now free from the demon's power, and that it was Jesus who had done it. Notice that Christ commanded the spirit to depart and never to re-enter him.
  - c. Also notice that the demon in the boy had caused him to be both mute and deaf. One who can not hear cannot learn to enunciate words. They can perhaps learn to read lips. If such a person can learn to read and write, communication is still possible, although at a slower rate.
7. Verses 26-27: "And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose."
- a. The demon was so spiteful toward the Lord, and so full of hatred, he wracked the boy's body in one final stroke intending to damage him or even kill him. Through the boy's mouth, the demon cried out. We are not told whether he cried out in words or just gave vent to his fate in a loud sound.
  - b. So violent was the strike that the boy fell down as though dead. Some of the bystanders believed that he was indeed dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up. Quickly the lad was on his feet again, completely separated from the demon's influence.
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- c. "Nothing but the amazing cruelty and effrontery of the demon can account for the convulsion into which he threw the young man as he left him. The outcry was not an articulate sound, but one of those fearful shrieks which are sometimes heard from the deaf and dumb, while the shock given to the nervous system of the young man left him pulseless and apparently dead. Such torture wantonly inflicted by a demon, gives an awful conception of the state of society which must prevail among these God-forsaken spirits. While the by-standers were saying that the youth was dead, the touch of Jesus, who alone can deliver us from the power of the devil, brought instant restoration to him, and joy to the heart of his kind father. [McGarvey].
8. Verses 28-29: "And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."
- a. Johnson: This is an extreme case, one that can be made to yield only to faith nourished by the earnest use of all the means of strength. Prayer is recognized as the first great spiritual agency; and if the reference to fasting is genuine, our Lord associates with prayer self-denial, regarded, evidently, as the fitting means of attaining a holy self-command.
  - b. Following this miracle, the disciples asked Jesus privately, after they had entered the house (Mk. 9:28), why they had failed. The Lord's answer indicates that it was traceable to a lack of faith on their part. Modern "healers" claim that the faith necessary to heal lies with the "patient." In some Bible cases, that was so, but in some cases there was no faith at all in the heart of the one being helped; in others, the faith of a third party was required (as here), and in the case of the disciples, their faith was insufficient.
  - c. Boles suggested, "During the absence of Jesus, his disciples had attempted for their own personal honor and glory to exercise power over demons, but it failed for lack of faith. The powers and blessings of God are not to be used for selfish gain or honor; when so used, they put us to shame and become a curse to us." (Matthew, p. 361).
  - d. "In order to work a miracle it was necessary not only to have a miraculous endowment, but also to exercise faith. This is declared in the Savior's answer, and it had already been indicated to the disciples at the time of Peter's attempt to walk on the water. (14:31.) The faith in question was the belief that what was commanded would be done—faith in the power with which they were endued. When they spoke doubtingly to the demon he had power to resist them" (McGarvey, p.153).

D. Mark 9:30-32: Jesus Predicts His Death.

1. Verse 30: "And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it."
  - a. The other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 17:22-23: "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."
    - 2) Luke 9:43-45: "And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying."
  - b. Christ made this statement while they were still in Galilee. This fact is given in order to strengthen the force of the Lord's prediction relative to his crucifixion. He said that he would be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. "Jesus makes the discouraging announcement of his death at a time when their faith in him was in liveliest exercise. Three of them had just witnessed his transfiguration, and all had seen a demon, whom they could not cast out, depart promptly at his command" (McGarvey, p.153).
  - c. Matthew's account includes the fact that he would be betrayed. To be betrayed means that someone close enough to him to do this evil deed would be the culprit. He later identified the one unmistakably. He did not want to publicize his presence as he made this trip; he would have been hindered by the press of the great crowds.
  - d. We remember that the Lord [and Peter, James and John] had been at the transfiguration event; they had been rejoined by the other nine apostles, and were passing through Galilee en route to Capernaum. "The meaning is, that our Lord, with His disciples, then left the district of Caesarea Philippi, and on their journey passed through Upper Galilee. They probably crossed the Upper Jordan by the bridge

or ford called Binat Jacob, below Lake Huleh, and thence followed the route to Capernaum” (Johnson).

2. Verse 31: “For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.”
  - a. We remember what he stated in Matthew 16:21: "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." This was the first plain statement he had made to the apostles. Our present text is another of those cases.
  - b. Although he made it plain to the Twelve that he would suffer death when the time was proper, it was very hard for them to accept it. They had seen his powerful miracles; maybe they thought he could easily avoid any attempt to arrest and execute him.
  - c. Peter, James and John had witnessed the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. When Jesus said he would suffer death at the hands of the Jewish authorities, he stated that he would be raised from the dead. They knew of the possibility of resurrection. Here, we have the very promise that the Lord would be raised up to life again. Why should they doubt his prediction of his death and resurrection?
3. Verse 32: “But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.”
  - a. The ministry of the Lord was in full-bloom. Countless people knew about and flocked to him. He had taught many people and proved both his identity and his message by the miracles he wrought.
  - b. The apostles did not comprehend what he just taught them. They believed, as did the population of the nation that when the Messiah came, he would remove the yoke of Rome which they thought was too onerous to bear; that he would establish a kingdom and rule over them after the pattern of David and Solomon.
  - c. They still had this view until Christ ascended back to heaven: “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:6-7). Ten days later their understanding was opened and they finally saw the truth.

#### E. Mark 9:33-37: The Greatest is the Servant.

1. Verse 33: “And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?”
  - a. The other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 18:1-8: “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.”
    - 2) Luke 9:46-48: “ Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.”
  - b. Christ asked the apostles after they had entered a house at Capernaum what they had been discussing en route. He did not ask them in order to obtain information; he already knew what they had been disputing among themselves. The omniscience of our Lord was fully operational!
2. Verse 34: “But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.”
  - a. These men were unwilling to bring up the subject which had absorbed them: Who would be greatest in the coming kingdom. Peter, James and John had been privileged to be with the Lord during his transfiguration; this may not have pleased the other nine. But among the three there was the problem of which of them would be the most exalted one.

- b. Johnson: "But they held their peace. Deep shame kept them silent, and that silence was the most eloquent confession of their sinful ambitions. Who should be the greatest. Who should occupy the chief position under the King—the position of prime minister, as it were, in the kingdom that they thought he was about to inaugurate.—Morison. What seductive dreams lay for Galilean fishermen in their being commissioned by the Messiah, as his confidential friends, and the first dignitaries of his kingdom! They had as yet no other notion of the kingdom that was shortly to appear than that it would be a temporal one; that their Master was to become a powerful prince, with places, honors, wealth, at his command."
- c. Matthew 20:20-28: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
- 1) The two apostles boldly asserted their ability to endure the sufferings Jesus described, to which the Lord said that they would indeed undergo these hardships. James drank the cup of martyrdom when he was slain by the sword (Acts 12:2). John lived to be an old man, living longer than any of the apostles, and died a natural death (according to secular references); but during that long life he suffered many things for the cause of Christ. Jesus knew that they would be faithful and thus face severe persecution. But he could not give them that which they had requested—to sit on either side of him as he reigned over his kingdom.
  - 2) "Without doubt, Jesus states, these disciples will drink of the cup of suffering, but he adds that places on his right hand, and on his left in the kingdom *'is not mine to give'* (v.23). Not even the Son of God can give that which is completely against the nature of the Father's kingdom, and against the nature that is to be in the kingdom's citizens....The Lord is not here stating that while he cannot give those chief places to men, that the Father has prepared chief places for two certain ones. Rather, in the Father's preparation—in the plan of God—places in the kingdom may be obtained but he will show that all have the same place: Not regal rule, but SERVICE!" (Bill Jackson, *The Book of Matthew*, p.527). Cf. Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:1-8; Matthew 23:6; 3 John 9.
- d. "Christ did far more than merely deny the request of that ambitious woman on behalf of her sons. He went much further and explained that the usual concept of some men ruling over others would not be allowed in the kingdom of God under any circumstance (Coffman, p.314). "Nothing moves the indignation of men more than to know that one of a company of equals is plotting to get an undue advantage over the others. It was now necessary that Jesus should interfere as a peacemaker" (McGarvey, p.177).
- e. The others were "much displeased" over this move on the part of James and John (Mark 10:41). The devil had used human ambition and anger to divide the apostles on this occasion. Unless Jesus could bring about a reconciliation, his great mission was in jeopardy.
- f. The one who would be great, in the Lord's system, is one who is servant to the others. He does not point to some exalted title or position as the proof of greatness. The means of obtaining greatness in God's sight lies in the humble service which one does in behalf of one's fellowman. The way to greatness is in humility. No wonder Christ has forbidden the exalted titles (Matt. 23:1 ff) which men are wont to wear!
- 1) "There are different works to be done, but still there is no rank. Even the idea of authority, as it most certainly resides in the office of elders (Heb. 13:17), still does not carry with it the picture of a military-type rank and command function. We would all do well to remember that, as just a Christian with no assigned functions, or teachers, or deacons, or preachers or elders, all are to be SERVANTS! Servants, first, last and always!" (Bill Jackson, *Book of Matthew*, p.530).
  - 2) The Lord had just previously told them about his soon-to-come arrest, condemnation and crucifixion. But the apostles were looking to an appointment to some high office in his kingdom!
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Their knowledge was certainly deficient! And their priorities were guided by folly rather than by wisdom. "About the only thing accomplished thus far by Jesus' repeated reference to his approaching death was the development of an argument among the Twelve over who would be the head man afterward. Human ambition had reared its ugly head, James and John, particularly, demanding to be accounted the greatest, a post also evidently desired by Peter" (Coffman).

3. Verse 35: "And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."
    - a. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).
      - 1) The Lord makes this statement to illustrate the principle of greatness he had just bound. Since the very Son of God, the Lord of Glory, was a minister of humanity while in his earthly ministry, so should his followers be! (cf. John 13:1-17). "In this way both the ambition of James and John, and the indignation of the others, were suppressed. It is impossible for preachers, teachers, and other workers in the Church, to study this lesson too carefully" (McGarvey, p.177).
        - a) Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
        - b) 1 Peter 2:21: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."
      - 2) Christ did not come into the world to receive the honor and praise and service of mankind. He came rather to be a minister to us all, in that he lived the perfect life, and died the perfect sacrificial death.
      - 3) He came to give his life a ransom for many. "How and why the shedding of the blood of Jesus was essential to the salvation of man is, and has been, a trouble to many. The blood is the life. The shedding of blood is the giving of the life. When we say Jesus shed his blood for the sins of the world, we mean Jesus gave his life for the sins of the world....Since the blood can be seen by our fleshly senses, and the immaterial principle of life cannot, it is probable that the blood is spoken of to represent the life, the shedding of the blood, the giving up the life. When it is said he shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins, it means he gave up his life to provide for the remission of sins; he became a ransom for many" (Boles, p.406).
      - 4) "The word *ransom* means literally a price paid for the redemption of captives. In war, when prisoners are taken by an enemy, the money demanded for their release is called a ransom; that is, it is the *means* by which they are set at liberty. So anything that releases anyone from a state of punishment, or suffering, or sin, is called a ransom" (Barnes, p.210).
      - 5) The life of Christ was given as ransom for many. Actually, he died for everyone. But not everyone will receive the benefits of his gift (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; 1 John 2:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Those who benefit from the giving of his life are the "many" of the present text (Matt. 26:28; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 5:5-8; 6:1-18). They receive it on the basis of personal obedience.
    - b. Alas, the disciples of the Lord in all ages have invariably lost their spirituality in just such a manner as this, falling into all kinds of vanity in the pursuit of human ambition. There has hardly ever been a congregation on earth in which the question of who would be the "greatest" did not at one time or another hinder the work of God. Against such ambitions, the Lord has imposed a standard of greatness that depends upon service and not upon position. However this was not a problem that the Lord confronted only once. [Coffman].
  4. Verses 36-37: "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me."
    - a. Luke 9:48: "And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."
    - b. Matthew 18:1-5: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."
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- c. Johnson:
- 1) Simply because the desire to be first, self-seeking, is exactly opposite to the spirit which is the law of Christ's kingdom, the spirit of love, of self-denial, of helpfulness of others, of humility. Therefore the more any one has of the desire to be first, the less he has of Christ's kingdom. So that the very desire to be first makes him last by the very nature of things. And servant of all.
  - 2) Despotism, self-seeking, ambition, ever make a man a slave. No one is so much a slave as he who desires to be first of all. He is a slave to his ambition, to the whims and opinions of other people, to circumstances. But voluntary service in the kingdom of love, and under the impulse of humility and self-denial, makes a man a spiritual power, gives him an unconscious and blessed greatness. To be truly great one must (1) forget himself in his work, (2) be humble instead of conceited, and (3) be a helper of his race, or the servant of all.
- d. "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:2-3),
- 1) Keeping in mind that these remarks were addressed to the twelve, the conversion was that of these apostles. Conversion means to be changed from one form to another, to be turned from one course of life to another. Since these men were children of God by virtue of their birth (they were all Jews), and were already followers of Christ, the conversion meant was from their selfish ambition and worldly outlook. If they expected to enter the coming kingdom, and if they wished to be invited into the eternal abode of heaven, they must make this change and become as a little child.
  - 2) There are certain characteristics of children which are to be cultivated by Christians. The trait primarily enjoined here is that of humility. Children generally are willing to accept instruction; they recognize that their parent or teacher is more knowledgeable than they; they can be molded and shaped; they are docile, and free from ambitious aims. What children are by nature, Christians are to become by design.
  - 3) The characteristic of humility the Lord required of the twelve is likewise required of any who wish to be translated into the kingdom and eventually to be invited into heaven.
  - 4) "Benjamin Franklin, the great Restoration preacher, found in this text one of a triad on the subject of conversion. The expression 'turn' or 'turn again' is translated 'be converted' in the AV. The other two texts are Acts 3:19 and 28:27. The three texts represent instruction directed to three different classes of persons, depending upon their spiritual development. These three are: (1) believers who needed to repent (Matt. 18:3), (2) unbelievers (Acts 28:27), and (3) believers whose repentance was anticipated (Acts 3:19). From these three texts it is clear that Biblical conversion has three phases, faith, repentance, and something additional (baptism), these separate phases being accomplished by obedience to the gospel and involving three distinct changes in the individual. Franklin taught that the three changes are (1) a change of mind, (2) a change of will, and (3) a change of state or status. Thus faith was appointed to change the mind, repentance to change the will, and baptism to change the status. Significantly, these also sustain a certain relation to time, past, present, and future. Thus, faith changes the present, repentance changes the future, and baptism changes the past" (Coffman, Matthew, p.276).
- e. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). This verse shows that it is the humility of children that is being emphasized. It is the one who is humble that is considered by the Lord to be the greatest in the kingdom. This answers their question of verse one. The greatest is the one who is the humblest and least ambitious.
- 1) Psalm 131: "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul *is* even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever."
  - 2) 1 Corinthians 14:20: "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."
- f. "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." This remark does not have reference to a physical child, but rather to the humble Christian. "One *such* little child" is the one who humbles himself as a little child; in other words, a faithful, humble child of God. Verse four identifies the person being discussed as one who "shall humble himself as this little child." Matthew 18:6 further describes the same person as "one of these little ones which believe in me."
- 1) The point of the verse is that one who receives a child of God in the Lord's name, receives the Lord. When we receive a faithful follower of Christ, we receive Christ, because every faithful
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saint belongs to Christ. To "receive" another Christian means to approve, love, treat with kindness, and aid when needed (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

- 2) "But if one does not help the humble and trusting disciple, he is likely to hinder him, that is, cause him to stumble. It appears that the primary reference was to the effect the selfish contentions in which the disciples had been engaging might have on others. This should be an impressive lesson to those followers of Christ who engage in quarreling among themselves" (ALC, 1959, p.169).

g. The passage has nothing at all to do with receiving little children into church membership.

F. Mark 9:38-50: Another Who Cast Out Demons and the Unquenchable Fire.

1. Verses 38-40: "And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part."
  - a. The apostle John, likely the youngest of the twelve, tells the Lord that they had seen a man who cast out demons in the name of Jesus. Since that man was not a member of the twelve, they forbad his actions. If the man was truly casting out demons, then he was acting by the power of heaven. No mere man could do such a supernatural work. We do not know who this man was or how he obtained this miraculous power.
  - b. Johnson:
    - 1) "The disciples had shortly before returned to Christ from their first missionary tour, in which they were empowered to cast out devils (Matt. 10:8). The man here referred to they probably met during this tour. He must have been a disciple of Christ, who was enabled by his faith, yet without a commission, to cure the possessed.—Abbott. Casting out demons in thy name. Really, and not in a wrong spirit, as did the Jewish exorcists (Acts 19:13, 14); for it was done in thy name. Such workers as this man believed in him, or they would not have used his name ....
    - 2) "What perplexed John was, that one not belonging to the apostolic band should have wrought precisely the miracle which stood foremost among the signs of apostleship; that which the disciples themselves had so lately attempted, but failed to work. See Mark 9:18, 23. Nor are we able to explain the case because we know nothing more of the man or circumstances than is here stated. And we forbade him. Hindered him, so far as blaming him, and insisted on the abandonment of the exercise of his gift."
  - c. Luke 9:49-50: "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." Compare: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:41-42)
    - 1) "'In the name of a prophet' is a Hebraism for 'because he is a prophet.' (Alford.) He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet, or a righteous man because he is a righteous man, or who gives a drink of water to a disciple because he is a disciple, distinctly recognizes the person's relation to God as the ground of the act; and to that extent God is honored by the act. Not so, however, with him who performs a simple act in the name of humanity, or because the recipient is a man" (McGarvey, p.95).
    - 2) "A prophet's reward is not synonymous with final salvation; for while it is true that in heaven we will have full reward for all the good we do on earth, we will have infinitely more than this, and our admission into heaven is a matter of *grace* and not of reward. So, then, the promise of the text does not imply the salvation of all that receive a prophet, etc., but simply that he shall be rewarded. If he be a pardoned man, he may receive his reward in heaven; if not, he will receive it only on earth" (*ibid.*).
    - 3) "The utmost heavenly concern for the apostles and their message is seen in the fact that even a single cup of cold water given to them shall not lose its reward. *These little ones* is a term of endearment spoken by Christ of the Twelve. One may suppose that the principle of heavenly recognition for any favor extended to a disciple still holds..." (Coffman, Matthew, p.149).
  - d. In the situation in the present case, one who was not working against the Lord, was not an enemy to his cause. That man was working in harmony with Christ and his apostles. For he that is not against

- us is on our part. "The Savior graciously associates the disciples with himself. On another occasion (Matt. 12:30) he said, "He that is not with me is against me."
- e. Coffman: "There is no special approval here for the unknown exorcist, who, for all that is stated, might indeed have proved eventually to have been an enemy of the Lord; but rather there is a prohibition against the servants of God making it their business to monitor and pass judgment upon the works of others. The lesson here is the same as that against pulling up tares, as forbidden in the parable (Matthew 13:39f)."
  - f. In a situation such as was the case with Apollos, that man's understanding of the truth was imperfect; thus two godly, more knowledgeable saints supplied him with the information he needed: "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:24-26).
2. Verse 41: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."
- a. "A cup of cold water" represents some small service or kindness shown one of God's people. Even those small acts do not go unnoticed by the heavenly Father. And none of these actions will go unrewarded. God observed the kindness Lydia showed to Paul and Silas (Acts 16:15); the many kind deeds done by Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43); he saw those done by Cornelius (Acts 10:2,22). He also sees the acts and words of hatred and harm done by such men as Diotrophes (2 John 9-11). What is done to a disciple is felt by the Lord. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:1-6).
  - b. Consider these passages:
    - 1) Matthew 25:35-40: "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."
    - 2) Hebrews 6:7-10: "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
3. Verses 41-42: "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."
- a. To cause someone to stumble means to trip them up, to entice them to sin (Thayer). "But as Jesus said concerning offenses, it must needs be that the occasion for them come, for some are not willing to follow the Lord's teaching; 'but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!' One should be made to tremble when he considers that even his speech and conduct, which have no reference to the by-stander, may cause his stumble. This, of course, has reference to speech and conduct which are contrary to the Scriptures" (ALC, *ibid.*).
  - b. "Contentions as to who shall be greatest always give offense, and at the same time, by exciting evil passions, they ensnare the persons engaged in them. Jesus desired that his disciples should see this tendency of their discussion, and to show how fearful the final result would be to the offender, he assures them that it were better for such to have a millstone hung about his neck, and to be cast into the sea. It were better, because his actual fate will be worse than that. (Comp. 8,9.)" (McGarvey, p.156).
  - c. "An ancient mode of punishment for certain crimes was to hang a millstone about the neck of the victim and cast him into the sea to drown; this was practiced by the Syrians, Greeks, and others. The Jews at times had practiced this by casting the victim into the Dead Sea with a stone tied around him" (Boles, p.369).
  - d. It is said that there were two kinds of millstones: one turned by woman power and another turned by donkey power; the latter one is used in this passage.
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- e. The terrible fate alluded to in the passage is the eternal punishment the guilty will receive in hell. This is one [of many passages] which speaks of punishment after death, and which denies the materialistic concept dreamed up by modern false teachers.
4. Verses 43-44: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
    - a. NKJ: "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched — where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'"
    - b. Matthew 18:8-9: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."
      - 1) It is better to give up some pleasure, opportunity, position, state, practice, etc., if the thing involved causes one to commit sin. It is better to forego such if the result is to lose one's soul in eternal punishment.
      - 2) "In the physical realm, amputations of various kinds daily illustrate the validity of our Lord's words. Removal of a mortally infected member is required for the preservation of life. The use of strong metaphor, as in the case here, frequently marked the teachings of Christ. (Also see Matt. 5:29,30)" (Coffman, p.278).
      - 3) "The words of Jesus here are not to be taken literally, for God does not permit us to injure and maim our bodies in order to avoid temptation, but shows us, by this impressive figure of speech, that we should deny our selfish and proud desires, and 'put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth'" (Boles, p.371).
    - c. It is better to be alive spiritually here (and eternally in heaven) while deprived of certain things which cause sin, than to enjoy the pleasure of those sinful things which culminates in one's being cast into *Gehenna*.
      - 1) Compare: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).
      - 2) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
    - d. The view that there is no punishment of sinners after death is false. Man is a free moral agent; he must give account (Heb. 9:27; Eccl. 11:3; Gal. 6:7-8). God is righteous (Acts 17:30-31; 24:25). There is no other possible way for God to provide and maintain a heaven for his people. Unless the ungodly are separated from the holy, no proper reward for them could be had. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).
      - 1) Objection: "God has changed; he was vengeful in the Old Testament days." The Old Testament days were dark, ignorant, and wicked times; God frequently used direct force in punishing evil, and gave a record of some of that punishment as a warning for us (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1 ff). But he also overlooked many sins of that era (Acts 17:30) and was patient with men. For the good of the whole race, he often directly punished the few.
      - 2) Objection: "Hell is only a temporary, corrective measure." This is denied by plain statements of the Bible:
        - a) Revelation 22:11-12: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."
        - b) Luke 16:26: "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."
        - c) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

- 3) Objection: "No parent would punish his child so." But no parent is able to do so! Disobedience to God is far worse than disobedience to one's parent. Only God can ascertain the proper punishment for sin. Christ's *death* was necessary for pardon.
  - 4) Objection: "If God is good, why doesn't he destroy Satan and all evil?" He will do that very thing at the proper time (Rev. 20:10). He gives man time to repent (2 Pet. 3:9) which gives men time to do more evil. A moral, spiritual battle is to be fought in order to prepare men for heaven. God is not responsible for the evil men do!
- e. Johnson:
- 1) Are we to understand these passages literally? No, certainly not. The meaning is, if an object dear as the right eye, and useful as the right hand, stand between you and your progress to heaven, and your complete surrender to Christ, that object, however dear, you are to part with.—Cimring.
  - 2) The temptation to do what is wrong—forgery, stealing, murder. Eye. Lusting, coveting. Foot, Going into forbidden ways. He goes on to warn them that no sacrifice could be too great if it enabled them to escape any possible temptations to put such stumbling-blocks in the way of their own souls or the souls of others.—Farrar.
  - 3) *Into life maimed*. The meaning is, not that any man is in such a case that he hath no better way to avoid sin and hell; but, if he had no better, he should choose this. Nor doth it mean that maimed persons are maimed in heaven; but, if it were so, it were a less evil.—Richard Baxter.
  - 4) Into hell. Not Hades but Gehenna, the place of eternal punishment. The name was derived from the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem where refuse was burned.
5. Verses 45-46: "And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
    - a. NKJ: "And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched — where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'"
    - b. Matthew 18:6-14: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."
  6. Verses 47:48: "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
    - a. *Where their worm dieth not*. Yet another strong figure, again in terms of Isaiah 66:24, and expressing a future penalty that does not exhaust itself. "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isa. 66:24).
    - b. Coffman: The saddest teaching in the word of God relates to the subject introduced here. The word Gehenna (which is translated as "hell" or "hell-fire") refers to the Valley of Hinnon near Jerusalem, a place where the city's garbage was burned, and a valley tarnished by many unsavory memories for the Jews. Here a king made his son pass through the fire to Molech (2 Kings 23:10; see also 2 Chronicles 28:3). It was a place of defilement and horror. Perhaps it is in this place's character as a garbage dump that the most appropriate likeness to HELL is found; because hell is God's cosmic disposal device for that which is finally unconformable to His holy will. Here also is seen the necessity for it. No industry, no kitchen, no household were ever possible without the means of disposing of the refuse; and it would be illogical to suppose that God could run the whole universe without some means
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of taking care of the refuse. For a more extensive discussion of this, see my Commentary on Matthew, Matthew 25:41ff.

7. Verses 49-50: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."
  - a. Johnson:
    - 1) The key to its meaning is found probably in the Levitical regulation which provided that with all oblations salt was to be offered (Lev. 2:13), as the glossing addition rightly suggests. Salt was used in connection with the making of covenants (Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5); and the sacrificial salt of the Levitical offerings was the symbol of the covenant-relation between God and Israel. It was interpreted by this time, at least, with reference to the properties of salt as a preservative against corruption in things apt to putrify, a preservative, however, with a stinging, painful effect on sentient life. In this respect it is like 'fire,' which also causes pain, yet it may be, wholesome and purifying pain; hence the combination of the two metaphors in the one idea 'salted with (purifying) fire.' To this discipline of suffering in one form or another, Jesus says, all men must submit, whether freely or by constraint.
    - 2) The form he here sets before his disciples, for their good, is that of discipline; voluntarily accepted for the sake of the true life, to be safeguarded thereby from corruption; and illustrations of this positive or cleansing function of moral fire have just been given in 43-47. But these are only special cases of the general principle of suffering as integral to the path of his disciples, as of their Master, which Jesus had set himself to bring home to them ever since he had hinted, while near Caesarea Philippi, at the Cross looming before him (see 9:31f) ....
    - 3) Salt is good, lost its saltiness. The sweeping out of salt that has lost its virtue, and become useless or hurtful, is still, travelers tell us, a common sight in Palestine, wherewith will ye season it? Salt once spoilt can never have its saltness restored. So if the qualities which make up the 'saltiness' of the true disciple—fidelity at all costs of pain, self-abnegation, and the like—are turned to faithlessness and selfishness, what becomes of the discipleship which should save others from the corruption of worldliness and selfhood? There is no human source of 'saltiness' capable of renewing it ....
  - b. Coffman:
    - 1) Jesus said of his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and their saltness would therefore be their quality of having in themselves the likeness and teachings of Jesus. Such salt is indeed good for this world.
    - 2) Christians are the salt of the earth in the sense of their preserving it from destruction. If the salt have lost its saltness ... is a metaphor based upon the salt commonly used in Jesus' day, which was not a pure product at all, but mixed with other elements. If the true salt had been leached out, only a worthless residue was left, a perfect metaphor of the Christian who has lost his identity with the Lord.
    - 3) Have salt in yourselves ... is a reference to the Christian's necessity of keeping his identity with Christ and of continuing faithfully in his teachings.
    - 4) And be at peace one with another ... is an admonition to brother-love and forbearance, a requirement frequently stressed by the Lord, and absolutely mandatory for all who would follow in his steps.

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## The Establishment of the Kingdom of Christ

### I. Introduction.

#### A. The Kingdom of God!

1. The mere mention of it stirs the interest of spiritually-minded people, and raises questions in the minds of the thoughtful.
  - a. Has the kingdom come?
  - b. Is its coming still future?
2. There are many errors concerning it which are taught and believed by many sincere men.
  - a. The nature of the kingdom is misunderstood: millions view the kingdom as an earthly entity.
  - b. Many believe and teach that the kingdom has not come yet, but that its establishment is soon to occur.
  - c. Many believe and teach that the throne of the kingdom will be in Jerusalem. In the past, there were some who thought it would be in Asia Minor (Montanus), and others asserted it would be in Munster, Germany (some of the Anabaptists).

#### B. It is vitally important that we know what the Bible says about the establishment of the kingdom.

1. A proper understanding of the establishment of the kingdom is essential if we are to comprehend the New Testament. Millions of sincere folks do not know, and thus misunderstand much of the gospel. Great Biblical subjects are tied to the kingdom, including the new birth and the Lord's Supper. If the kingdom has not come, we have no right to eat the Lord's Supper or to preach the new birth, for both of these pertain to the kingdom. John 3:1-8; Luke 22:15-20.
2. Prominent, popular religious systems have been built around a misunderstanding of what the Bible says about the establishment of the kingdom.

### II. DISCUSSION.

#### A. Daniel 2: King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia had a dream.

1. The dream was so startling and real that the king woke up, but could not recall the details of the dream. He called his magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers to remind him of what he had seen and to reveal the meaning thereof.
    - a. Daniel 2:10: "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore *there is* no king, lord, nor ruler, *that* asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean."
    - b. God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel. Daniel 2:19: "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."
  2. Daniel came to the king with the information he wanted. Daniel 2:28: "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these."
    - a. In the dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great image, very bright and terrible in appearance. Its head was of fine gold, its breast and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs were of brass, and its legs of iron and feet partly of iron and partly of clay.
    - b. A stone smote the image on its feet, breaking it into pieces; the pieces were blown away by the wind; the stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:31-35).
  3. Daniel gave the meaning of the dream (Dan. 2:31-45).
    - a. The golden head of the image represented Nebuchadnezzar and his great Babylonian Empire. (Dan. 2:37-38).
    - b. The breast and arms represented another kingdom which would replace Nebuchadnezzar's great empire; it would be inferior to that of Babylonia (Dan. 2:39). The reference to this kingdom is connected to the third, and the descriptive clause apparently applies to both the second and third kingdoms; that is, both would bear rule over all the earth.
    - c. The belly and thighs represented the kingdom which would succeed the second kingdom (Dan. 2:39). This kingdom would bear rule over all the earth.
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- d. The legs and feet represented a fourth kingdom. This would be a mighty kingdom, inasmuch as iron breaks other into pieces, but it would be divided (Dan. 2:40-43).
  4. Having plainly named the first of these four great kingdoms to be that of Babylon, the other three powers are easily identified from history.
    - a. Babylon rose to power when it defeated the Assyrians at Nineveh in 612 B.C and the Egyptians in 606 B.C. at Carchemish. It subdued Judah also in 606 B.C. Babylon fell to the combined armies of the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C.
    - b. The Medo-Persian Empire captured Babylon in 539 B.C., taking over its vast empire. They were in turn conquered by the Grecians in 330 B.C., when Alexander the Great invaded the East.
    - c. The Grecian Empire prevailed from 330 B.C. until they were overcome by the Romans in 63 B.C.
    - d. The Roman Empire extended their influence throughout the *civilized* world, conquering nation-after-nation, subjugating the ancient world to their iron rule. The Roman Empire fell into ruin about 476 A.D.
  5. In connection with this fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire), Daniel uttered his awesome prophecy of the coming kingdom.
    - a. Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
    - b. God promised to establish his kingdom during the days of the Roman kings. If he was true to his word, we may confidently look for the beginning of the kingdom during the span of time between 63 B.C. and 476 A.D., a period of 539 years.
- B. The Kingdom was at hand during the days of John the Baptizer and Jesus.
1. John's message prominently featured a promise of the nearness of the kingdom. Matthew 3:1-2: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
    - a. The events of this chapter are separated from the events with which chapter two closed by almost thirty years; Matthew began this chapter with these words: *in those days*. Daniel 2:44 had predicted: "And in the days of these kings...."
    - b. Luke 3:1-3: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."
    - c. Daniel had predicted that the kingdom would be established during the time when the Roman kings were in power; Luke identified the Roman king then on the throne, and named several of the other great men who were also in power at the time.
  2. Jesus began his ministry with the same message as did John. Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
  3. Jesus instructed the twelve to preach the same message when he sent them on the limited commission. Matthew 10:7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
  4. Christ gave this same message to the seventy disciples when he sent them forth to preach. Luke 10:9: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."
  5. These eighty-four preachers had the same message: the kingdom was about ready to be established. How can anyone who respects the integrity of God's word think that all of these were wrong?
    - a. Premillennialism teaches that Christ planned to establish an earthly kingdom and reign over it from a literal throne in Jerusalem, but that the Jews rejected his efforts.
    - b. The truth is, a powerful group of Jews tried to enthrone Christ on a literal throne, which the Lord refused. John 6:15: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."
    - c. His kingdom was never intended to be a worldly kingdom. John 18:36: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
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C. The kingdom was still future during the years 30-33 A.D.

1. Christ taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come in Matthew 6:10: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven."
2. Faithful people were still awaiting the coming of the kingdom in Mark 15:43: "Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."
3. The kingdom had not come by the time of Luke 19:11: "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."
4. It was still future in Luke 22:18: "For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come."
5. It had not come by the time of Luke 23:42-43: "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."
6. It was still future at the time of Acts 1:6: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

D. Some signs were given by which the appearance of the kingdom could be perceived.

1. Luke 17:20-21: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."
    - a. The appearance of the kingdom was not to be detected by the natural eye. Its coming could be discerned, but not by physical manifestations.
    - b. The kingdom of God is within you; that is, it is not a visible, earthly kingdom. This makes it undeniable that the kingdom of God was not intended to be a worldly or political organization.
    - c. The Lord made it plain that men were not to look with physical eyes to find his kingdom; the nature of it was spiritual.
  2. Mark 9:1: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."
    - a. The Lord bluntly stated, without reservations, that the kingdom would come within the lifetime of some of those people who were then living upon earth; it would come before the generation then living on earth passed on into eternity.
    - b. He affirmed also that the kingdom would come in company with power. Therefore, we should look to the establishment of God's kingdom prior to the passing of that generation, and at the time when *power* was demonstrated.
    - c. Consider these possibilities:
      - (1) Christ was wrong about the promise; it never took place. Obviously, this conclusion is to be rejected.
      - (2) Christ was right about the promise, but some members of that generation are still living upon the earth. Clearly, this conclusion is to be rejected; if not, where are these old men?
      - (3) Christ was right about the promise; the kingdom came with power before that generation left the earth by dying. This conclusion demonstratively is the only correct view.
  3. Luke 24:47-49: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
    - a. The apostles were to remain in Jerusalem until they were "endued" (clothed) with power from "on high" (heaven). At that time, repentance and remission of sins would be preached in the Lord's name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
    - b. The promise that had originated with God would be given to them from heaven while they abode in Jerusalem.
    - c. If we can identify the occasion when the apostles were given this power, we will have identified the establishment of the kingdom.
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4. Acts 1:5-8: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
  - a. Christ was speaking to his apostles in this passage; he promised that they would receive the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" in the very near future.
  - b. He promised that the apostles would "receive power" when the Holy Spirit came upon them. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and their reception of power would be simultaneous.
5. Tying Acts 1:5-8 to Mark 9:1 and Luke 24:47-49, we learn that the kingdom was to come when the apostles received the power with which the Holy Spirit would clothe them. If we can determine when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, giving them the power indicated, we will discover the beginning of the kingdom. The kingdom came when all of these factors were present.

E. God was true to his promises.

1. He had promised to set up the kingdom after the ascension of Christ.
  - a. Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
  - b. We are given a view of the Lord's ascension from earth in Acts 1:9-11: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
  - c. We are given a prophetic picture of Christ's return to heaven following his successful mission to earth, in Psalms 24:7-10: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who *is* this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory."
  - d. Daniel 7:13-14 states plainly that the Messiah received the kingdom after his return to heaven; this is another key to identifying the time the kingdom was established.
  - e. A three-part picture is given to us of the Lord's ascension.
    - (1) Acts 1:9-11 gives the view of his departure from earth.
    - (2) Psalm 24:7-10 describes his return to heaven, where the mighty gates were opened to him.
    - (3) Daniel 7:13-14 shows his return to the Father, who gave him the kingdom.
2. The Holy Spirit gave power to the apostles on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2.
  - a. Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
  - b. Acts 2:29-36: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, a knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house

- of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
- c. 1 Corinthians 4:20: "For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power." The kingdom of God does not rest on words only, but on miraculous power! The miracles that were wrought in the first century proved that point. It came in close connection with supernatural demonstrations, proving to those who witnessed them (and to those today who read of them) that the kingdom of God is now with men.
3. Penitent believers who were baptized were added by the Lord to his church for the first time on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2.
    - a. Acts 2:41,47: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls....And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." To be added to the Lord is to be added to the church, for the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).
    - b. When Christ promised to build his church, he described this institution as the church and the kingdom; using the terms interchangeably shows that they are identical. Matthew 16:18-19: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Cf. Matthew 18:18.
      - (1) When Christ built his church, he established his kingdom. He used the apostles to fulfill this promise.
      - (2) He gave Peter (and the rest of the apostles) the keys to the kingdom; they used these keys to open the church.
      - (3) To be added to the church is identical to be translated into the kingdom. Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."
  4. Prior to the time of Acts 2, the kingdom was still future; after Acts 2, the kingdom is spoken of as being present.
    - a. Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." [Revelation was written about 96 A.D.].
    - b. Revelation 1:6: "And he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (ASV).
    - c. Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." [Hebrews was written about 63 A.D.].
    - d. Colossians 1:13: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." [Colossians was written about 62 A.D.].

#### F. The importance of the kingdom.

1. Those who are purified are in the kingdom, which is entered by the new birth.
  - a. John 3:5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
  - b. 1 Peter 1:22-23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."
  - c. We must be pure (holy) before we can be in God's presence in heaven. Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Cf. Matthew 5:8; Revelation 21:27.
2. Those who are redeemed are in the kingdom.
  - a. Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."

- b. To be redeemed is to be forgiven of our sins.
- 3. Those in the kingdom have the privilege of worshiping and serving God. Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."
- 4. The kingdom will be taken to heaven at the second coming of Christ.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 15:24: "Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."
  - b. 2 Peter 1:11: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
  - c. Matthew 25:34: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

### III. CONCLUSION.

#### A. Are you a citizen in God's kingdom?

- 1. You must be born again to enter the kingdom (John 3:5).
- 2. To be born again is simply to obey the gospel (1 Pet. 1:22-25; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38).

#### B. Can you give a logical reason why you do not:

- 1. Obey the gospel now, if you need to do so?
  - 2. Return to the Savior if you have obeyed the gospel but have fallen away?
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## Mark 10

### A. Mark 10:1-12: Divorce and Remarriage.

1. Verse 1: “And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.”
  - a. Matthew 19:1-9 : “And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”
  - b. "The country lying east of the Sea of Galilee and river Jordan was called by Josephus' the Peraea,' but it is referred to in the New Testament as 'beyond the Jordan.' (Matt. 4:15,25; 19:1; Mark 3:8; John 1:28; 3:26; 10:40.) It is never called Perea in the New Testament. This country seems to have been called in the Old Testament 'land of Gilead.' It is perhaps the most picturesque and beautiful part of Palestine. In the time of Jesus' ministry Perea with Galilee was under the dominion of Herod Antipas. The Jews recognized Perea, the land beyond the Jordan, as a province of the land of Israel, ranking with Judea and Galilee on the west. On the borders of Perea, some think that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan. It was the scene of happy and profitable intercourse with Jesus and his disciples; it furnished the retreat from Jewish enmity, and from whence Jesus was summoned at the death of Lazarus at Bethany. (John 10:40.)" (Boles, Matthew, p.384).
  - c. Many people were with the Lord as he made his journey toward Judaea. He continued his usual practice of teaching them. Teaching was his paramount work during his personal ministry. His miracles served to prove his identity and verify his message as being from God.
  - d. “The Lord worked for about four months in this area, according to the scholars. Nazareth, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Judaea, Samaria and Galilee had been closed to the Lord. One province remained before him. He thus began his work of teaching (Mark 10:1) and healing in Perea...
    - 1) “He went through the cities and villages teaching and performing a few miracles. The great parables recorded by Luke belong to this period: The Slighted Invitation (Luke 14:15-24); The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, The Lost Son, The Other Brother (Luke 15:1-32); The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13); The Importunate Widow (Luke 18:1-8); The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14); The Pounds (Luke 19:11-27).
    - 2) “It was during this period that the Lord discussed 'The Rich Man and Lazarus' (Luke 16:19-31), taught concerning divorce, showed his concern for 'litttle children.' We have also the incident of The Rich Young Ruler, and Matthew adds 'The Laborers in the Vineyard'" (Deaver, Matthew, ibid., p.490).
  - e. Jesus' personal ministry may be outlined in this way:
    - 1) Birth and infancy.
    - 2) Period of preparation.
    - 3) The Early Galilean Ministry.
    - 4) The Early Judaeian Ministry.
    - 5) The Great Galilean Ministry.
    - 6) The Later Judaeian Ministry.
    - 7) The Perea Ministry.
    - 8) The Last Days.
2. Verses 2-3: “And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?”

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- a. The Pharisees were not noted for their search for truth, but mainly tried to find fault with the Lord and his teachings. Here, they asked Jesus if it was in keeping with the Law of Moses for a man to divorce his wife.
  - b. In Matthew's report, their question was thus worded: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (19:3).
    - 1) These Pharisees were neither honest nor sincere; they were not seeking information. Their purpose was to try to get him to say something that would cause him to lose influence with the people. "It was their aim and determination to entangle the Lord in serious difficulties, inconsistencies, and/or contradiction" (Deaver, *The Book of Matthew*, p.493).
    - 2) Their question grew out of the current controversy between two schools of thought over what constituted proper grounds for divorce. The passage in question was Deuteronomy 24:1-2: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed...she may go and be another man's wife."
    - 3) Shammai taught: "The man is not to release his wife unless he have found something indecent in her." Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for virtually any cause. "The historical evidence is that the Jews in general followed the teachings of Hillel. But, the Pharisees would like to create a conflict between the Lord and Shammai and his followers, or between the Lord and Hillel and his followers. Whichever position the Lord took would get him in serious trouble" (Deaver, *ibid.*, p.493).
    - 4) Further compounding the situation was the fact that at least under some circumstances Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife. If Christ had said that there was no proper grounds for divorce, he would have placed himself in contradiction to the Law. Furthermore, the area where he was now working was governed by Herod Antipas, the man who had murdered John the Baptizer. Herod had taken his brother's wife, and had been rebuked by John on this account.
    - 5) The Lord stood to be in jeopardy whatever his pronouncement was on the question at hand. It appeared that he would infuriate some part of the people, no matter what he answered.
  - c. Jesus was always perfect in his response to the questions and demands of his enemies. In this case, he pointed them to what the Law of Moses recorded.
3. Verses 4-5: "And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept."
    - a. They replied that Moses allowed them to write a bill of divorcement and give it to the wife. Their question grew out of the current controversy between two schools of thought over what constituted proper grounds for divorce.
    - b. The passage in question was Deuteronomy 24:1-2: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed...she may go and be another man's wife."
    - c. The Lord affirmed that the reason this clause was placed in the Law was for the benefit of the deposed wife. If such an exclusion was not included, some hard-hearted Jewish husbands would not have been averse to murdering his wife. It was because of the "hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept."
    - d. The Lord replied that Moses only suffered (allowed, permitted) divorce; he did not command it. Rather, because of their hardness of heart this breakup of the home was permitted for the protection of the wives. Both the Jews and Gentiles are said to have had hard hearts (John 12:40; Acts 7:51; Matt. 13:15; Rom. 2:5; 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:14; Eph. 4:18).
    - e. "God had made one woman for one man in the beginning, and for subsequent marriages he had authorized only one woman for one man, and vice versa, of course. This strikes against polygamy, whether simultaneous or successive" (ALC, pp.154f).
    - f. From the beginning the provision of divorce was not permitted; it was merely a part of the Law of Moses on account of the hard hearts of many men. "Moses, far from being a champion of divorce, had only suffered or tolerated it as the lesser of two evils—a lesser evil toward the woman than the hardness and cruelty of men's hearts....'Had the law propounded at creation been reenacted by Moses, many would have refused to marry at all, preferring an illicit life to the hazard of matrimony under
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a stringent law, and others finding themselves unhappily married would have secretly murdered their wives to gain their liberty.

- 1) "As a choice of two evils, God therefore temporarily modified the law out of compassion for the women.' 'The conclusion of the disciples, that if divorce at will is prohibited, it is not good to marry, proves the wisdom of allowing divorce under the law of Moses; for if these men would so conclude, how much more those Jews who were less disposed to obey God? And if marriage were avoided, licentiousness would necessarily prevail.
  - 2) "Even in the Savior's day, then, the hardness of heart among the Jews was still an obstacle in the way of the original law; but motives to obedience greater than any that had been known under the Jewish law were about to be presented in the completed gospel, and this made it wise to withdraw the temporary concession'" (ALC, p.155).
4. Verse 6: "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female."
- a. The original purpose of marriage was for the husband and wife to live together throughout their lives. God made them male and female and intended for the marriage to last a lifetime. He did not make several females for one male; he did not make several males for one female. He made one of each; this was God's plan for marriage. It was only after men departed from God's will that multiple wives, divorce, etc., came into human experience.
  - b. In a move which had not been anticipated by his antagonists he would completely avoid becoming involved in any of the traps which they had set for him. He went back to the original home, the original law. It was God who created marriage and the home. It was God who gave the sacred laws by which he intended for marriage to be governed. So he took them back beyond the Law of Moses to the Garden of Eden and the first marriage.
  - c. Matthew included more information:
    - 1) **Have ye not read?** Is it possible that you do not even know what the Scriptures say? The answer to their problem was set forth in the Scriptures, and they should have been fully aware of what they taught.
    - 2) **He that made them at the beginning.** Adam and Eve were created (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:1ff). God made them male and female—different but compatible. This statement shows that the theory of theistic evolution is wrong for it was at the beginning, not millions of years after the beginning, that he made man and woman.
  - d. He made them male and female. He only made one Adam and only one Eve: one man and one woman. Only those who have rejected God's original design for marriage have men, with the approval of society, had multiple wives, divorced a wife for any excuse, and in others ways usurped the authority of the Almighty.
5. Verses 7-9: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
- a. **For this cause shall a man leave father and mother.** Because God had made them male and female, a man shall leave his parents' home and cleave to his wife. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). "This means, shall bind himself more strongly to his wife than he was to his father or mother. The marriage connection is the most tender and endearing of all human relations—more tender than even that bond which unites us to a parent" (Barnes, p.194).
  - b. **Shall cleave to his wife.** Cleave is from a Greek word meaning "to glue together, cement, fasten, unite." Barnabas used this word in exhorting the saints at Antioch to "cleave" to the Lord (Acts 11:23). We are told to abhor evil and cleave to that which is good (Rom. 12:9). "Those properly joined together in marriage are to *leave* all others and are to *cleave* to each other" (Deaver, *ibid.*, p.497).
  - c. **They twain shall be one flesh.** They are two different individuals with distinct personalities, but they are united in their common love for each other, they are one in their aims and purposes, and they seek the common good of each.
  - d. **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.** "Marriage is God's creation. The laws to govern it are God's laws. When the two persons eligible (according to God's law) for marriage join themselves together in sacred matrimony, according to the laws of God and the laws of the land, they are also joined together *by God*. Hence, the declaration, '*Let not man put asunder*'"

(ibid.). Since it is God who did the joining, it is only God who can disjoin the marriage. Any law by which a marriage is set aside must be God's law. "God's laws by virtue of his creating them male and female take precedence over all human laws....Man's laws cannot change the mind of God or the fundamental laws of God; hence man's laws cannot annul the marriage bonds which God has sanctioned" (Boles, Matthew, p.387).

6. Verses 10-12: "And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."
  - a. Entering the house, the disciples asked the Lord for more information about the subject. He told them very plainly that a man who divorces his wife and then marries another woman, commits adultery in this process.
  - b. Johnson:
    - 1) Mark alone tells of the later inquiry of the disciples. In Matthew the address to the Pharisees is continued, with the solemn assertion that he who puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another commits adultery. In Mark "except for fornication" is omitted; but it is sufficiently implied. The statement in both Gospels is that a man is charged with adultery when he enters into a new sexual union while the first is still unbroken— i.e. when he breaks the exclusive unity of flesh with his wife by an act of union with another. Of course an equal union of sexes can be broken by either member; and so the "except for fornication" is implied clearly enough in principle in Mark.
    - 2) Verse 12, indeed, distinctly enforces the principle of equal responsibility. The custom to which it alludes, of the wife putting away the husband, was a custom, not of Jews, but of Romans and of other Gentiles. Possibly Jesus saw that there was danger, under Roman influence, of its coming in among the Jews.
    - 3) Here, in verses 11, 12, is our Lord's own answer to the original question, whether a man might put away his wife. It is, "No, unless she has already broken her unity with him." Sexual unfaithfulness forfeits the bond, but nothing else does.
  - c. **Whosoever.** Notice how the same word is used in Matthew 5:21; 11:6; 12:32; 16:25. The word is used inter-changeably in Matthew 5:22 with "every one" (ASV). "...The Bible is quite clear that the Lord's teaching on divorce and remarriage is *universally applicable* to the human family, and the novel notion that Matthew 19:9 is but a 'covenant passage' obligating only those relationships in which both parties are members of the church is both devoid of NT evidence and plainly contrary to the facts" (*Christian Courier*, ibid.). Cf. Revelation 22:17.
  - d. **Shall put away his wife.** The term used is applied in the NT to the release of a prisoner (Mark 15:6-7); to one loosed from an infirmity (Luke 13:12); but especially to divorce (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3,7-9; Mark 10:2,4,11-12; Luke 16:18). "In [Matt.]19:9, the form of the verb is *apoluse*, aorist tense, subjunctive mood. The aorist tense denotes simple, undefined action, with no consideration of its progress. The subjunctive mood is the mood of contingency or potential. The aorist subjunctive ignores the element of time and simply focuses upon the potential act, in the case at hand, that of 'divorce'" (*Christian Courier*, April, 1981).
  - e. **Except it be for fornication.** Fornication is the only ground upon which a valid divorce (and remarriage) may be obtained. The term "fornication" is a generic term, denoting any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse. "It covers intercourse between unmarried people (I Cor. 7:1), and it also covers extra-marital adulterous sexual activity (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Homosexuality is likewise a form of fornication (Jude 7), as well as such gross, unnatural vices as bestiality, etc. Fornication is a deadly sin; it is the only thing [save death—Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39; Matt. 22:30] that can *break the wedlock of holy matrimony*" (ibid.). "God's attitude toward the person who breeches his vow of marital fidelity is well-illustrated in the book of Ezekiel. Spiritualizing his holy city under the symbol of a woman, Jehovah instructed his prophet to 'cause Jerusalem to know her abominations' (Ezek. 16:2)" (ibid.). See Ezekiel 16:8,9-14,15,25,32,38 (cf. Lev. 20:10).
  - f. More from Johnson:
    - 1) The teaching of this passage is strong and conclusive for all who acknowledge the authority of Jesus Christ. The inviolability of marriage is grounded, not in any principles of expediency or advantage, right as these might be, but in its correspondence to the constitution of man as male and female. The sexual element in marriage makes of the two one flesh—it was meant that sexual

union should be inseparable from permanent personal unity—and only by sexual unfaithfulness can the unity, once established, be broken,

- 2) This is not to affirm that sexual unfaithfulness is necessarily more guilty than any other sin—a life-long course of drunkenness and abuse may be as guilty—but the sexual relation is the groundwork of the family, and its purity is absolutely essential to the physical and moral welfare of mankind.
- 3) With good reason, therefore, God has made faithfulness in this relation the determining element in the perpetuity of marriage, To this divine appointment human laws should be made to correspond. Separations for other causes than adultery there may be, but dissolution of marriage, never.
- 4) If it is said that such a law works hardship in many cases, the answer is that all laws that are for the general good sometimes work hardship while sin continues. But the purity and the permanency of the family are worth so much to mankind that individuals may well afford to suffer hardship rather than contribute to the overthrow of so precious an institution.

B. Mark 10:13-16: Citizens of His Coming Kingdom Are Like Little Children.

1. Verse 13: “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.”
  - a. Other reports:
    - 1) Matthew 19:13-15: “Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.”
    - 2) Luke 18:15-17: “And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”
  - b. The stated purpose for these children being brought to the Lord was that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them. "The prayers of a good man in our behalf have always been regarded as a blessing: no wonder that the mothers of these children desired the prayers of Jesus in behalf of their little ones" (McGarvey, p.166).
  - c. These little ones were not brought for any healing, but for the Lord's prayers. "It was an ancient custom to lay hands on one in pronouncing the blessing. (Gen. 48:14; 2 Kings 5:11; Matt. 9:18.) The parents believed that since children at the age of eight days were taken into the privileges of covenant with God they could receive a covenant blessing....These parents came with their children and interrupted the course of instruction; the disciples thought that these parents were interrupting an important subject with trivial affairs" (Boles, Matthew, p.390).
    - 1) "Those who have imagined that there is an allusion here to infant baptism, or to infant church membership, are indebted for the idea, not to their Bibles, but to their creeds" (McGarvey, p.166).
    - 2) In Matthew 18, Christ held up little children in their innocency and humility, as proper examples of what all in the kingdom must be and have. Here he declares that the innocent children represent the condition of those who are in the kingdom of heaven.
    - 3) “Hebrews 12:2: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
    - 4) 1 Peter 2:21: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”
  - d. The “coming” to Jesus under consideration is not the coming to him for salvation, but for the purpose plainly stated in Matthew 19:13; they were brought that Jesus might lay hands on them, pray for them, and convey this blessing. The very nature of their spiritual condition erases any need for them to come to the Lord for salvation. Lying behind the notion of infant baptism and church membership is the foul doctrine of original sin. If a little child comes into the world guilty of sin, from whom did he inherit that guilt? Certainly it was not from God! And Ezekiel 18:20 frankly says that sin is personal; it is not obtained from the individual's father (or mother). Sin is declared to be the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4); Ezekiel declares that the wickedness (sin) of the wicked individual shall be upon

himself; it cannot be transferred to another, just as righteousness pertains to him who does righteousness (1 John 3:7).

- 1) There is no record, direct or indirect, in the New Testament of any little one being baptized. If the household of Lydia, the Jailer, or Cornelius had any that were baptized, then let the proponents tell the name and age of just one! The pure spiritual nature of a little child shows that he has no need to be baptized; the requirements of the gospel plan of salvation show that no infant can obey the gospel: they cannot believe, repent, or confess faith in Christ; thus, they cannot obey the gospel in baptism.
  - 2) **Of such is the kingdom of heaven.** "Not of little children, but of such *as* little children. Neither the kingdom as it now is, nor the kingdom as it will be, is composed of little children, but in both states of its existence it is composed of persons with characters like theirs....As, however, children are here made the models of those in the kingdom, it is quite certain that on account of their freedom from personal transgression they will be admitted unconditionally into the eternal kingdom. (McGarvey, pp.166f).
- e. The disciples were opposed to the little children being brought to Jesus. They even rebuked the people who sought the Lord's attention to the little ones. Why was this? Perhaps they were trying to relieve the Lord of this additional demand on his time and effort.
2. Verses 14-15: "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."
    - a. Other translations:
      - 1) ASV: "But when Jesus saw it, he was **moved with indignation**, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein."
      - 2) NKJ: Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was **greatly displeased** and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."
    - b. But their opposition displeased the Lord, who reproached the disciples. Allow these little children to come into my presence. Do not forbid them. Why? The innocence and purity of these little ones are representative of the citizens in the kingdom!
    - c. Strictly construed this clause means, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child receives it." To receive the kingdom of God is a different act from entering into it. The distinction is made in this very sentence: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Receiving it precedes entering into it, and means no more than accepting its teaching. This a little child does with an implicit faith from the moment that its understanding is sufficiently developed. [McGarvey].
  3. Verse 16: "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."
    - a. The Lord is said to have taken them in his arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Any right-thinking parent would have wanted the Lord to intercede with the Father in behalf of their children.
    - b. Not content with merely laying his hands on them, he took them up in his arms to do so, and blessed them. The tenderness which he manifested toward the little children should cause parents to more highly appreciate them, and to labor more assiduously to bring, them up in the doctrine and discipline of the Lord. [*ibid.*].
    - c. The blessing was not some nebulous, indefinable generality. It would have included an expression of gratitude for them and a request for God's providence over these children. Christ was praying for these children. Compare: "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).
    - d. Notice the parallel passages regarding the Lord's Supper:
      - 1) Matthew 26:26: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and **blessed it**, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." [Greek 2168 is used].
      - 2) Luke 22:19-20: "And he took bread, and **gave thanks**, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after

supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” [Greek 2127 is used].

- 3) The Lord took bread and blessed it. Luke 22:19 says he gave thanks for it. Thus, to bless means to give thanks. The Greek term used is "*eucharisteo*."
- e. Blessed: *Where God is referred to, this word has the sense of "praise," as in 1Sa 25:32, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel." But where man is in mind it is used in the sense of "happy" or "favored," and most frequently so in the Psalms and the Gospels, as for example, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked" (Psa 1:1); "Blessed art thou among women" (Luk 1:42); "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Mat 5:3).* [ISBE].

### C. Mark 10:17-22: The Rich Young Ruler.

1. Verses 17-18: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 19:16-22: "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."
    - 2) Luke 18:18-23: "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."
  - b. This man came running up to the Lord and asked him what he must do to inherit eternal life. His rapid approach to Jesus indicates his earnest desire for eternal life. His approach seems to be abrupt and perhaps immature. He showed his sincerity and respect for the Master. He kneeled and addressed him as "Good Master." That was as it should have been.
  - c. Why callest thou me good? Christ does not rebuke the young man for employing what was nothing more than the language of respect by any pupil to a teacher—Abbott. But he asks him whether he looks upon him merely as any other teacher; or does he recognize him as a divine teacher—the only one who is truly good; the "good master" who knows all things, and whose teaching is eternally true. — There is none good but one, that is God. He does not deny that he is good; for he is the one who is good, even God (1 John 3:5). Some have mistakenly found in these words an affirmation that Christ is not divine. [Johnson].
2. Verses 19-20: "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth."
  - a. In reply to the young man's first question, Christ told him that he must keep the commandments in order to enter into life. So, from the Lord's plain words, obedience to God is a requirement if we would have eternal life. This is what is said in other places: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).
  - b. It matters not that this man lived under the Mosaic Dispensation; regardless of the age under which a man spent his time on earth, it must needs be that he have been obedient unto God if he is to have eternal life in heaven. The specific requirements of God's law have changed with the passing of the various laws, but there has never been a time when God did not require obedience to his will.
  - c. The list of commands named by the Lord include:
    - 1) Do not commit adultery.

- 2) Do not kill. In Matthew's account: "Thou shalt do no murder."
  - 3) Do not steal.
  - 4) Do not bear false witness.
  - 5) Do not defraud. "It seems as if intended to be a special application of the tenth commandment. One who had great possessions, gathered in the usual ways by which men gain wealth, needed to examine himself specially by that text. Were there no ill-gotten gains in his treasure?—Ellicott. Our Lord gives this enumeration of the commandments to bring out the self-righteous spirit of the young man, which he before saw" (Johnson).
  - 6) Honor thy father and mother.
  - 7) Matthew adds: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
  - d. The young man states that he has kept these commands from the time he was a youth. Matthew includes another statement: "What lack I yet?"
  - e. Jesus answered listed five commands of the ten in the Decalogue, plus "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This latter command embraces the sentiment in the last requirement in the Ten: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," etc. Notice that Jesus interpreted the command "Thou shalt not kill," as "Thou shalt do no murder." Thus, the Law did not forbid all killing, but forbade murder. It was right for those in authority to execute certain lawbreakers; it was right for God to do so. What was forbidden was murder, not legal executions.
  - f. Why the Lord omitted the first four while including the last six is a matter of conjecture. "We suppose that he named the last six rather than the first four, because the six were then more frequently violated than the four, and obedience to them was on this account a better test of character" (McGarvey, pp.167f). This young man was a credit to his generation in many ways. He would be considered an outstanding person by many of our day who think a facade of spirituality is sufficient. He inquired whether there was yet something else that he needed to add or change. Thus, "What lack I yet?"
3. Verses 21-22: "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."
    - a. The Savior knew the man's heart and discerned his great weakness: his interest in material possessions was too great, hence the Lord quickly devised a means of exposing this frailty to the young man's mind. He told him to sell his possession and come follow him, if he would be perfect.
    - b. No one in the flesh is able to attain to a state of absolute, sinless perfection; no one but Christ was ever able to do so. However, each one of us is expected to reach a state of spiritual maturity where all our faculties have been brought under the control of the Lord. (See Matt. 5:48; 1 John 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 5:12-14; Jas 1:4; 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; cf. Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1). But none of us will ever reach a point in this life when we can say that we do not sin (1 John 1:7-10; Rom. 3:9,23).
    - c. The blessings of heaven are described by the Lord as "treasure in heaven." (cf. Matt. 6:19-21). The instruction to follow Christ was probably intended in the literal sense as was the case in Matthew 8:19-22 (cf. the Twelve). To follow Christ requires that we be willing to sacrifice anything we hold dear if it comes between us and the Lord. It is likely the case that Jesus expected the young man to join his band of disciples, as they traveled about Palestine.
    - d. Does the Lord require that any who would follow him today must sell their possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor before they can be Christians? We can know that this is not required for several reasons. Mary had a house in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12); Philip had a great house in Caesarea Palestina (Acts 21:8); Ananias and his wife were not required to sell their possession, or to give the money it brought to the church after it was sold (Acts 5:4). Philemon was evidently a wealthy man and he was not required to rid himself of his wealth. These all were in good standing with the Lord even though they retained their property. "Furthermore, the Lord's teachings in the parable of the pounds, the parable of the talents, and many other passages suggest and even demand that ownership of property was not condemned by Jesus nor forbidden to members of his kingdom" (Coffman, Matthew, p.298).

#### D. Mark 10:23-27: Those Who Trust in Riches.

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

- a. The Lord looked about him as he told the disciples of the difficulty of a rich man's entry into the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing inherently wrong with having material wealth or possessions, even with having them in great abundance. The inherent danger is that one will place his trust in his riches instead of in God.
- b. We know that riches are not sinful for many great men of faith in Bible times were wealthy, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the New Testament, Philemon and Cornelius were evidently men of substance. The warning given in the Bible is against the love of money, not against money.
  - 1) Proverbs 30:8-9: "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*."
  - 2) 1 Timothy 6:6-19: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness .... Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
2. Verse 24: "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"
  - a. The Lord now speaks more specifically about a rich man and salvation: as it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, so it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Mark 10:24 makes the meaning clear: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" The rich man Jesus envisions is one who puts his trust in riches, and not in God. It is certain that no man can be saved, be added to the church, and go on to heaven who has his trust in his money. The Lord is speaking literally in this passage. It is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of the needle; it is also impossible for one who trusts in his riches instead of in God to enter salvation.
  - b. Notice that the amount of money in question is immaterial: if one trusts his \$10 to see him through difficult times, and does not trust God to give him deliverance, he is sure to fail. He cannot be saved in that frame of mind, and he cannot please God if he is already a child of God when that evil attitude arises. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The rich young ruler was one who ultimately placed his trust in his riches more than in God. He departed from the Lord's presence with sorrow in his heart.
3. Verses 25-27: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."
  - a. McGarvey suggests that the impossible thing of this verse has primary application to the camel passing through the eye of a needle. "As it is possible for God, though impossible with men, to cause a camel to go through the eye of a needle; so it is possible with God, through a work in itself difficult, to save a rich man. The point of difficulty was seen in the case of the man who had just gone away—his disposition to esteem riches more highly than eternal life" (ibid.).
  - b. Boles states that the disciples "still had the idea of temporal kingdom, and if Jesus declined the aid and influence of the rich, then how could his kingdom be established? Men's standards and God's have ever differed. The disciples thought that power and wealth gave one a favorable standing with God; they thought that the poor were in some way cursed of God; but now since it is next to impossible for the rich to be saved, then what will become of the poor? With men it was impossible, 'but with God all things are possible'" (p.395).
  - c. While it is impossible for one who trusts his riches instead of trusting God to be saved, it is possible for a wealthy man to be saved although there is the likelihood that he will feel independent and have

no need of the Almighty. The Lord can still lead such a one as the latter through certain circumstances of life, and provide certain motivations through his word, to bring this rich man to repentance. Men cannot do this, but God, in his own way, can.

E. Mark 10:28-31: Blessings Promised to the Faithful.

1. Verse 28: "Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee."
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 19:27-30: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."
    - 2) Luke 18:29-30: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."
  - b. Johnson: Peter, as usual, speaks for them all, saying, in substance, "We have done what this man would not: we have accepted the kingdom on the right terms at personal sacrifice." The question, "What shall we have, therefore?" added in Matthew, is plainly implied here and in Luke. Here is a frank statement of self-seeking, even in self-renunciation; self-denial in the hope of direct returns. The apostles were still hoping that their special honors in the kingdom would make amends for everything. Yet in the words of Peter now there may be a tone of despair, in view of the depression of their prospects implied in the words just spoken: "What shall we have, what amends, if the kingdom is to be of this exacting and unambitious kind?" No concealment anywhere of the low spiritual tone of the disciples.
2. Verses 29-30: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."
  - a. Our fellow-saints during the first century faced severe hardship because they were followers of Christ. The Lord himself suffered at the hands of his enemies. So did the apostles. Stephen was stoned to death by a vicious mob. What was his crime? He presented truth that they disdained. The apostles were beaten and imprisoned; James was executed.
  - b. A large number of Jews and proselytes obeyed the gospel in Judaea; at the death of Stephen, a great persecution was directed against these Christians, and they were scattered abroad. In this and other times of cruel treatment, how could these faithful ones survive? They helped each other. Some were able to provide shelter, food and other assistance to the many.
  - c. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34-37).
    - 1) A man's foes shall be of his own household. William Tyndale was betrayed to his death by a "faithful" servant (Coffman, p.147). Judas betrayed Christ. "In nearly all quarrels, except those about religion, the members of the same family stand together, but in religious feuds the family circle is often broken, and its parts arrayed against each other. When a man abandons the religion of his ancestors his own kindred feel more keenly than others the shame which the world attaches to the act, and are exasperated against the supposed apostate in a degree proportionate to their nearness to him" (McGarvey, p.94).
    - 2) Religious differences put the disciple's faith to a strong test. He must decide whether he loves the Lord or his family member more. Christ will not take second place. He that loves father or mother more than he loves Christ is not worthy of the Lord. This verse is parallel and thus explains Luke 14:26. To hate, as used in Luke, means to love less.
  - d. It would sometimes be the case that when one obeyed the gospel, even the members of his own family would turn against him, and force him to leave home. This could be the case of a wife, or son or

daughter. A new Christian could lose his employment, his business or some other source of his livelihood, his own house, his own property—and be exposed to rejection and danger. His close relatives would turn against him, but because he was a faithful saint, there would be countless houses opened to him; although he was an outcast to his parents and siblings, there would be others in the household of faith who could more than replace those he had lost!

e. Johnson:

- 1) The rewards of the kingdom are for all the faithful, all who, for my sake and the gospel's, have forsaken what they held dear. Note the true suggestion—that the forsaking must be for a person and for a principle. Jesus wishes not to be regarded apart from the gospel, nor can the gospel be regarded as a true object of sacrifice apart from Jesus. So in chap. 8:38. The promise seems to mean (for of course the promise of multiplication of goods cannot be taken literally) that all good that is given up for Christ shall be immeasurably more precious to the soul for the surrender. It shall be given back to the soul, if not to the hands, enhanced a hundred-fold in value. It may be given back to the hands, i.e., sacrifices may be required in spirit that are not called for in the course of divine providence—and in that case the hundred-fold of new preciousness is always found.
- 2) But to the soul all that is given up for Christ shall be returned, and thus graciously multiplied. (The possible thoughts of the lad who gave up his loaves and fishes, John 6:9). The principle of self-sacrifice sweetens life instead of embittering it, and the experience of self-denial surprises the soul with unthought-of wealth. So much at present; and in the age that is coming, with its full spiritual rewards, eternal life, So 1 Tim. 4:8.
- 3) But the warning lies in the solemn reservation, preserved by Mark alone, With persecutions. No easy way leads to these honors and rewards (2 Tim. 3:12; 2 Cor. 11:23-27; 6:4-10). Even when outward persecution is not, still the principle is the same: it is no easy way.—The hundred-fold will not prevent the persecutions; but neither will the persecutions interfere with the coming of the hundred-fold.

f. The apostles of Christ had left their secular employment; some were fishermen; the others had given up their sources of income. They willingly left these in order to join the Lord's band of disciples. He who had been God's agent in the creation, would see that they were fed, clothed, and protected. Their reward would be far superior to anything they had forfeited of this world's goods. Peter's wife and children, and his mother-in-law, would have their necessities provided. Gospel preachers today leave secular positions offering even great benefits and pay, to preach the truth at low wages; they are often despised by even some members where they preach; their children shunned by the children of some of the members. They are apt to be "put out to pasture," but they have to provide their own pasture.

g. So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time — houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29-32, NKJ).

h. What one loses of this world is more than made up for in spiritual advantages in the Lord's church. Persecution is at hand, but we have the aid of many faithful Christians! And in the world to come, in eternity, Heaven and eternal life await!

3. Verse 31: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

a. "Exactly what does the Lord mean by this proverb? It seems to fit in closely with the matter which He is about to discuss: The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. Things are not always what they seem. Some, like Judas, who were early in relationship to blessings of the Lord, would not properly use their opportunities; others like Paul, who would be later in coming to have these blessings and opportunities, would use them correctly" (Deaver, on Matthew, p.515).

b. "This proverbial expression, in its present connection, means that many who are first in prospect of everlasting life shall be last, and many who are last in this respect shall be first. For example, the rich young man whose inquiries had given rise to this conversation (16-20), had been among the first, but now it appeared that he was among the last. Judas, also, who was then among the first, was destined to be last, and Matthias, who was among the last, being then only an obscure disciple (Acts 1:21-23), was to take his place" (McGarvey, p.171).

c. The Jewish people were the first to have the gospel preached to them, beginning on the Pentecost Day of Acts Two; but the great majority of them rejected the truth [only three thousand obeyed the gospel in Acts 2]. At the proper time, the gospel was presented to the Gentiles; great numbers of them obeyed the gospel happily.

- 1) Acts 1:8: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”
- 2) Acts 8:4: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”
- 3) Romans 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
- d. “The judgment of God is according to truth,” and rank will finally be determined by true judgment and not according to present appearances. Let no man boast; even the rich young man who has gone away sorrowful may possibly yet outrank the apostles. Here, according to Matthew, our Lord adds the parable of the Laborers (Matt. 20:1-16) to illustrate the solemn warning....The rich young man we see no more, unless under his proper name. Those who think that he may have been Lazarus suggest that his sickness, death, and resurrection, or some part of that great experience, may have been used by God, to whom all things are possible, in bringing him to the spirit of the kingdom. Whoever he may have been, we cannot suppress the hope that he who is said to have loved him did not leave him to himself.” (W. N. Clarke). [See Johnson]. The experiences of this rich, young ruler in the future remain a mystery to us.

F. Mark 10:32-34: Again the Lord Predicts His Death and Resurrection.

1. Verse 32: “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.”
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 20:17-19: “And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.”
    - 2) Luke 18:31-34: “Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.”
  - b. The twelve apostles were shocked that Jesus intended to return to Jerusalem, the headquarters of his most violent foes. They not only feared for the safety of the Master, but their own lives were at risk. They were afraid! The truths of a former lesson had not taken root in their heart. Compare: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).
  - c. Christ now tells them again what they could expect after returning to Jerusalem. “Mark leaves us without information as to the cause of these feelings; but John's narrative incidentally supplements Mark's, and supplies the needed information. Since leaving Galilee Jesus had already been to Jerusalem on a visit not recorded by Mark (John vii. 1-10; x. 22), and had encountered such opposition there that he had been constrained to retire beyond the Jordan. From this retirement he had been recalled by the sickness and death of Lazarus, and as he started in obedience to this call, the disciples had exclaimed, ‘Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?’ Thomas said, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’” (John xi. 1-8, 16.) [See McGarvey].
  - d. “After raising Lazarus he had been driven away again by the machinations of the Jews, and had retired to a city called Ephraim, in a country near the wilderness. (John xi. 46-54.) He was now once more returning to Jerusalem, and it is not surprising that the disciples were amazed at his apparent recklessness. The fact that Mark makes the statement about their surprise and fear, without furnishing the facts which account for it, shows the artless simplicity with which his narrative was constructed; and the fact that the causes of their alarm, when once discovered, are ample to account for it, shows that his simplicity is that of a truthful historian telling an unvarnished story. The frequent occurrence of such coincidences should also teach us that many other obscure portions of the gospel narratives would be rendered perfectly intelligible, if we were only acquainted with details which have been omitted from the record for the sake of brevity” [*ibid.*].

2. Verse 33: “And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles.”
  - a. “The prediction is the same as in the former cases, but with a more distinct intimation that he was to suffer by judicial process, or by form of law. They (the Sanhedrim, the national council or representatives) shall condemn him unto death, and deliver him to the Gentiles (literally, nations, meaning all nations but the Jews) for the execution of the sentence, all which was literally fulfilled, as we shall see below” [Johnson].
  - b. In this remarkable prophecy, Jesus described precisely what would later occur. He would be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes; they would condemn him to death; they would deliver him to the Gentiles who would mock, scourge, and crucify him; and on the third day he would rise again. The Romans occupied Palestine and had taken authority to carry out capital punishment away from the Jewish leaders, thus after condemning the Lord in their perverted legal conspiracies, he would be delivered to the Gentiles [the pagan Romans] to be put to death.
  - c. Scourging was a cruel form of punishment involving a "terrible laceration by the severest thongs that could be devised, and inflicted only upon the lowest criminal; it was done by placing iron spikes or sharp stones in the lashes of the whips and applied to the bare back of the victim" (Boles, Matthew, p.402).
3. Verse 34: “And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.”
  - a. He would be mocked—treated with derision (Cf. Judges 16:25; Jer. 38:19). Only the Lord could have predicted in such detail the events leading up to and following his death, including the type of death he would endure and his resurrection from the dead on the third day. He gave more than enough specifics to show that a genuine prophecy had been presented.
    - 1) Judges 16:25: “And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.”
    - 2) Jeremiah 38:19: “And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.”
  - b. “And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go” (Luke 23:22). This chastising was the scourging noted by John 19:1-3: “Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.”
    - 1) This scourging was a horrible ordeal, even causing the death of some victims. "The scourge was a whip with leather thongs, the ends fastened to lead balls or sharp spikes. The victim was usually bound to a stake naked and made to bend over thus tightening the skin which usually split open at the first blow. When it was over often the sufferer was unconscious, a bleeding mass of torn flesh. It is quite possible that the reason Jesus was unable to bear up under the weight of his cross was due to the terrible beating he had but recently suffered" (Woods, John, p.391).
    - 2) The governor knew what was involved in scourging; he also knew of the innocence of Jesus; yet he turned the Lord over to his cruel soldiers for this horrible experience! How could any person with any grain of sympathy and sense of justice thus condemn an innocent man to this unspeakable ordeal? It would take more than a pan of water to cleanse his evil heart.
  - 3) Compare:
    - a) Matthew 27:27-31: “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.”
    - b) Mark 15:15-20: “And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him

with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.”

- 4) These soldiers had the items at hand with which to torture and ridicule the King of Glory. They platted a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head. We do not visualize this as a gentle action. Not only was this a means of mockery but of torture. The sharp spines of the thorns would easily penetrate the skin and more than a little blood would be emitted. Mark reported that they smote him on the head with the reed—the pain would have been harsh.
  - 5) Mark also tells us that the whole band of soldiers were at hand to participate in the cruelty and mockery that followed. The life of a Roman soldier was certainly harsh and brutal; they met with all kinds of adversities in the field and in battle which would have hardened them against the gentle qualities of life. It is hard to picture them as having any compassion for our Lord. Perhaps they were competing with each other as to which forms of torture and mockery to use!
  - 6) They put on him a purple robe, usually worn only by royalty. “And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11). It might well be this same purple robe which Pilate’s men put on the Lord. One of the first things they did to Jesus was to stripe off the clothing he wore. We are not told that Herod’s men removed the robe they had used in their mockery.
  - 7) The soldiers of Pilate bowed before their victim, who had been dressed in a robe of royalty and crowned with a crown of thorns. Mockery can be exceedingly painful to the inner man. No one likes to be made fun of. As the old truism declares, “Sticks and stones might break my bones, but names will never harm me!”
- c. They laughingly saluted him as “King of the Jews.” These men were stationed in Palestine among a population which they controlled by brute force. They hated the Jews and the Jews hated them. The prominent exception to this rule was Cornelius (Acts 10:2, 22).
  - d. They smote the Lord with their hands and spat upon him. These are especially insulting to the usual victim, but doubtless Jesus was enured to their beatings and insults.
    - 1) When Jesus was arrested, he stated that there was unlimited power available to defend him, if he had so-chosen: “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 27:53).
    - 2) That great power was still as his call—but these men had no conception of who it was they were tormenting! Compare: “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do....” (Luke 23:34). This brief prayer was answered only for those who would later obey the Gospel of Christ—Acts 2:36-47.

G. Mark 10:35-45: James and John Foolishly Ask For High Honors in the Kingdom.

1. Verses 35-36: “And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?”
  - a. NKJ: Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"
  - b. Matthew 20:20-28: “Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

- c. The mother of Zebedee's children came to make a certain request of Jesus. According to Mark 10:35, it was James and John who approached Jesus with the request. Matthew states that Salome came with her two sons. The sons were behind the move, but it was the other who articulated their desire to the Lord. She approached Christ in a respectful manner—humbly prostrating herself before him.
2. Verse 37: "They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory."
- a. Having stated that there was a certain request to be made, the Lord asked what it was specifically (cf. Mark 10:35; Mt. 20:20). The petition was that James and John might have the honor of sitting on either side of the Lord in his kingdom. Mark's account says "in thy glory." He would be sitting on the throne of his glory while he rules over his kingdom. Since he is on the throne now (Heb. 12:2; I Pet. 3:22; Acts 2:30-38), he is now on the throne of his glory (cf. Matt. 25:31). The view Salome and her sons had of the kingdom was wrong; they thought it would be a literal, earthly kingdom.
- b. "The place of highest honor in the courts of kings is at the right hand of the throne, and the next, at the left hand. Salome therefore desired to secure for her two sons the highest possible honors in the expected kingdom" (McGarvey, p.176).
3. Verses 38-39: "But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized."
- a. "They knew not what they were asking, because to sit on his right hand and on his left was far different from what they thought, and was to be obtained in a way of which they had no conception" (McGarvey, p.176). The very nature of the spiritual kingdom precluded the exaltation of anyone above all the rest of its citizens. All those who are part of this kingdom are on equal footing.
- 1) Matthew 23:8: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren."
- 2) Galatians 3:28-29: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
- b. "The Lord first informs them that they have no idea as to what they were asking. They thought in terms of a literal, earthly kingdom, and in terms of a king sitting upon a throne, and in terms of the men of rank and power sitting in those special places beside their king. They knew what they were asking in those terms, but did not realize that what they were asking would be impossible because it could not be realized in the kingdom that Jesus would head" (Bill Jackson, *Book of Matthew*, p.526).
- c. His next response was to ask the question, "Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink?" "It was common in ancient times to execute criminals by compelling them to drink a cup of poison, and assassination and suicide were often effected by the same means. The cup, therefore, became a symbol of suffering and of death, and it is so used here" (McGarvey, p.176). Socrates was forced to drink hemlock. In the garden Jesus prayed that "this cup" might pass from him. The cup was the horrible ordeal he was about to endure.
- 1) Psalms 11:6: "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup."
- 2) Psalms 75:8: "For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and drink them.*"
- 3) Isaiah 51:17: "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, *and wrung them* out."
- 4) Jeremiah 25:15: "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it."
- d. The Lord added, as a different figure for the same hardship, the question: "Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am to receive?" "Jesus here paints by another striking word his coming sorrows and sufferings as if a great wave of the sea were burying him, in their confusion and uproar, as if he were to be drowned in a terrible baptism in them. (Psalm 42:7; 69:2; Luke 12:50.) This is a graphic picture of the agonies of the soul of Jesus, yielding to the tremendous tides of human sin, passion, hate, and rage, and sinking alone, out of sight, in the gloomy waves of death. Incidentally, we see what is meant by baptism; it is not a mere 'sprinkling' of suffering, but an overwhelming of suffering

in death; so baptism in water is not a sprinkling, but is a dipping, submersing, or overwhelming, or burial in water" (Boles, Matthew, pp.404f).

- e. Johnson:
  - 1) The request was probably suggested by the words just spoken, and recorded only by Matthew (19:28): "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Of course they took this literally, or nearly so; and now the two disciples, or their mother for them, came asking for the two thrones nearest the King himself.
  - 2) Their personal nearness to him in the apostleship and the early date of their following may have emboldened them to this; and if they were first-cousins to him, as seems probable, this would be another reason for expecting a favorable answer. Yet, as if they feared failure, they would try, with a genuine human impulse, to pledge the answer in advance.
- f. The two apostles boldly asserted their ability to endure the sufferings Jesus described, to which the Lord said that they would indeed undergo these hardships. James drank the cup of martyrdom when he was slain by the sword (Acts 12:2). John lived to be an old man, living longer than any of the apostles, and died a natural death (according to secular references); but during that long life he suffered many things for the cause of Christ. Jesus knew that they would be faithful and thus face severe persecution. But he could not give them that which they had requested—to sit on either side of him as he reigned over his kingdom.
- g. "Without doubt, Jesus states, these disciples will drink of the cup of suffering, but he adds that places on his right hand, and on his left in the kingdom *'is not mine to give'* (v.23). Not even the Son of God can give that which is completely against the nature of the Father's kingdom, and against the nature that is to be in the kingdom's citizens....The Lord is not here stating that while he cannot give those chief places to men, that the Father has prepared chief places for two certain ones. Rather, in the Father's preparation—in the plan of God—places in the kingdom may be obtained but he will show that all have the same place: Not regal rule, but SERVICE!" (Bill Jackson, *The Book of Matthew*, p.527). Cf. Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:1-8; Matthew 23:6; 3 John 9.
4. Verse 40: "But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."
  - a. "Christ did far more than merely deny the request of that ambitious woman on behalf of her sons. He went much further and explained that the usual concept of some men ruling over others would not be allowed in the kingdom of God under any circumstance (Coffman, p.314, *ibid.*).
  - b. "Two statements are here—that the assignment of the highest rank is the prerogative of the Father, which reminds one of the language of Mark 13:32, and that the highest rank shall be assigned by him to those for whom it has been prepared. But who are they for whom the highest rank has been prepared by the Father? (See verses 42-44). They are the disciples who are most like the Master. The nearest thrones are prepared for the truest followers, just as the crown is prepared for the successful contestant (1 Cor, 9:24). Here, again, the last may be the first, and even the chief apostles cannot be sure that some servant of humbler name may not at the end be above them" (Johnson).
5. Verse 41: "And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John."
  - a. "Nothing moves the indignation of men more than to know that one of a company of equals is plotting to get an undue advantage over the others. It was now necessary that Jesus should interfere as a peacemaker" (McGarvey, p.177).
  - b. This sinister practice has been widely practiced in the military, in educational operations, and in the business world. It is always odious. When it occurs in the Lord's church, it is certainly wicked.
  - c. The others were "much displeased" over this move on the part of James and John (Mark 10:41). The devil had used human ambition and anger to divide the apostles on this occasion. Unless Jesus could bring about a reconciliation, his great mission was in jeopardy.
  - d. In Gentile arrangements, society was controlled by authorities at various levels. This makes sense in secular settings, especially in the military. Definite authority was had by various individuals with which order was forcibly maintained.
6. Verses 42-43: "But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister."

- a. The Lord did not allow for such an arrangement in his kingdom. Yet this is precisely the setup in the modern denominations! But this is no strange thing because they have seen fit to change virtually every significant feature of the Lord's plan, including the plan of salvation, the plan for worship, the organization and designation of the church. The exaltation of certain individuals to positions of authority, or in giving certain ones titles which exalt and distinguish them from the rest, is contrary to the Lord's order. In the kingdom there are no chief seats or positions of power. Rather, all are equal under Christ. Only the apostles who were selected to receive from God and convey to men the New Testament have any authority, and that authority is simply in the privilege of communicating the truth to humanity.
- 1) Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
  - 2) Luke 24:46-49: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
  - 3) John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
  - 4) John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."
  - 5) Acts 1:5: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."
  - 6) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
  - 7) 2 Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
- b. The one who would be great, in the Lord's system, is one who is servant to the others. He does not point to some exalted title or position as the proof of greatness. The means of obtaining greatness in God's sight lies in the humble service which one does in behalf of one's fellowman. The way to greatness is in humility. No wonder Christ has forbidden the exalted titles (Matt. 23:1ff) which men are wont to wear!
- c. "There are different works to be done, but still there is no rank. Even the idea of authority, as it most certainly resides in the office of elders (Heb. 13:17), still does not carry with it the picture of a military-type rank and command function. We would all do well to remember that, as just a Christian with no assigned functions, or teachers, or deacons, or preachers or elders, all are to be SERVANTS! Servants, first, last and always!" (Bill Jackson, *Book of Matthew*, p.530).
- d. Johnson:
- 1) Recognized greatness among the nations of the world implies the exercise of domination over men; the great ones lord it. This is the ideal of greatness and a kingdom which Jesus rejected in the wilderness, and again when the Jews became his tempters (John 6:15). But so shall it not be—or, on manuscript authority, "it is not so" among you. Your principle is not the principle of the world, and you have your own type of greatness and your own way of becoming great. Accordingly, he proceeds to tell of the Christian way of becoming great ....
  - 2) What, now, is the Christian principle of greatness and the way by which a wise Christian will seek high rank? The Christian greatness consists in humble service; and a Christian who wishes to be great will seek it, if he seeks as a Christian, only through humble service ....
  - 3) Does he wish to become great? he will be your minister (*diakonos*), attendant, or assistant—i.e. he will make himself a helper to his brethren. Does his ambition reach higher, so that he wishes to become a man of first rank? he will bow still lower, and be the servant of all, a slave (*doulos*)
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for the service of all to whom he can be useful. There is a threefold climax .... Whoever is doing the service in the Master's spirit is already of high rank, already on the throne.

- e. Matthew 25:37-40: "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."
7. Verses 44-45: "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
  - a. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).
  - b. The Lord makes this statement to illustrate the principle of greatness he had just bound. Since the very Son of God, the Lord of Glory, was a minister of humanity while in his earthly ministry, so should his followers be!(cf. John 13:1-17). "In this way both the ambition of James and John, and the indignation of the others, were suppressed. It is impossible for preachers, teachers, and other workers in the Church, to study this lesson too carefully" (McGarvey, p.177).
    - 1) Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
    - 2) 1 Peter 2:21: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."
  - c. Christ did not come into the world to receive the honor and praise and service of mankind. He came rather to be a minister to us all, in that he lived the perfect life, and died the perfect sacrificial death.
  - d. He came to give his life a ransom for many. "How and why the shedding of the blood of Jesus was essential to the salvation of man is, and has been, a trouble to many. The blood is the life. The shedding of blood is the giving of the life. When we say Jesus shed his blood for the sins of the world, we mean Jesus gave his life for the sins of the world....Since the blood can be seen by our fleshly senses, and the immaterial principle of life cannot, it is probable that the blood is spoken of to represent the life, the shedding of the blood, the giving up the life. When it is said he shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins, it means he gave up his life to provide for the remission of sins; he became a ransom for many" (Boles, Matthew, p.406). Compare: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11).
  - e. "The word *ransom* means literally a price paid for the redemption of captives. In war, when prisoners are taken by an enemy, the money demanded for their release is called a ransom; that is, it is the *means* by which they are set at liberty. So anything that releases anyone from a state of punishment, or suffering, or sin, is called a ransom" (Barnes, p.210).
  - f. The life of Christ was given as ransom for many. Actually, he died for everyone. But not everyone will receive the benefits of his gift (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; 1 John 2:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Those who benefit from the giving of his life are the "many" of the present text (Matt. 26:28; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 5:5-8; 6:1-18). They receive it on the basis of personal obedience.

#### H. Mark 10:46-52: Blind Bartimaeus.

1. Verse 46: "And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 20:29-34: "And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."
    - 2) Luke 18:35-43: "And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they

- told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.”
- b. Luke 18:35 speaks of the healing of the blind as taking place when the Lord came nigh unto Jericho; Matthew says it occurred as he left the city; Mark 10:46 says that the miracle took place as Christ went out of Jericho. Logical explanations have been offered. The second of these appears to be the better explanation.
    - 1) Some have suggested that two separate miracles occurred: one as the Lord entered into the city and the other as he departed from it. This might also explain the difference in the number of blind men healed (Matthew says two, the other accounts mention only one); perhaps he healed one as he entered and the other as he left.
    - 2) "The discrepancy as to place, 'as he went out from Jericho,' or 'as he drew nigh to Jericho,' is best explained by the recent suggestion that the healing occurred after he left old Jericho, and as he was approaching the new Jericho which Herod the Great had built at some distance away" (Robertson, quoted by Coffman, Matthew, p.316).
  - c. Matthew speaks of two blind men. At this point in the journey toward Jerusalem, two blind men, who were sitting by the road, called out to Jesus for mercy. They had heard that Jesus was passing that way. They probably often positioned themselves on the roadside to beg alms (Mark 10:46), so the approach of the Lord was an added and unexpected benefit. They seized this one opportunity to ask for his aid. Perhaps the one of the two who was the primary spokesman, was named Bartimaeus.
  - d. By addressing Jesus as "Son of David," they acknowledged their belief that he was the Messiah. By calling to him for mercy, they declared their faith in his ability to grant their request.
2. Verses 47-48: “And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”
    - a. The multitude, for some reason which is not specified, tried to quiet the cries of these two blind beggars. Some scholars suggest that it may have been the Pharisees who did this, not wanting Jesus to have another occasion to demonstrate his power. But there is nothing in the context which identifies them as Pharisees.
    - b. "The clamor appeared to the multitude indecorous, and it interrupted conversation; hence their desire to suppress it. The multitude were thinking of their own comfort and dignity instead of sympathizing with the unfortunate" (McGarvey, p.177). But the blind men were not about to let this opportunity slip by them; they continued to cry out to Jesus.
  3. Verse 49: “And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.”
    - a. Jesus heard the cries, stopped, and asked what it was they wanted. This question does not imply that the Lord was asking for information. He wanted them to express in plain words their request, thus to show their faith to all.
    - b. They plainly stated that their keenest desire was to have their eyes opened. Indeed, this would be the constant wish any blind man would have. Mark identifies one of these blind men as Bartimaeus, and says he cast off his garment (the outer garment) and approached Jesus.
    - c. "Thus, naked, or nearly so, this poor beggar, blind, despised, and suffering the most abject shame and poverty, appeared as an object of the utmost pity as he stood trembling before the Lord of Life and heard the blessed words, ‘What will ye that I should do unto you?’" (Coffman, pp.318f).
  4. Verses 50-52: “And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”
    - a. Johnson:
      - 1) It was the confidence which the blind man cherished in the ability and benevolence of Jesus that induced him to seek aid from Jesus, and that induced him to persevere while the crowd sought to

restrain him. Such confidence Jesus delighted to acknowledge and to honor. The faith of this man was great; because, being blind, he could not see the miracles which Jesus did. Faith came to him by hearing. He believed on the testimony and report of others; and so he inherited, in a manner, the promise of the Lord his Savior, "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:20).

- 2) Christ was always ready to heal. No one was ever refused who asked him. It rested with the man; the healing could not have its way and enter in, save the man would open his door. Hence the question, and the praise of the patient's faith. Made thee whole. Complete, sound, nothing wanting ... And followed Jesus. Glorifying God, as Luke adds (18:43), and joining the festal company of His Healer, who all likewise gave praise unto God for the miracle which they had witnessed. Compare Acts 3:8-10.
  - 3) Thus, as our Lord journeyed toward Jerusalem, he gathered in his train fresh monuments of his power. The march of earthly conquerors is tracked with blood; smoking villages and mangled corpses mark the way which they had trodden, while weeping captives are chained to their triumphal chariots. But the Savior left joy behind him wherever he went, and collected new trophies of his mercy.—Tyng.
- b. "Though they came not for spiritual comfort, the bodily blessing which they received attached their hearts to Jesus and led them in the direction of the blessings yet more to be desired" (McGarvey, p.178).
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## Mark 11

### A. Mark 11:1-11: The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem.

1. Verses 1-2: “And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.”
  - a. The other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 21:1-11: “And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”
    - 2) Luke 19:29-44: “And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said, The Lord hath need of him. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”
    - 3) John 12:12-19: “On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.”
  - b. On the day of his arrival at Bethany, a supper was made for him (John 12:1-2); this was on Sunday, in view of the statement by McGarvey [below]. It was during this supper that Mary anointed the Lord's feet with the expensive ointment (John 12:3-8). “Though not explicitly stated, the presumption is that this supper was given on the evening after his arrival” (McGarvey, *ibid.*, p.406).

- 1) The next morning (John 12:12), Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when great multitudes spread palm branches and garments before him (Mt. 21:8). "It is palm Monday, if it is palm anything. Thus one of the Roman Catholic traditions, which is without foundation in fact, passes away" (ibid.).
  - 2) "While Mark, like the other synoptics, says nothing about the day of the week, he makes a series of chronological statements, extending from the day of the public entry to the first day of the passover, which corroborate perfectly the six days of John.
    - a) "To show this let us suppose Monday to be the day of public entry, and make the count. He says, at the conclusion of his account of the ride, that Jesus 'entered into Jerusalem, into the temple; and when he had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, he went out to Bethany with the twelve' (11:11).
    - b) "This brings us to the close of Monday; and it shows, by and by, that the public entry took place in the afternoon. Mark next says that 'on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered,' and then comes the incident of the barren fig-tree (12-14). This now is Tuesday. They go into the city, he casts out the traders whom he had seen there the evening before, and the statement follows that 'every evening he went forth out of the city' (19).
    - c) "Then comes the statement that 'as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig-tree withered away from the roots' (20). This was Wednesday. They pass on into the city (27), and the discussions follow which occupy the rest of the eleventh chapter and all of the twelfth.
    - d) "Then he goes out to the mount of Olives, and delivers the discourse about the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming (13:1-37). At the close of this discourse, still Wednesday, Mark says, 'Now after two days was the feast of the passover and the unleavened bread' (14:1). But 'after two days' from Wednesday, in Jewish count, would be Friday.
    - e) "So we have counted in Mark five consecutive days—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; and if we add to these the sixth day previously mentioned by John, but omitted by the synoptics, we have John's account reproduced" (McGarvey, *ibid.*, pp.407f).
  - c. Making their journey from Jericho to Jerusalem, they came to Bethany and Bethphage unto the mount of Olives. These two villages were on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and were located close to one another. Lazarus, Mary and Martha lived at Bethany where the supper of John 12:1-9 was given. Some scholars maintain that this was the 10th of the month, the day on which the animals for the Passover were taken into the city to be kept there until Thursday when they were slain (Exod. 12:1ff).
  - d. Jesus selected two disciples and sent them into the village nearby, which was Bethphage. About one mile east from Jerusalem lay the ridge of the mount of Olives, so called from the great number of olive trees which grew upon it. (Acts 1:12.)
    - 1) "In leaving Jerusalem one must first pass across the valley of Jehoshaphat, called at its lower end the valley of Hinnom or Gehenna. Through it ran the brook Cedron or Kidron. (John 18:1.) One then passes by the enclosure of Gethsemane (meaning the place of the oil press) which lay along the west side of the hill nearest Jerusalem; ascending the Mount of Olives one could see Jerusalem, and trace the buildings, and especially the temple crowning Mount Moriah.
    - 2) "Then passing over the hill or ridge, one first reached Bethphage on the eastern side, and further still, or two miles from Jerusalem, the village of Bethany, from which Jesus began this day's walk. The Mount of Olives is about a mile in length from north to south and with three peaks. The road to Bethany wound around the middle peak. Palm trees flourish on Mount Olivet, whence the name Bethany, the house of dates and figs, whence the name Bethphage, the house of figs. The oil of the olive was used in the tabernacle and temple worship. (Ex. 30:24-29)" (Boles, pp.409f).
  - e. These two disciples were sent to obtain a donkey and a colt upon which Jesus would make his entry into Jerusalem.
2. Verse 3: "And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him."
    - a. The Lord instructed them what to say in case someone questioned their taking these animals. They were simply to say that "the Lord hath need of them." Mark 11:5-6 shows that they were called on to give this answer.

- b. The horse was generally considered a weapon of war, and the multiplying of horses was forbidden of Israelite kings (Deut. 17:16). Jesus entered Jerusalem as a picture of peace, not as a conqueror with battle gear, or on a fiery charger; rather he came as the Prince of Peace.
3. Verses 4-6: “And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.”
- a. Matthew says, “an ass tied and a colt with her.” According to both accounts, it was the colt that was ridden (7; comp. Matt. xxi. 5); so Mark, pursuing his characteristic method of singling out the one most important person or object in a group, mentions the colt and says nothing of the dam. (For other examples of this method, compare v. 2 with Matt. viii. 28 ; vii. 31,32 with Matt. xv. 29, 30; x. 46 with Matt. xx. 30; xi. 21 with Matt xxi. 20; xii. 2 with Matt. xxi. 34; xiii. 1, 2 with Matt xxiv. 31.) [p.334, McGarvey].
- b. Here Mark gives an incident which is omitted by the other writers. He states that the inquiry, “ Why do ye this?” which was anticipated and provided for by the Savior (3), was actually made when the disciples were untying the colt, and that when the inquirers were told, “The Lord hath need of him,” “they let them go.” This was another display of foreknowledge, showing that Jesus knew where the animals would be found, and what would be the mind and word of their owner. [*ibid.*, p.335]
4. Verses 7-8: “And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.”
- a. "Foreseeing the strange figure of a king riding in triumph into the capital city of his kingdom, not on a richly caparisoned steed and surrounded by pomp and glory, but on the colt of an ass, the last animal which vanity would choose for a grand display, the ass without a bridle and with no saddle but a man's coat thrown across its back, the prophet exclaims, 'Behold, thy King cometh to thee *meek*, sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass'" (McGarvey, pp.178f). “All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass” (Matt. 21:4-5).
- b. The Bible reports that a very great crowd of people went forth from Jerusalem to meet Jesus upon hearing of his approach. This was a momentous occasion; and the entry of the Lord was one fraught with the greatest of danger, for the religious leaders had been conspiring to put him to death, as well as to kill Lazarus (John 12:10-11). They were much disturbed over the popularity of Jesus, for as his fame increased, their fortune waned.
- 1) Matthew 27:18: "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him."
- 2) John 12:17-19: "The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him."
- 3) John 11:47-48: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."
- c. "The people were wild with delight and admiration. Only the most extravagant state of feeling could prompt them to make a carpet along the mountain path with their garments, and with the soft branches of the palm-tree. (John 12:13.) It was 'a very great multitude,' and their numbers enabled them to spread this carpet all the way from the mountain top to the gate of the city" (*ibid.*, p.179).
- d. Luke gives an interesting detail in 19:39-40. Some of the Pharisees, who were always trying to find fault, called on the Lord to rebuke the multitude for this tribute he was being shown. Christ replied that if they should stop this praise the stones would cry out immediately! This welcome was one of necessity.
5. Verses 9-10: “And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”
- a. **Hosanna**: a shout of prayerful joy; it is derived from two Hebrew words meaning “be now propitious” and “save us now” (See Boles, p.412). Others gave additional cries (Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38).
- 1) Psalms 118:25: "Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity."

- 2) Mark 11:10: "Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."
- 3) Luke 19:38: "Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."
- b. Compare: "On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12:12-13).
  - 1) The events we are now studying occurred during the last week of Jesus' life prior to the crucifixion. Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany (John 12:1).
  - 2) "If the passover began on Friday, which is certain, though it has been questioned by a few writers, then six days before the passover fixes the arrival of Jesus at Bethany on Sunday. This follows from the universal custom of the Jews, in stating the number of a series of days or years, to include in the aggregate both the first and the last, even when only a small part of either was actually included. According to this method, a count of six days ending Friday must begin with Sunday" (McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*, pp.405f).
  - 3) The next morning (John 12:12), Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when great multitudes spread palm branches and garments before him (Mt. 21:8). "It is palm Monday, if it is palm anything. Thus one of the Roman Catholic traditions, which is without foundation in fact, passes away" (ibid.).
6. Verse 11: "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve."
  - a. As the great procession neared the city, the tumult was heard by those yet in Jerusalem, many of whom asked, "Who is this?" They could know that some truly great personage was approaching. The reply was, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." This is an appropriate answer to the question raised by Nathaniel in John 1:46 ("Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?").
  - b. The whole city was stirred; the multitude filled the city with their cries of gladness; the rulers were filled with rage and envy. No wonder the Lord's enemies said on this occasion, "The world is gone after him" (John 12:19).
  - c. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this experience is the great change of heart the populace had within the next few days: today they gave him a king's welcome; before the week was out they were calling for his crucifixion! This change was effected by the devious work of the religious leaders who manipulated the people to work up a frenzy of hatred toward Christ: "But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them" (Mark 15:11). False teachers are powerful in ability to deceive and destroy; their power is not to be underestimated.
  - d. The Lord did not remain in the city, but he led the twelve back to the little town of Bethany, where they were staying.

**B. Mark 11: 12-19: Jesus Entered Jerusalem Again the Next Day.**

1. Verses 12-14: "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it."
  - a. As he and his disciples were returning to Jerusalem the next morning, Jesus was hungry. Apparently he had left Bethany without eating. Some think this implies that they had not stayed with any family that night. He saw a fig tree, evidently near the road and thus public property (Deut. 23:24-25). It was fully clothed with leaves, a sign that the fruit was there and ripened. Compare: "When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put *any* in thy vessel. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn" (Deut. 23:24-25).
  - b. "In Palestine the fig tree puts out its fruit first, afterward the leaves; by the time that the tree is in full foliage, the fruit ought to be ripe. This tree was an exception; a perversion of the laws of its nature; it deceived the eye, was to all appearance fruitful, but only cumbered the ground" (Boles, p.416). It was like the Jewish nation: full of leaves but had no proper fruit. Thus by cursing the tree a severe rebuke to the nation was given also.

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- c. This episode has elicited a variety of responses from its readers. Some find reason for taking exception to what happened.
- 1) Some think that Christ had no right even to try to eat from the tree since it did not belong to him. But according to Deuteronomy 23:24-25, a passerby had to right to eat of another's vineyard or grain field; he did not have the right to harvest it. A tree that grew by the wayside was public property.
  - 2) Some say the Lord had no right to expect fruit of that tree because "the time of figs was not (yet)" (Mark 11:13). The ASV says, "It was not the time of figs." The scholars give differing views on this statement. Some interpret it to mean that the time for figs to be ripe had not come; others interpret it to mean that the time of the harvest of figs (a) had not yet arrived or (b) was not over. If the time for the ripened figs had not come, why did the Lord expect to find figs on the tree since none could possibly be there? And why did he curse the tree for having no figs when the laws of nature had prohibited the presence of figs on the tree at the time?
  - 3) Some say that Christ only pretended to look for figs, knowing that there was none to be found. The omniscience of the Lord would reveal to him whether there was any fruit on the tree, unless he chose to "turn off" his omniscient powers. It is reasonable to assume that the Lord knew full well that there were no figs on the tree. So why did he look? Obviously to teach some object lesson; what that lesson was becomes apparent in the rest of this chapter and in chapters 23 and 24 [In Matthew]. Jesus was not guilty of deceit for we are told (I Pet. 2:22) that he was without guile.
  - 4) Some say that Christ had no right to destroy the tree since it did not belong to him. Actually, it did belong to him since he was God's agent in the original creation (Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-4). Anyhow, this tree was unproductive and thus useless; he did no one any harm by destroying it. He was able, by cursing the tree, to teach a needed and timeless lesson by which millions have been benefitted.
  - 5) Some say that Christ exhibited petty anger over learning there was no fruit on the tree. But there is nothing in the text which indicates any anger on his part. The Lord was teaching an important lesson which appears in the following context; he chose a tree with which to teach this lesson; he had power to punish mankind with death, as was done many times in the Old Testament, but he chose to use a tree instead.
- d. Regarding the fig trees in Palestine, the scholars give this information, which is partially contradictory. It is reported that there are two different varieties which are common to the land: one ordinarily ripens in June and the other in August. It is also reported that some figs might remain on the tree through winter, and that there might even be figs available at most times during the year. At that ancient time there may have been other varieties of which we know little or nothing today. It is reported that figs were ripe by March and April, the time of these events. It is also reported that some of the people liked to eat the figs before they became ripened. With this information at hand, it is difficult to come to a satisfactory conclusion regarding the current story, but some facts are clear:
- 1) If Jesus knew there were no figs on the tree, why did he look anyway, and why did he curse the tree? In order to teach a lesson.
  - 2) If the season for figs had not come, why did he pretend to look for figs? Everyone would know that the leaves on the tree meant nothing, yet the disciples said nothing to dissuade his look for figs. Although the season for ripened figs may not have come, it was possible that this one tree prematurely put forth leaves.
  - 3) If the time of fig harvest was not over, we can see why he would look even though he would know the tree was barren—to teach the lesson.
  - 4) If the time for figs to appear on the tree had not yet come, then there should not have been any leaves either. Why were there leaves? If it would have been miraculous for figs to be present, it would be likewise miraculous for leaves to be on the tree. But we have no reason to believe any miracle was involved in the presence of the leaves or the absence of the fruit.
  - 5) It appears to this Bible student that Jesus had reason to expect figs to be on the tree by the presence of the leaves; that this was what anyone would expect; and that therefore the statement in Mark 11:13 means that the time of gathering the figs was still in progress. Of course, Jesus knew that no fruit would be found, since he was all-knowing, but used the tree as an object lesson.
- e. One viable fact regarding fig trees in Palestine is known: the figs are on the tree before leaves appear, so that when one ordinarily saw the leaves, he would be sure the figs had been produced. Matthew says the tree was "in the way," while Mark reports that they saw it "afar off." It was beside the road
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but still a good way ahead when they took sight of it. This shows that Jesus did not try to steal from some farmer. Deuteronomy 23:24-25 gave any one the right to partake of it as he traveled down the road.

- f. The Lord had related a parable in Luke 13:1-9 about a certain man who had a fig tree in his vineyard which produced no fruit. He ordered that it be cut down since it had borne no fruit for three seasons. His vine-dresser asked that he be allowed to dig around it, and dung it, and if it then did not produce, to cut it down. This parable was given immediately following the exchange recorded in the first five verses of the chapter, in which the Lord showed that all would perish unless they repented. The non-producing fig tree in this parable describes those people in the context who were guilty of sin but would not repent. Vineyard and fig tree illustrations were often used to teach spiritual lessons to Israel (Isa. 5:1ff; 28:1ff; 42:1-4; 61:1-3; Matt. 11:15-21; Luke 13:1-9; Matt. 21:18-22).
  - g. "The vine is used in the Bible to represent what is beautiful and good, but the fig tree is rarely used except as a symbol of what seems bad. There is a Jewish legend to the effect that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a fig tree. The Greeks called a bad man, a fig tree man. Thus the word *sycophant* (a flatterer, a man who acts dishonestly), when literally translated, means a man that shows figs" (Lockyer, *All The Miracles of the Bible*, p.237).
2. Verses 15-16: "And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple."
- a. Those who were in charge of the temple were very strict in who was allowed to enter this holy edifice. Later when someone declared that Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple, a great tumult was raised: "And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him [Paul] in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut" (Acts 21:27-30).
  - b. Unscrupulous people will twist any truth or reality to their own advantage. Those Jews who traveled from afar would find it very convenient to purchase a sacrificial animal at the temple than to have to find one out in the country. We are told that the Sadducees were in charge of the Temple; they were not averse to making money from those who were dealers in animals and items used in the sacrifice, which would bring them a considerable gain in money. These places of business would not have been in the holy parts of the temple, where divine services were conducted, but in some other part.
  - c. The Law prescribed that doves could be offered by the poor in place of the more expensive animals; it also directed that a half-shekel coin be given each year for the upkeep of the tabernacle or temple (Matt. 17:24-27). "The only coin received in the sacred treasury was the Levitical shekel or half shekel; these money-changers were men who took pains to buy up all the legal coins and sold them again to the Jews, who had come to worship; they charged a high price for the exchange" (Boles, pp.413f).
  - d. The common currency of the day was Roman, which was unacceptable for the contribution indicated. The animals to be offered in temple worship could not handily be brought from afar by those making the pilgrimage. A bustling business was had by those who sold the doves and who changed the money. The Lord's action in shutting down these businesses doubtless met with strong approval on the part of those who had to pay the exorbitant prices these businessmen charged. Any time there is a strong demand for some product or service which is not otherwise readily available, there are always those who will take advantage of the situation.
  - e. There was a degree of violence involved in the Lord's casting out the businessmen, and the overthrowing of their tables and seats. It is useless to speculate what the outcome would have been if these men had refused to leave. The approach the Lord took was more than sufficient to cause them quickly to depart. Perhaps they knew about his miraculous activities, and feared what he might do to them. Further, the huge crowd which had welcomed him into Jerusalem might be in agreement with Jesus.
  - f. Christ could clearly see that this merchandising was an affront to the Almighty; he took immediate and rightful action to end this sinful arrangement. At the beginning of his work, the Lord also cleansed the temple: "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and
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poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:13-17).

- 1) Jesus cleansed the temple at this point early in his ministry and on a later occasion when he made his final trip to Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 21:12). Brother Woods offers this: "Moreover, the Jews came to worship from many lands and before purchasing these offerings they had to change their currency into that in use in Judea and this also afforded another opportunity to profit at the expense of the worshippers, since a fee was charged for each transaction. When Jesus observed this gross and materialistic misuse of the sacred precincts of the temple he was outraged. They had turned the house of prayer into a den of thieves" (p.54).
  - 2) Isaiah 56:7: "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."
  - 3) Mark 11:17: "And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers."
- g. Finding material at hand, likely from the ropes used in handling the animals, the Lord made a scourge (a whip) from the small cords or ropes. Obviously, this weapon would not be dangerous but would be a means of moving the crowd of people. Does anyone doubt that the Lord's anger was stirred? Jesus would have been a stranger to these people, but his ire was certainly recognized. We do not know what size man the Lord was, but likely he would have been a person of considerable strength since he had evidently worked for a long time with his carpenter father. There assuredly was something about the Lord that struck fear in the hearts of these evil men. Lying in the immediate background was his mighty entrance into the city. This was "Jesus the prophet of Galilee!"
  - h. Being the Son of God, he had the right to cleanse the temple of these covetous merchandisers. He also issued stern warnings against such attitudes: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).
  - i. In the process of this effective work, he drove from the temple the animals, the merchants, and overturned the tables of the money exchangers. Jesus accused them all of being thieves, indicating that they were crooked in their dealings, cheating those who came from afar to worship God at the holy temple.
  - j. Christ also interrupted the practice of carrying any thing through the temple; the was also a violation of the sanctity of this holy place. It may be that some were taking shortcuts in moving certain items and animals through some part of the temple to the altar.
3. Verse 17: "And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves."
    - a. Compare Matthew 21:13: "And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." The quotation is from Isaiah 56:7, and the latter part may be from Jeremiah 7:11, although it may be the Lord's personal comment. Thieves and robbers often inhabited dens and caves. It is reported that on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem there were many such places (cf. Luke 10:30-37).
    - b. Christ describes the despicable merchants who operated from the temple courts hyperbolically as "thieves," and said they had turned the house of God into a "den of thieves." This is extremely critical language, and obviously condemns their sinful dealings as well as their choice of location. The place intended as a place where God met with men in a sincere and holy worship setting had been defiled with commercialism which was itself extortionate. Notice the antithesis of the verse: house of prayer -vs- den of thieves. As previously observed, there was great danger associated with his journey into Jerusalem.
    - c. Of course the Lord knew what awaited him there, and had even foretold exactly what would transpire. It was to that end that he had come to earth. He was not terrified of his enemies; he willingly went to their own territory, and fearlessly entered and "bearded the lion in his own den!"
  4. Verses 18-19: "And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city."
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- a. "This is the first instance in the Synoptics of the "chief priests" taking serious measures to destroy Him, and the reader will notice how closely it follows upon the cleansing of the temple. 'They sought how they might destroy him.' Their fears made them think that it would be no easy thing to destroy Him. They did not count upon the fleeting nature of all popularity. Three days after this the people who were astonished at His doctrine made no effort to save Him." (M.F. Sadler)." [See Johnson].
- b. Coffman:
  - 1) Note that it is not stated here that they "decided" to destroy him; that decision had already been made more than three years previously (John 5:18). Furthermore, Jesus, at the first cleansing, had associated his action with a veiled prophecy of his death and resurrection (John 2:19). Without doubt, Jesus' action in the two cleansings was a prime source of the motivation of the enemies who decided to destroy him. The principal concern of the chief priests, as revealed here, was exactly how they could bring about his death. Mark's very next verse suggests the possibility that they might have assassinated Jesus if he had not withdrawn from the city every night. That they really preferred secret murder to any public act against him is plain from Matthew 26:4: "And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him."
  - 2) In addition to the reason for Jesus' leaving the city each night and staying either in Bethany or in some secluded place on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, which was cited under the above verse, there was also the evident purpose of our Lord to avoid identification, as much as possible, with any of the places previously accounted sacred. His sitting by Jacob's well (John 4:6) dignified a place not mentioned in the Old Testament, it being nowhere stated therein that Jacob ever dug a well. Nazareth, Cana, Bethany, Bethsaida-Julius, and the majority of the places made memorable by Jesus were simply not identified among the Jews as having any notability. Jesus' refusing to stay all night in Jerusalem was fully compatible with the obvious design of his whole life, which was to show that no place, or person, was so obscure or unimportant as to deny it or him a participation in the mercy which God sent to all.
- c. As evening came, he and his disciples left Jerusalem and returned to Bethany, to spend the night there. We are not told precisely where they stayed, but likely at the house of his friends, Lazarus and his two sisters.

C. Mark 11:20-26: Lessons to the Apostles From the Dead Fig Tree.

1. Verses 20-21: "And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away."
  - a. We remember that the Lord had cursed this particular fig tree on the previous day (Mark 11:12-14). "In Palestine the fig tree puts out its fruit first, afterward the leaves; by the time that the tree is in full foliage, the fruit ought to be ripe. This tree was an exception; a perversion of the laws of its nature; it deceived the eye, was to all appearance fruitful, but only cumbered the ground" (Boles, Matthew, p.416). It was like the Jewish nation: full of leaves but had no proper fruit. Thus by cursing the tree a severe rebuke to the nation was given also.
  - b. In a short time, this fig tree had withered away. Peter seems to be somewhat surprised at this, and called the Lord's attention to the dead tree.
  - c. This is the only miracle involving a curse which Jesus is reported to have done. All the others involved mercy, goodness and help. But here the tree is cursed that it promptly died. The next morning as Christ and the apostles made their way into the city, Peter called attention to the fact that the tree was already withered (Mark 11:20-21). They probably did not notice it the evening before as they returned to Bethany due to darkness (Mark 11:19).
  - d. Matthew's account tells us that it withered "presently." The withering of the tree was miraculous for if a tree or limb is cut down, or if a leaf is plucked from a tree, it retains its greenness perhaps for several days. Mark tells us the it dried up from its roots. The apostles were amazed to find it so soon dead.
  - e. "Every miracle affecting a new department of nature, filled the disciples with fresh surprise. They had seen miracles wrought on the human body, on demons, on the winds and the waves, on bread and flesh; but they had not until now seen one that took effect on a tree. Their surprise, though by no means philosophical, was not unnatural" (McGarvey, p.181).
  - f. Although the Lord does not directly, in plain words, say that the fig tree represented the barren nation of Israel, the following context will show that this was obviously the intent. In cursing the tree, which gave the appearance of fruitfulness, he showed his rejection of those who merely put on a show of

- righteousness. Israel had every appearance of being very religious and righteous, but inwardly they were full of deceit and disobedience.
2. Verses 22-23: “And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”
    - a. Compare: “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” (Matt. 21:22-23).
    - b. The Lord gave the apostles assurance that they would also be enabled to perform miracles, provided their faith was sufficiently strong. The New Testament record bears out the fact that they did truly perform great miracles. The Lord's language should not be pressed too far. There is no record of anyone ever miraculously uprooting a mountain and casting it into the sea. The Lord apparently used this as an illustration of the wondrous power to which they would have access (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 3:1ff; 2 Cor. 12:12). A genuine miracle always had a definite purpose.
    - c. Christ was giving the apostles a promise of the miraculous power he would soon give them. They would be endowed with supernatural abilities to confirm the message they would be broadcasting throughout the world.
    - d. The promise of Matthew 21:22-23 and Mark 11:22-24 is a repeat of that which was given in Matthew 17:20: “And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”
    - e. Christians of every generation are promised that their prayers will be heard by the benevolent Father, provided the conditions of acceptable prayer are met, and the requests are in harmony with his will. The time of miracles has long since passed into history; any prayer that requires a miraculous act from heaven, will not be filled.
  3. Verse 24: “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”
    - a. Other versions:
      - 1) ASV: “Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”
      - 2) NKJ: “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”
    - b. This statement is not intended to be an unlimited promise, but was given only to the apostles, and based on conditions stated elsewhere in the Scriptures. The Lord is not promising them that all their wants would be furnished; even Christ did not provide his necessities by miracle (cf. Mt. 21:18-19).
    - c. Coffman: This important passage sheds light upon the manner of Jesus' teaching the Twelve. A comparison with Matthew 6:15, where portions of this are conspicuous in the Sermon on the Mount, and with Matthew 18:35, where almost the same words were used to conclude the parable of the unmerciful servant, shows that Jesus repeated over and over many basic truths, introducing them in various contexts. Significantly, this undercuts absolutely the conceit of some of the critics and their doodlings with regard to where, exactly, such and such a statement belongs. The lines in the sacred gospels "belong" wherever one finds them; and, if they occur several times, then they "belong" several times!
  4. Verses 25-26: “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”
    - a. Our Lord expressed similar thoughts in Matthew 6:14-15: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
    - b. These verses are not part of the model prayer [which precedes in Matthew 6], but give additional information about the statement in Matthew 6:12. We are to forgive others if we expect to receive pardon from the Father. Matthew 18:15-35.
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- c. Mark 11:25-26: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." The Lord here teaches us to be ready to forgive anyone who trespasses against us.
- d. Luke 17:3-4: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Our forgiveness is not to be extended to one who will not repent.
- e. We forgive, but we cannot remove guilt. We forgive in the sense that we receive the offender back into our fellowship, and treat him as though he had never committed the offense.

D. Mark 11:27-33: Jesus Speaks With the Jewish Leaders.

1. Verses 27-28: "And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?"
  - a. Compare: "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things" (Matt. 21:23-27).
  - b. If prompted by the proper motive, this question raised by Jesus' enemies is very important. It is a question that needs to be asked of everyone who speaks on a spiritual issue. If the authority is only from man, the practices and teachings are without value; if they are from God, they are to be accepted and applied.
  - c. The chief priests were the heads of the twenty-four courses (classes) of priests. David had made these classifications; each group had one of their number appointed as its chief priest. Hence the chief priests were the twenty-four heads of the twenty-four courses of priests; these were the spiritual leaders in Israel. The elders were the rulers of the cities, thus bore civil authority. Mark adds the scribes to the list. These were authorized teachers. Their job entailed making copies of the Law, and since they were considered learned men of the Law, they held positions of authority in religious instruction.
    - 1) These men came to Jesus, demanding to know the authority behind his actions and words. "What authority to cast out the traders, as he had done on the previous day, to teach, and to allow himself to be called the Son of David. As he was neither priest nor a civil ruler, and had not been commissioned either by Caesar or the Sanhedrin, they denied that he had rightful claim to the authority which he exercised" (McGarvey, p.182).
    - 2) These men were not sincere in their questions for they showed by their response to his question that truth was unimportant to them. They wanted to hold to their own positions of power and wealth. They might have been receiving financial gain from the merchants doing business at the temple.
    - 3) The Lord's enemies were aware of his miracles, but closed their minds to the implications involved. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:47-48).
- d. "It was absurd and impertinent to ask him for his authority when his miracles had given an unmistakable answer; consequently his reply was not an attempt to enlighten them, but to expose their folly. They had often tried to place him in a dilemma, and had never succeeded; he sometimes tried the same with them, and never failed. He does so on this occasion by asking them the source of authority for John's baptism....They were forced either to tell a lie, which they did, or to acknowledge the fact that John's baptism was from heaven" (McGarvey, p.183).
  - 1) His miracles were more than sufficient proof of his authority: his authority was from God, and he was the very Son of God. The Lord raised a devastating question which exposed them as hypocrites. He knew they had rejected John's baptism (Matt. 3:7-12); they had refused to receive

- John as a true prophet for the same reason that they refused to accept Jesus—it would have meant an end to their positions of authority and wealth.
- 2) They were religious hypocrites and not sincere adherents thereof. They were very much like the fig tree which gave a beautiful appearance of fruitfulness by its grand display of foliage, but were as barren of [spiritual] fruit as was the cursed tree. The parable of the two sons (21:28-32) and that of evil husbandmen (21:33ff) point out the hypocrisy of these Jewish leaders in particular and the whole nation in general.
  - 3) The same theme is further developed in Matthew 22 by the confrontation between the Lord and various parties and individuals who questioned him; and still further in chapter 23 when the Lord denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees; and the doom of such hypocrisy and disobedience is described in chapters 24-25. All of these immediately follow the story of the cursing of the barren fig tree, and it is clear that the fig tree episode occurred to illustrate that very matter.
- e. If they had admitted the divine source of John's baptism, they would have had to take John as a true prophet; and since he was a true prophet and had announced publicly that Jesus is the Messiah, to accept John would necessarily have required acceptance of Jesus also. By rejecting John's baptism, they rejected the counsel of God (Luke 7:29-30), the messages given through John, and ultimately rejected the Messiah as well.
- 1) That the Lord's question cut to the heart of their problem is seen by the terrible quandary into which they were placed. They were quick to see their predicament and were able to know they could not give an answer. "If we say it was from heaven, he will demand to know why we rejected him; but if we say from men, the people are liable to stone us for they consider John as a true prophet."
  - 2) They were fairly trapped! Their hypocrisy would be seen by all who witnessed this exchange. Their only possible reply convicted them of hypocrisy, so they blindly and stubbornly had to hold to their course, or repent. These men appear to be unable to have godly sorrow (2 Cor. 5:10), a prerequisite to repentance.
2. Verses 29-33: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."
- a. Their answer was: "We cannot tell." Those who love truth will recognize it and accept it. Those who have pleasure in their own wisdom, or in a system they love, or in unrighteousness, will try to escape the truth in some manner. Some will devise some quibble against it, which will always be contradictory to some other truth; some will change their arguments to suit the changing situations even though the latter positions contradict what they formerly affirmed; and some will try to plead ignorance. This is seen often when the truth on baptism, the identity of the church, the kind of music God has ordained for worship, faith, unity, etc., is presented. Cf Matthew 13:13-16; Mark 3:1-6; John 5:45-47; 8:43-45; 9:39-41; Acts 13:44-51.
  - b. They answered by saying that they did not know. This is a foolish position, for these were learned men; the common people who had little or no education could see that John was a prophet, but these of the educated elite did not know! Actually, they pleaded ignorance as the only "out" they could see; but their answer showed either they were dense or ignorant, or else they were hypocrites. They were neither stupid nor ignorant! They could not tell because they would not tell.
  - c. Having exposed their hypocrisy, Jesus saw no need to answer their question. He had demonstrated his identity many times by his miracles, which also revealed his source of authority; but they had refused to accept that positive, absolute proof. They could not disprove or logically deny his miracles; and his miracles proved his claims to be true. These men were not sincere in their question; they were trying to find fault with Christ, and to discover some basis on which to nullify his influence. Thus the Lord refused to give them an answer. Cf. Matthew 12:1-30.
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## Mark 12

### A. Mark 12:1-12: The Wicked Husbandmen.

1. Verse 1: “And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.”
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) “Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons” (Matt. 21:33-41).
    - 2) “Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Luke 20:9-18).
  - b. "The wine-presses of the ancients were literally *dug*, for they consisted in an excavation in the solid rock a foot or two in depth and several feet square. The grapes were thrown into these excavations and mashed by young men tramping them with their feet. Another excavation lower down the hill side, whose top was on a level with the bottom of the press, received the juice as it ran from the mashed grapes through an orifice provided for the purpose" (McGarvey, p.184).
  - c. The tower was for the purpose of stationing a watchman to keep out any one or any animals that might break through the hedge. "The Jews lived in cities and villages, knowing nothing of the farm life so common in America. They went to their fields in the morning and returned at night, except in times of harvest and vintage, when they sometimes slept in the fields. (See Ruth 3:1-7.)" (McGarvey, p.185).
  - d. Johnson: “The enemies of Christ had already determined on his death. Their only ground of hesitation was his popularity with the throngs who now crowded Jerusalem. This day was one of constant conflict. The chief ecclesiastical authorities had come to him to demand his authority for driving the money changers out of the temple but had been silenced by a question that he had hurled upon them. After Jesus had put to silence the chief priests and scribes, he spoke to them three parables. The Two Sons, recorded only by Matthew; the Wicked Husbandmen, and The Marriage of the King’s Son, given only by Matthew. It was as if in a glass held up before them they might see themselves. Yet even these parables, wearing as they do so severe and threatening an aspect, are not words of defiance, but of earnest, tenderest love—spoken, if it were yet possible to turn them from their purpose to save them the fearful sin they were about to commit, to win them also for the kingdom of God.”
2. Verses 2-3: “And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.”
  - a. At the time when the harvest should be ready, the owner sent certain servants to get the produce of the vineyard, either the fruit or the money from the fruit. The husbandmen were those who had rented the vineyard and cultivated it for a certain percentage of the yield.

- b. The meaning of this parable was probably already beginning to make itself known to the Lord's enemies, for Isaiah had pictured Israel as a choice vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7). The husbandmen, not wanting to relinquish any of the fruits of the vineyard to the owner, beat one of the servants, killed another, and stoned another.
- c. These servants represent the various messengers and prophets who had been sent by God to Israel through the ages:
- 1) Hebrews 11:37-38: "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."
  - 2) Jeremiah 37:15: "Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison."
  - 3) Matthew 23:31-35: "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."
  - 4) Acts 7:51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."
3. Verses 4-5: "And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some."
- a. *Another servant.* God sent many prophets to the Jews, as he sends many influences to us. *Shamefully handled, or dishonored.* It is the generic summing up of all that the imagination naturally suggests when we think of what must have been done to the man in the affray in which his head was seriously wounded—Morrison. [See Johnson].
  - b. "The increase of severity toward the servants, the first being merely beaten, the second being wounded in the head with stones, and the third being killed, gives the force of a climax to the description, but points to no historical feature in the significance of the parable" (McGarvey, p.339).
4. Verses 6-7: "Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours."
- a. The householder send more servants, but these were likewise mistreated. The owner lastly sent his son, thinking that they would have reverence for him, and would live up to their bargain. But these wicked men connived together, saying that if they killed the son they could seize the inheritance. So they caught him, cast him from the vineyard, and slew him. Since the household in the story represents God, and the servants the prophets, then the son represents the Messiah, God's only begotten Son.
  - b. Notice that the Son was sent lastly. This signifies that he will be the last effort made by God in behalf of man. The details fit the case also in the matter of the son being cast outside the vineyard where he was slain. Jesus was crucified outside the camp, the walls of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:12-13; John 19:17). The story shows the mercy of God for he sent servants, and finally his Son, even though the husbandmen were unworthy.
  - c. The Jews of the ancient times treated the prophets of God shamefully. Compare:
    - 1) 1 Kings 18:13: "Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?"
    - 2) 1 Kings 22:24-27: "But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace."

- 3) 2 Kings 6:31: "Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day."
  - 4) 2 Chronicles 24:19-22: "Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it."
  - 5) 2 Chronicles 36:16: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."
  - 6) Hebrews 11:36: "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment."
  - 7) Acts 7:52: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."
5. Verses 8-9: "And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others."
- a. Coffman:
    - 1) In Mark's abbreviation of this, the important fact of the Lord's extracting the prophecy of the removal and destruction of the husbandmen and the letting of the vineyard out to others from the lips of the priests themselves is not mentioned. The fact that "others" would "render him the fruits in their seasons" was also omitted by Mark. (See Matthew 21:40,41).
    - 2) This verse is a clear prophecy that God would destroy Israel and extend salvation to the Gentiles, a prophecy fulfilled by the fact of God's sending the message of redemption to all the world (also including Israel), and by the further fact that the mainstream of true faith in God would, for nearly two millenniums, take on a Gentile identification.
  - b. Christ first refers to Psalm 118:22ff where a prophecy had been made of the Messiah, describing him as a stone which was rejected by the builders. The corner stone was the main part of the building for it was cut and placed perfectly so as to align two walls of the building. If it were imperfect or incorrectly placed the whole building would be out of kilter.
    - 1) A rejected corner stone was one the builders had inspected and found wanting. This is just what had happened with Christ: the Jews had a preconceived notion about the Messiah; when Jesus did not measure up to their expectation, they rejected him. Similar points are also made in:
      - a) Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
      - b) 1 Peter 2:4-8: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."
    - 2) "In the figure of the rejected cornerstone, the chief priests and Pharisees are represented as trying to build the walls of a house, but being unable to fit the stones at the corner because they rejected the only stone that was cut for that place. They were guilty of this folly in rejecting Jesus while trying to construct a conception of the kingdom of God" (McGarvey, p.185).
  - c. The Jews had largely rejected Jesus as the Messiah; only a remnant obeyed the gospel. Hence, the gospel would be presented to the Gentiles who would, in a great many instances, accept it.
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- 1) Down through the centuries the church has been comprised almost entirely of Gentiles; the Jews still reject Christ and his gospel, even though there is more than sufficient evidence to prove that he is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, and his gospel is the will of Almighty God.
  - 2) Compare: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region" (Acts 13:44-49).
6. Verses 10-11: "And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"
- a. Compare Acts 4:11: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."
    - 1) Peter refers back to Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22. Christ had used this same figure of himself (Matt. 21:42), and Peter used it again in 1 Peter 2:4-6. "In this passage, he places his proud judges in the ridiculous attitude of searching about vainly for a stone to fit the corner of the foundation, while persistently rejecting the real corner-stone, without which the building can not be reared" (McGarvey, p.63).
    - 2) "The Sanhedrin as the rulers of the people had rejected Christ and refused to build upon him, but he has now become the 'chief corner stone.' Their rejection of Christ went to prove him to be the true stone of whom the prophets spoke" (Boles, p.67).
      - a) "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:44).
      - b) "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Luke 20:18).
      - c) Isaiah 28:16: "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste"(ASV).
      - d) Psalm 118:22: "The stone which the builders rejected Is become the head of the corner" (ASV).
      - e) 1 Peter 2:4-6: "'Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame" (ASV).
  - b. See Coffman:
    - 1) In the primary meaning of the psalm the illustration seems to have been drawn from one of the stones, quarried, hewn, and marked, away from the site of the temple, which the builders, ignorant of the head architect's plans, or finding on it no mark (such as recent explorations in Jerusalem have shown to have been placed on the stones of Solomon's temple in the place where they were quarried, to indicate their position in the future structure of the fabric), had put on one side as having no place in the building, but which was found afterwards to be that on which the completeness of the structure depended on which, as the chief corner-stone, the two walls met and were bonded together.
    - 2) Plumptre. The stone. The "stone" is the whole kingdom and power of the Messiah summed up in himself.
    - 3) Alford. The builders rejected. The builders answer to the husbandman; they were appointed of God to carry up the spiritual building, as these to cultivate the spiritual vineyard. The rejection of the chief corner-stone answers exactly to the denying and murdering the heir.
    - 4) Trench. Become the head of the corner.
  - c. It was God who was behind the great plan of which Christ here speaks. Those who come to perceive this splendid operation, it becomes truly marvelous to us. Compare: "Having made known unto us the

mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself" (Eph. 1:9). The apostle declares the God has made known unto *us* (the apostles and prophets—Eph. 3:5) the mystery of his will.

- 1) "The word *mystery*...means literally something into which one must be *initiated* before it is fully known...and then anything which is concealed or hidden. We commonly use the word to denote that which is above our comprehension or unintelligible. But this is never the meaning of the word in the New Testament. It means there some doctrine or fact which has been concealed, or which has not before been fully revealed, or which has been set forth only by figures and symbols. When the doctrine is made known, it may be as clear and plain as any other. Such was the doctrine that God meant to call the Gentiles, which was long concealed...and which was not fully made known until the Saviour came, and which had been till that time *a mystery—a concealed truth*—though when it was revealed there was nothing incomprehensible in it" (Barnes, p.24).
  - 2) The Greek word *mystery* (*musterion*) is a military term; it was used in reference to a secret military plan drawn up by the commanders of an army and which was hidden from view until it was put into operation. *Operation Overlord* was the name of the secret plan the Allies developed for the invasion of Europe during World War II. When the plan was put into action, it was easy to understand and appreciate it. The *mystery* of the passage is not information that is beyond human comprehension, but was information that could not be known by man without God revealing it.
- d. God's great plan had its inception before the foundation of the world.
- 1) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
  - 2) Ephesians 3:9: "And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."
  - 3) Colossians 1:26: "*Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."
7. Verse 12: "And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way."
- a. The elders of verse 23 are now referred to as Pharisees. The chief priests are said by the scholars to be Sadducees. It was easy for these errorists to perceive that both of the parables (verses 28-32 and verses 33-44) applied to them. Rather than bring them to repentance, these men stiffened their necks even more.
  - b. "With a genius surpassing that of any mortal, Christ wove eternal truth into the fabric of the parables. He held the completed picture up before his enemies, as one might hold up a mirror; and at last, confronted with a likeness of themselves as plain as any photograph, they got the point! Their fury was unbounded....They probably would have rushed upon him to kill him then and there, but the Master had too carefully laid the plan for that to happen" (Coffman, p.340).
  - c. "Before that week ended, those evil men would by falsehood, suborned and lying witness, political pressure, intimidation, and mob violence, accomplish his crucifixion, under Christ's permissive will, and with themselves and others as the instruments of Satan....They would disperse the vast concourse of people who loved Jesus and hailed him as the son of David. They would use their wealth, official prerogatives, social position, and political power to intimidate and frighten into silence all who disagreed with them....They would even stoop to take the part of loathed and hated Caesar in order to strengthen their presentation before the governor....Their every word and action would appear in full view and understanding of millions of men for all ages....The dark drama would soon move to its shocking culmination" (Coffman, p.341).
  - d. *And they sought to lay hold on him.* The three accounts supplement each other here. The purpose to seize him is plainly stated in all Mark shows that it was a continued effort (literally, "they were seeking"), while Luke tells that they would have done so on the spot, had they not been afraid of the people. For they knew, etc. Matthew gives the more general reason for this fear: "Because they held him as a prophet." Their desire to seize him was increased by this parable; but their fear of the people was also increased, since they (i.e., the rulers) perceived that he spake the parable against them, and in the presence of the people (Luke 20:9), so that they felt themselves convicted before the people. Conscience made them cowards.—Schaff. [Quoted by Johnson].

B. Mark 12:13-17: Tribute to Caesar.

1. Verse 13: “And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.”
    - a. Johnson:
      - 1) Although thus foiled in their direct attempt to silence him, they lose no time in aiming at the same end by a more insidious method, all the parties hostile to him coalescing for a moment in a joint and several effort to destroy his popularity and influence, by setting him at variance either with the Roman government or Jewish people. The means employed for this end was a series of entangling questions upon difficult and controverted points, both doctrinal and practical, to which it seemed impossible for him to return any answer that would not commit him in the eyes of some important party.
      - 2) This design is apparent from the coalition of two adverse sects or parties in the first attack, the Pharisees, or bigoted opponents of all heathenish and foreign domination, and the Herodians, or followers of Herod, who sustained him as the instrument and vassal of the Romans, This unnatural alliance between parties diametrically opposite in principle was caused by their common hostility to Christ, whose growing influence was far more dangerous to both than either could be to the other.
      - 3) By combining, too, they seemed to render his escape impossible, as any answer which would satisfy the one side must of course afford a ground of opposition to the other. Of this crafty and unprincipled contrivance, on the part of men whose only bond of union was their hatred of our Lord and their desire to destroy him, it might well be said that their design was to catch him, as a bird is caught in fowling, by a word, i.e., by a perplexing question, or, as some explain it, by an unguarded answer.
    - b. Who did the sending? It may have been the Jewish Sanhedrin court. The setting for the preceding parable involved certain leaders of the Jews: “And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders” (Mark 11:27). The Sanhedrin was made up of men from these groups.
  2. Verse 14: “And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?”
    - a. NKJ: When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"
    - b. Other accounts:
      - 1) Matthew 22:15-22: “Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.”
      - 2) Luke 20:20-26: “And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.”
    - c. The Lord could easily see through their flattery. Preachers, elders, deacons, teachers, and all members must be alert to the evil of flattering words! A certain wise preacher once stated, “When some salesman starts bragging about me, I take care to guard my billfold!?”
    - d. The leading Pharisees selected certain of their disciples who, in company with the Herodians, came to Jesus to raise the question which they had decided to ask. The chief Pharisees did not come, for
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- Jesus was apt to recognize them, perhaps having had other exchanges with them. In their stead, these leaders sent some of their aspiring young pupils, perhaps those who were sharp, or beguiling in appearance, and ones the Lord was not apt to recognize as enemies.
- e. The Herodians were a political party who were so named because of their support of King Herod. This put them on good terms with, not only Herod, but the Roman authorities in Palestine also. These men were made part of this entourage because they would be quick to recognize in Jesus' answer anything that might be used against him before the Romans. Ordinarily, the Herodians and Pharisees were on opposite sides. But Jesus was seen as an enemy by both of the groups, and a common enemy often makes strange bedfellows.
  - f. They tried a different approach as they introduced their question. They gave the Lord some flattering compliments which were intended to give him a favorable attitude toward them. One who has been warmly complimented tends to react warmly, favorably, and openly toward the complimenting party. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Ps. 55:21, cf. verse 3).
  - g. They called him Master (Teacher), implying he was superior in position and knowledge to them. They next said they knew he was true (that he was always truthful). Further, that he taught the way of God in truth (he did not compromise the truth in any way). Also, that he did not care for any man (he was completely fearless), and did not regard the person of men (impartial, did not show partiality to men because of their position).
3. Verse 15: "Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it."
    - a. Other versions:
      - 1) ASV: "Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why make ye trial of me? bring me a denarius, that I may see it."
      - 2) NKJ: "Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it."
    - b. "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" (Matt. 22:18).
      - 1) Jesus was infinite in knowledge and understanding, and thus was able to discern their motives. Their efforts are described as "wickedness." He bluntly accuses them of tempting him (putting him on trial with their question), and calls them "hypocrites."
      - 2) A hypocrite is one who feigns to be one thing when he is another. They tried to give the impression that they were very sincere in their question, and even complimented the Lord highly, but their purpose was to find a means to destroy him. They knew immediately that their subterfuge had been discovered.
  4. Verses 16-17: " And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him."
    - a. Compare: "They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).
    - b. They answered only one part of the question: the image is Caesar's. The Lord replied with the answer which has since become proverbial: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." What wonderful wisdom! Who but the Lord could have given such a reply!
    - c. "Nearly two thousand years have not diminished the wisdom and truth of that sensational answer. It fell like a blow on the questioners. It gave the truth about the tribute question, namely, that it should be paid, and that it could not be wrong to do so since it was paid with Caesar's own money, a plain fact attested by his picture and title on the coins! Christ then went far beyond their question and commanded the tax be paid, but in such a manner that no breach in the popular esteem of Jesus would result. Then, vaulting over all earthly and secular considerations, Christ, as always, directed their attention to the higher ground of God's authority rather than to Caesar's..." (Coffman, pp.351f).
    - d. "The answer is general, and in teaching that tribute must be rendered to those to whom tribute is due, it teaches that other obligations to civil rulers are to be discharged as well. While thus pronouncing unmistakably in favor of paying the tribute, he saves himself from popular prejudice by adding, 'and unto God the things that are God's,' asserting in a manner which carried conviction with it, that the payment of enforced tribute was not inconsistent with maintaining complete allegiance to God. The
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answer was not inconsistent with the statute in Deuteronomy, for this had reference, not to enforced subjection by a foreign power, but to the voluntary choice of a king" (McGarvey, pp. 189f).

- e. We may now conceive of him as holding the denarius in his hand, or displaying it to those around, as if it had been something new, thus still more exciting curiosity and gradually opening the way for the solution of the difficulty which had been suggested. Whose is this image and inscription? referring to the well-known head and title of the emperor by which the money was authenticated as a legal tender. As if he had continued in the same tone as before. 'See this money has a man's head and a man's name stamped upon it; what does this mean? who is this, here represented both in words and figures?' The inevitable answer, Cesar's, may to some have suggested, at least vaguely and obscurely, the solution just about to be expressed in words, while others, perhaps most, still continued in suspense, until the words were uttered. [See Johnson].
- f. So long as the Jews submitted to the Romans and enjoyed their protection they were not only authorized but bound to pay for the advantage .... All these constructions [named by Johnson] seem to me too artificial, and the only satisfactory one that which understands our Lord as first suggesting by the very aspect of the coin that they were under obligations to the civil power, and then reminding them that till these came in conflict with religious obligations they were no less binding. As if he had said, 'Yes, if you are actually under Roman domination, yet allowed to serve God in the way of his appointment, and indeed protected in that service, you are bound to pay back what you thus receive, but no such obligations can destroy those which you owe to God himself, or suspend them when they come in competition. In a word, repay to Cesar what he gives you, and to God the infinitely greater gifts which you receive from him'." (I.A. Alexander). [Cited by Johnson].
- g. To this wisdom they could not respond; rather, they were amazed at the answer. There were several reasons for their amazement: he had quickly discovered their scheme; his effortless escape from the dilemma; his ability to shrug off the flattery which was intended to disarm him; and the tremendous wisdom of the reply itself. Thus, baffled and amazed, they left him. One can but wonder what they told the chief Pharisees who had sent them on this fool's errand.

#### C. Mark 12:18-27: The Sadducees and the Resurrection."

1. Verse 18: "Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying."
  - a. This section is also reported by Matthew and Luke:
    - 1) Matthew 22:23-33: "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine."
    - 2) Luke 20:27-40: "Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all."

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- b. Matthew says that this was on the same day. These enemies of Christ had perhaps witnessed the failure of the Pharisees and Herodians.
  - c. The peculiar beliefs of the Sadducees place them in league with modernists of our day: "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). Their question dealt with the resurrection. Their errors grew out of their denial of the existence of spirits: if there were no spirits, then there were no angels, and there was no resurrection, since there was no spirit awaiting the resurrected body.
  - d. "The Sadducees were the sophisticated materialists of their day, relatively few in number, but holding most of the important offices of the Jewish system" (Coffman, p.352).
2. Verses 19-23: "Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife."
- a. They knew what the Law said about the matter they first introduced, which formed the basis for their question. The teachings of the Law on this is found in Deuteronomy 25:5: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her." The practice indicated by the Law was one which predated the Law (see also Gen. 38:6-11).
  - b. McGarvey says that the Sadducees had actively opposed Jesus on only one previous occasion: "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven" (Matt. 16:1).
  - c. The situation they described was one that could have happened, but such was highly unlikely. They claimed to have known a case where seven different brothers, one by one, married the same woman after the preceding brother who had married her died. In each case, there was no child born to the marital union. Lastly, the woman died. Their question, which propounded a dilemma for those who believe in the resurrection, was, whose wife shall she be after the resurrection.
  - d. "The force of the question depended on the assumption that the marital relation would still exist in the resurrected state, and this assumption could be denied only by one competent to speak authoritatively of that state. On this account the Pharisees could not answer the objection satisfactorily. The case was strongly put; for not only were seven men supposed who would have equal claims on the same woman, but these seven men were brothers, between whom a wife in common, or a strife for possession of her, would appear more incongruous than if the seven were strangers to each other" (McGarvey, pp.190f).
  - e. The situation described was one which they had probably used with telling effect on their enemies, the Pharisees. Only the Lord could give a proper answer to the case presented. They probably thought that Jesus would be unable to answer, thus would his influence be diminished by this defeat. But they were doomed to the same fate suffered by the Pharisees and Herodians before them!
3. Verses 24-25: "And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."
- a. Other versions:
    - 1) ASV: "Jesus said unto them, Is it not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven."
    - 2) NKJ: Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."
  - b. The Lord smoothly pointed out three errors in their question. They erred in (1) not knowing the Scriptures, (2) not giving credit to God's power, and (3) in assuming that man will sustain the same marital relationships in the resurrected state. Only one with knowledge of the eternal state could have given this latter reply.
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- c. Many Old Testament passages teach the fact of the resurrection (Job 19:25-27; Ex. 3:6; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). But men who have developed their own theology are adept at ignoring what the Bible teaches in contradiction to their positions. The Sadducees believed the truth about Deuteronomy 25:5, but rejected what it said about the resurrection. Their kinsmen are alive and active today!
- 1) Job 19:25-27: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."
  - 2) Exodus 3:6: "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."
  - 3) Isaiah 26:19: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."
  - 4) Daniel 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."
- d. They had shown their ignorance of God's power also. If they had rightly assessed the power of the Almighty, they would have recognized that he has the ability to raise the dead and give them bodies without the "propensities on which marriage is based" (McGarvey, p.191).
- 1) Hebrews 11:19: "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."
  - 2) Romans 4:17: "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."
  - 3) Matthew 3:9: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."
- e. In the resurrected state there will be no need for marriage, the primary purpose of which is the propagation of the race. Since there will be no death in heaven, there will be no need for physical procreation. Marriage also furnishes companionship for the members of that relationship; but in heaven, there will be constant and perfect companionship, between the redeemed on that blessed shore, and between the redeemed and heaven's primary residents. Thus, the Lord says, on his own authority, that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." The Lord's argument also assumes the reality of angels; he ought to know they were real for they had served him in eternity before his virgin birth brought him into earthly life, and had ministered to him while here (Matt. 4:11).
4. Verses 26-27: "And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err."
- a. Compare: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine" (Matt. 22:31-33).
  - b. McGarvey's comments on these verses are wonderfully perceptive:
    - 1) "Having refuted the objection of the Sadducees, Jesus next furnished a proof of the resurrection. The major premise of his argument is the proposition that 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' Here the term *dead* is used in the sense attached to it by the Sadducees. If he had been disputing with Pharisees, they could have answered, He *is* the God of the dead; for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were dead when he said, 'I *am* their God.'
    - 2) "But to the Sadducees a dead man was *non est*—he had ceased to exist, he was nothing; and to say, in their sense of the term, that God is the God of the dead, is to say he is the God of nothing. It would be nonsense. But God did say, hundreds of years after the death of the three patriarchs, 'I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' (Ex. 3:6.) The conclusion follows, that these patriarchs were not dead in the Sadducean sense of the term; and as the conclusion applies only to their spirits, it proves that spirits continue to be alive after the bodies which they inhabited are dead.
    - 3) "The thoughtful reader may have observed that the conclusion of this argument falls short in its terms, of the demands of the subject. This subject is the resurrection of the dead, while the

conclusion affects only the question whether the spirits of the dead are still alive. We can not escape the difficulty by supposing, as some have done, that the resurrection spoken of is that of the spirit, not that of the body; for there is no such thing as a resurrection of the spirit. The spirit does not die, and therefore it does not rise from the dead. It leaves the body as the latter dies, its departure is the immediate cause of death, and it departs in the full possession of life. Resurrection is always spoken of in the Scriptures with reference to the body.

- 4) "How, then, does the Savior's proof that spirits continue to live apart from the body, include proof of a resurrection? It seems quite certain that the argument appeared conclusive to the Sadducees; for Jesus assumed that it was so, and they tacitly admitted the fact, while the bystanders who knew the view of the party 'were astonished at his doctrine.' (Verse 33.) In other words, the Sadducees admitted that if the existence of human spirits apart from the body were proved, the necessity for a resurrection would follow.
- 5) "The argument, then, was conclusive at least to them; but was it no more than an *ad hominem* argument? We think not; for human spirits, having been originally created for the exercise of their powers through the organs of the body, must, unless their original nature be changed, which is an inadmissible supposition because unsupported by evidence, be dependent for their highest enjoyment on the possession of a body. This being so, the continued existence of spirits after the death of the body creates a demand for the resurrection of the body, and the Sadducees were philosophical enough to see this" (pp.191f).
- c. Many liberals of our time look on the Bible, not as a book which is to be studied and interpreted closely, but as a message of general and vague principles. Many have the notion that one cannot so interpret the Bible as to reach a conclusion that is any more than an opinion. But the Lord had the highest confidence in the Bible, even the Old Testament, which he quoted.
  - 1) His argument hinged on the difference between the present and past tenses of a verb: *I am* the God of....
  - 2) Paul made similar use of Bible text in Galatians 3:16, his argument turning on the difference between the singular and plural of the word seed: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."
- d. The Bible is trustworthy; it was written to be understood, and when we all understand a Bible text, we will understand it alike; it was meant to be final authority for all our spiritual and religious activities; we must study it diligently, and often in minute detail, to obtain the message it has for us:
  - 1) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
  - 2) 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."
  - 3) 1 Timothy 4:13, 15-16: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine .... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
  - 4) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
  - 5) John 5:39: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."
- e. "The astonishment of the multitude arose from two circumstances: first, that Jesus was at all able to answer the boasted objection of the Sadducees; and second, that he found the answer in the writings of Moses, where it was supposed then, and has been supposed since, that the doctrine of a future life is not taught" (McGarvey, p.192).

#### D. Mark 12:28-34: The Greatest Commandment.

1. Verse 28: "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?"
  - a. Matthew's account: "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him,

and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:34-40).

- b. Matthew states that the initial purpose of the question was an attempt to ensnare the Lord. The Pharisees were still smarting from the shameful defeat their disciples had suffered at the response of Jesus to their devious question (22:15-22). They heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence. "Silence" is the word used to describe the action of "muzzling" an animal. The Sadducees were unable to utter any response to the Lord's answer. The Pharisees were now emboldened to make another attempt at Jesus, and chose a certain lawyer to word a question. A "lawyer" in Bible terminology is a specialist in the Law of Moses, and not what we call lawyers today. Mark's account (12:28-34) describes him as a scribe.
- c. The purpose of the question here raised is said by Matthew to be for the purpose of "tempting" (trying) Jesus. Their aim was to entrap Jesus in some technical fault on some command of the Law.
  - 1) They figured he would specify some particular command, and that selection would engender opposition from those who thought another command was most important. It was after the Pharisees had "gathered together" that the lawyer asked the question, hence it appears that he was selected to be the spokesman.
  - 2) Although he started out to ensnare the Lord, he was an honest man, and saw the truth which Jesus had spoken to the Sadducees, and readily perceived the good answer Jesus gave to his question (Mark. 12:32-34).
- d. The Pharisees had the idea that some commandments were more important than others (Compare: Matt. 23:23; Luke 18:11-12).
  - 1) Matthew 23:23: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."
  - 2) Luke 18:11-12: "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."
- e. "The teachers among the Pharisees had decided that no man could observe perfectly all the commandments of the law delivered by Moses; they were sticklers for perfect obedience; but they saw in their own lives that no one kept perfectly all the commandments of the law; therefore they had decided that if one man kept perfectly one commandment his obedience to this one would be accepted as obedience to all of the laws. However, the question arose among themselves as to which one was the most important, or which one should be selected to be kept. Some of them exalted one law above the other; some thought the law regarding the Sabbath was the more important, others thought that the law regulating conduct with respect to human life the most important" (Boles, Matthew, pp.437f).
- f. There is a religious philosophy that has gained momentum in our day, that we are obligated only to the "core" gospel. Their notion is that there are certain facts or truths which comprise the heart [the core] of the gospel system; it is only these truths that we are to follow. But what are these truths? They cannot even agree on these. The philosophy is built on a desire to be inclusive. They gave up on trying to agree on the many basic truths of the gospel. Their compromising of the truth includes the facts which lie at the heart of the gospel, along with the commands, the promises and the warnings it contains.
  - 1) In an effort to include as many as possible within their fellowship, encompassing all or nearly all of the religious world, they were willing to compromise truth. Once they start in this direction, there is no logical stopping place. The entirety of any and all religions would have to be included. [Billy Graham is on record as including Moslems since they believe *something* about Jesus.]
  - 2) The list of the Biblical truths that would have to be compromised seems endless: The identity, the organization, the work and the worship of the church; the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus; the plan of salvation; scriptural worship; the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.
  - 3) God gave a plan which enables all genuine children of God to be united:
    - a) Ephesians 4:1-7 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

- b) John 17:20-21: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
2. Verse 29-31: “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”
- a. Instead of one, Jesus gave two commands. First, love God with all the heart, soul, and mind (Mark adds "strength" to these three); second, love thy neighbor as thyself. One should not try to exalt any particular command above another, for "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:172).
- b. "The commandment cited was not, as the lawyer might have expected, taken from the decalogue, but from a comparatively obscure place in the Pentateuch. (See Deut. 6:5.) It is called the first and great, as the sequel shows (verse 40), not because, apart from all others it is great, but because in observing it all others are observed. The second was also selected from an obscure passage (Lev. 19:18), and was as little expected as the first. The best explanation of its meaning is that given by Jesus when another lawyer, conversing on the same subject, inquired, 'Who is my neighbor?' Jesus showed him by the parable of the good Samaritan that every man, even an enemy, is our neighbor, and that to love him as the commandment requires is to entertain toward him such feeling as will cause us to relieve him when in distress. (See Luke 10:25-37.) The love enjoined is a benevolent good-will toward all persons" (McGarvey, p.193).
- c. To love God with all our hearts means to have our feelings, desires, emotions, affections, and longings involved in the process of serving God. To love God with the soul involves our life and being. To love him with our mind involves fully dedicating our mind to learn his will and to apply our mind to his service. Compare: “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10).
- d. "To love thy neighbor as thyself is not to feel a magnetic attraction toward him, but it is to have the purpose of heart, soul, and mind to do him good, to work for his happiness and well-being as we labor for our own well-being and happiness. He is a true child of God who is willing to sacrifice every fleshly feeling and impulse and bear all things to do the will of God. He loves his neighbor as himself who can choke back the angry feeling and forget wrongs suffered in order to benefit and help him" (Boles, Matthew, p.439).
- e. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:40). "Jesus' answer is far more than a clever summary of all the commandments. It is the fundamental commandment underlying the whole economy of redemption. Above everything else, God desires and commands his human children to love him totally and completely .... In a technical sense, all the law and prophets do hang on the twin injunctions Christ named before the Pharisees. The first five words of the Decalogue deal with man's relation to God, and the second five have to do with man's relationship to men. The fifth commandment might go in either group" (Coffman, Matthew, pp.356f).
- f. "There is a tacit comparison of these two commandments to a hook in the wall on which are hung all the books of the law and the prophets. As the book supports all, so to keep these two commandments is to do all that is required by the Scriptures. He who loves God as required will keep all of God's commandments, and he who loves his neighbor will fulfill every obligation to his neighbor" (McGarvey, p.193).
- g. Mark gives some additional information to the story, showing that the lawyer (who was so because he was a scribe, thus was a specialist in the law, and religiously, he was a Pharisee), saw the truth of what Jesus had said. The Lord saw that he had responded "discreetly" (sensibly, prudently), he told him that he was not far from the kingdom. The lawyer's response "showed a readiness in perceiving the truth, and a promptness in accepting it, which were surprising in one of his class, and the more so from the fact that he had been put forward for the purpose of testing the Master with hard questions .... The man was in a condition to very readily receive the kingdom. It was perhaps also true that he was not far from the kingdom in point of time. It would be strange if such a man did not immediately enter the kingdom when it was preached by the apostles on and after Pentecost" (McGarvey, p.343).

- h. The point of the Lord's answer to the question is that not one command of God is more important than another, but the important matter is to have a heart which is ready to do anything and everything that God requires, and do so gladly.
3. Verses 32-33: "And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."
- a. This scribe showed his inner understanding and the strength of the Lord's answer. "Thou hast well said the truth." He was honest with the truth and within himself; he wanted the truth and recognized it when it was revealed by the Lord.
- b. The man could perceive and accept that it was more important to the soul for one to love God and neighbors than to offer burnt offerings. This was far more than the Pharisees and others were willing to grasp and admit as truth.
- c. Brother Johnson offer some excellent observations:
- 1) *The scribe said unto him.* Mark alone records the effect of our Lord's answer upon the scribe. It came home to his heart with convincing power. Doubtless he never before saw so plainly the deep spiritual truths of these commands. Entering into our Lord's reply, he cannot but express his approval, and even admiration.
  - 2) *Burnt offerings and sacrifices.* The scribe gathers up in his reply some of the great utterances of the prophets, which prove the superiority of Love to God and man over all mere ceremonial observances. See 1 Sam. 15:22; Psalm 51; Hosea 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8, The reply shows that he had either read the prophets with much greater discernment than most of his fellow scribes, or that his understanding had been enlightened by the teachings of the Lord. To say that love was greater than burnt offerings and sacrifices was a daring utterance, directly opposed to the rigid ceremonial ideas of the Jewish leaders.
- d. Consider these passages, along with Psalm 51:
- 1) 1 Samuel 15:22: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."
  - 2) Hosea 6:6: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."
  - 3) Micah 6:6-8: "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
4. Verse 34: "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question."
- a. NKV: Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.
- b. See the outline at the end of this chapter for a study on "Not Far From the Kingdom of God."

E. Mark 12:35-40: Two Other Important Matters.

1. Verses 35-37: "And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly."
- a. Other accounts:
- 1) Matthew 23:1-12: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts,

- and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”
- 2) Luke 20:45-47: “Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.”
- b. The Lord was still at the temple, and apparently this whole exchange, recorded in Matthew 21:23 through chapter 22, occurred in the same place. The Lord has addressed some pointed remarks toward his enemies and has answered their devious questions. He was able to utterly silence them with his incisive arguments and truth.
    - 1) In the passage, Jesus speaks to his disciples and the great multitude assembled there, and in the presence of the scribes and Pharisees, for in Matthew 23:13, he addresses them with a series of severe rebukes. The Lord affirmed that the scribes and Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat." The scribes were those men who made copies of the Old Testament, and because they were well acquainted with its contents, also served as teachers of the Law. As the leading sect among the Jews, the Pharisees occupied positions of authority.
    - 2) As Moses was the recognized teacher in his day, so the scribes and Pharisees served the nation as the acknowledged teachers of the Law at that present time. They were the prime source of education and information in Moses' Law. They had the authority to teach the Law; they did not have authority to add any man-made commands to the Law.
  - c. Matthew provides this thought: "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:3).
    - 1) With the foregoing limitation in mind, the people are to give heed to do those things which were taught from the Law by the scribes and Pharisees. As long as they taught only those things which were found in the Law, without perversion, addition or deletion, they were properly proclaiming God's truth, and the people were to observe and do. But these men were not content to stay with the truth; the Lord accused them time and again of perverting the law by their traditions (Matt. 15:1-14). Though they taught the truth, then did not personally follow what they taught.
    - 2) "The Pharisees did not practice what they taught, but their failure was no excuse for disobedience by those who knew God's will. The authority of God's word does not derive from the righteous life of the teacher but from the prior authority of God himself; although, of course, the righteous life of the teacher is always a strong encouragement to obedience. The evil and inconsistent life of the scribes and Pharisees was a strong deterrent to the acceptance of God's will in that day; and similar evil on the part of Christian teachers in all ages has the same hindering results" (Coffman, p.361).
  - d. Compare Matthew 23:14 with Mark's statement: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."
    - 1) This is called the second woe, by Matthew. This verse is omitted from some of the ancient manuscripts in Matthew's account, but is found in others. The same thought is expressed in Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47 so we know it is good scripture. "Devour widow's houses" is a figure of speech, showing the extreme avarice of these men. "The greed with which they defrauded widows is represented by the strong figure of eating up the houses in which they lived" (McGarvey, p.344).
    - 2) To keep up the appearance of piety they made long prayers. This pretense, effected as it was by the hypocritical prayers, only added to their wickedness, and thus their condemnation was greater. Unscrupulous and greedy men often use religion as a means to financial gain, and often will swindle, lie, cheat, steal, and even commit murder, to reach their unholy aims.
  - e. *The common people heard him gladly.* McGarvey:
    - 1) “This remark has reference, not merely to the paragraph with which it is connected, but to the entire discussion which had occupied the day. But what was true of the common people assembled then in Jerusalem, was equally true of those among whom he had taught in Galilee and Perea. It was only the elders, the chief priests, the lawyers, and the scribes, who did not hear him gladly.
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- 2) "To these he appeared in the light of a rival and an enemy, and he appeared thus only because he persisted in exposing their errors and in pressing on the attention of the people truths which they rejected. That the common people hear a man gladly in our own age are can not be taken as a proof in itself that his teaching is like that of Jesus, yet he who is most like Jesus will still be most gladly heard by the common people. He who in any great degree fails of this must have some most serious defect" (p.343).
- f. For the next section, compare: "He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22:43-45).
- 1) This second question was perplexing to the Pharisees; they were unable to answer it. The Lord pointed out that David had said "in spirit" (by inspiration, cf. 2 Sam. 23:2), that the Messiah was his Lord (the quotation of this is found in Psalm 110:1). The Lord asked, "How could the Messiah be called David's son and at the same time be David's Lord?" The two truths are inconsistent unless Christ is divine as well as human.
  - 2) "The reason the Pharisees did not recognize Christ (though some did) was that not all the Messianic prophecies were received by them. In the very nature of God's revelation to humanity of the coming of that Holy One who is both God and man at once, there were necessarily *seeming* contradictions. Thus, Isaiah hailed the Coming One as 'Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,' etc., while at the same time portraying him as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, with no form nor comeliness, a root out of dry ground, bruised, chastised, and suffering death. They did the natural, human thing: they believed the more agreeable prophecies and rejected the others" (Coffman, pp.357f). They had access to Psalm 110:1, but were unable to explain it.
- g. "It seems in order to further confuse these Pharisees that Jesus added another question, 'If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?' Here was the point for them to explain. They cannot admit it without acknowledging that while he is human as descended from David, so he is divine as the right Messiah sent of God; it shows that his royalty is not on earth, but in heaven. It also shows that the Messiah on earth was to have a twofold nature—fleshly and divine. They were unable to answer him; it is not recorded that they even attempted to answer" (Boles, Matthew, p.440).
- h. Consider Johnson's comments:
- 1) This figure itself, however, presupposes the act of sitting on a throne. It does not imply inactivity, as some suppose, or mean that Jehovah would conquer his foes for him, without any intervention of his own. The idea running through the whole psalm is, that it is in and through him that Jehovah acts for the destruction of his enemies, and that for this very end he is invested with almighty power, as denoted by his session at the right hand of God.
  - 2) This session is to last until the total subjugation of his enemies, that is to say, this special and extraordinary power of the Messiah is then to terminate, a representation which agrees exactly with that of Paul in 1 Cor. 15, 24-28, where the verse before us is distinctly referred to, although not expressly quoted. It is therefore needless, though grammatical, to give the *until*, an inclusive meaning, namely, until then and afterwards, as in Ps. 112, 8, etc.
2. Verses 38-40: "And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."
- a. Compare Matthew 23: "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."
- 1) The whole life of these men was bound up in having their own vanity "stroked." Their vanity is exemplified by the case of the prayer of the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14:
  - 2) "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man

- went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).
- 3) "While avoiding all heavy burdens, they performed some works, yet only such as would attract the attention of men and secure to themselves reputation for piety. These they carried to an excess, as is seen in the specifications mentioned below" (McGarvey, p.196).
- b. They make broad their phylacteries. Phylacteries were pieces of parchment upon which were written certain passages of scripture. The word *phylactery* comes from a word which means to keep, preserve, or guard (Barnes).
- 1) The phylactery was regarded as an amulet or charm, and was thought to provide its wearer with special protection from evil. There are those today who regard the Bible as some kind of charm, more than a revelation from God describing how we ought to live. The so-called *St. Christopher Medal* was considered to be a lucky charm, that if one had that item on display in his car, he was somehow protected.
  - 2) The broader the phylactery, the greater spirituality the wearer was thought to have. It was a device which brought to the Pharisee or scribe more praise from his constituents.
  - 3) "In Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18, it was said to Israel concerning the teaching of the law, that they should be bound, 'for a token upon thy head, and for frontlets between thine eyes.' In the interbiblical period, we find the Jews converting this figure into outward fact. They took four passages adjacent to the thrice repeated injunction, viz., Exodus 13:2-10; Exodus 13:13-22; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and Deuteronomy 11:13-22, and writing them on strips of parchment, encased the folded strips in minute leatherboxes. These four boxes were set on edge and fastened upon one leather base, which was placed in the middle of the forehead, and held there by a string tied round the head with peculiar knots which had a mystical meaning" (Coffman, p.362).
  - 4) Hanging a piece of jewelry around our neck is parallel in kind to what these misguided Pharisees did with their phylacteries. The wearers of the cross may sincerely think that this item is an outward display of their inner convictions; that it is some kind of proof that they are Christians. In reality, it demonstrates their ignorance of the New Testament. Instead of being evidence of their saved status, it may more likely indicate their alienation from Christ. Maybe the cross-wearers perceive the item to be a "good-luck" charm. Those who make the so-called "sign of the cross" by motions of their hand, apparently think that this action has some special power. The point we are making is that we are to be cross-bearers, and not cross-wearers.
    - a) Matthew 10:38: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." To "take up his cross" means to willingly submit to whatever hardship or persecution which being a faithful Christian entails. To remain faithful to Christ despite the rejection and opposition on the part of unbelievers demonstrates the highest degree of love for the Master. Bearing the cross involves bearing our obligations and refusing under any circumstance to cast them aside.
    - b) Matthew 11:18-20: "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not."
    - c) Luke 9:23: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
- c. They love the chief seats in the synagogues. These were the places which were considered as most prominent and conspicuous. "At the end of the synagogue building, opposite to the entrance, was the chest or ark containing the books of the law, and the seats near that end were the 'chief seats in the synagogue'" (McGarvey, p.196).
- d. They love the greetings addressed to them in the marketplaces. There were open places in the city which were frequented by those who had something to sell or buy; all kinds of business transactions, judicial proceedings, and social conversations took place here. The marketplace was called the "agora" by the Greeks, and the "forum" by the Romans. There was such a place in every city.
- 1) "The Pharisees delighted in the formal greetings and salutations which were here lavished on men of distinction by the fawning multitude" (ibid., p.197).

- 2) "They were little men, puffed up with their supposed learning, parading like peacocks before the admiring eyes of their followers, and inwardly gloating over titles of honor and deference. Such empty superficiality blinded the Pharisees and will also blind all others in all places in all times who become infected with the deadly virus of human pride" (Coffman, Matthew, p.363).
- 3) 1 John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

F. Mark 12:41-44: The Widow's Mites.

1. Verse 41: "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much."
  - a. NKJ: Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."
  - b. Luke 21:1-4: "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."
  - c. McGarvey: The treasury was the chest or other receptacle into which the people cast the contributions which the law of Moses required all of them to bring when they came up to the annual festivals. (Deut. xvi. 16, 17.) Jesus was sitting opposite to this receptacle, and purposely "beholding how the people cast money into the treasury," in order that he might give a lesson on the subject.
2. Verse 42: "And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing."
  - a. Coffman: Mite denotes a small coin made of brass, the smallest in use among the Jews, and the value of which cannot be exactly known. Their farthing was of less value than the English farthing. It was worth about three mills and a half, or about one-third of a copper cent.[16]. Cranfield pointed out that the word that Mark used for MITE is related to quadrans, a term prevalent in Rome but not in Jerusalem; and from this he concluded that Mark was writing "in the west." [17].
  - b. *Jesus Estimates Gifts Chiefly by What Is Retained.* "This principle alone accounts for the higher worth of the widow's gift. This estimate of gifts according to what is retained agrees with reason. Man's gauge of the moral value of a deed is the power of the doer. The child is not expected to put forth the strength of a man. Less force is looked for from the feeble than the strong man. A small gift from a narrow income is esteemed as much as a large gift from a vast income" [Johnson].
3. Verse 43-44: "And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."
  - a. Her contribution is thus contrasted with the sum total of the contributions of all who contributed on that occasion. Jesus knew how to evaluate gifts and he evaluated her gift as being "more than all they that are casting into the treasury." He tells the ground or basis of his evaluation; they cast in "of their superfluity," but "she of her want did cast in all the living that she had." Of their abundance they contributed a little, but of her meager and scant supply, she gave all. Hers was real self-denial; she felt what she gave; in love she devoted *all* to God, and trusted in his providential care. [From Gospel Advocate Commentary on Luke].
  - b. The Following is from Coffman:
    - 1) This teaches that a gift to be valuable in the sight of God is not solely determined by the face amount of it. The motive, attitude, and financial condition of the giver are taken into consideration. Christ did not condemn the widow for giving. His commendation of her gift dramatically underlines the Scriptural teaching that the poor should give, and that the exercise of this grace is not to be omitted by any person on the grounds of poverty. How is it that her gift was so great? The example she set in the faithful discharge of a religious duty incumbent upon all has inspired giving in all ages.
    - 2) Illustration: The City of New York was participating in a campaign among the immigrant poor of the great city to raise funds for the construction of the pedestal and supporting tower upon which

Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty would be erected. The campaign was lagging until a poor woman sold her bed for \$13.00 and contributed the money. Inspired by that, the people quickly responded and gave more than was needed. In a similar manner, the poor widow of this text has constructed many a church house and subscribed many a budget all over the world.

- 3) This encourages the poor not to withhold their gifts to the Lord, because of thoughts that they would not do much good; here is an example of a very great accomplishment having been achieved by a gift of very small actual value. As Calvin said of the poor, "If they consecrate themselves, their offering, which appears to men to be worthless, will not be less valuable than if they had presented all the treasures of Croesus." [19]
  - 4) This convinces the rich that merely giving an amount of money is not enough. The element of sacrifice should be present in every true gift; and that which can be easily "spared" by the wealthy is not enough to fulfill God's requirement.
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## Near To The Kingdom of God

### I. Introduction.

#### A. Mark 12:28-34.

1. Contains familiar passage but context not often considered.
2. Mark 12:28-34: “And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.”

#### B. Context offers:

1. Scribe's honest question and Lord's honest answer (12:28-31).
2. Scribes's approving comment and Lord's praise of Scribe (12:32-34).

### II. DISCUSSION.

#### A. Scribe's honest question: 12:28.

1. Some questions foolish and unlearned & generate strife: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Tim 2:23-24).
  - a. "Have you stopped beating your wife?" "Have you stopped stealing?"
  - b. "Can the omnipotent God create a rock too big for him to pick up?"
  - c. "Do you think that you and your little bunch are only ones going to heaven?"
2. But this is worthy and noble question.
  - a. Shows concern for God's will; acknowledges that his word supreme.
  - b. Was not to entrap him, stir up strife: cf, Luke 10:25-29.
  - c. This scribe was honest seeker: sincerely wanted to know.
3. His question shows: his interest in God's will and high opinion of Jesus.

#### B. Positive answer of Jesus.

1. No hesitation; good teacher knows material:
  - a. 2 Timothy 2:15: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
  - b. 1 Peter 3:15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”
2. Consider his answer:
  - a. Love is at the heart of God's commands:
    - 1) 1 John 4:8: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”
    - 2) Romans 5:8-9: “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”
    - 3) 1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”
    - 4) John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
  - b. The object of love is God.
3. Degree of love: whole being/all of faculties required; if not:

- a. Shallow/non-productive of good/lukewarm/repulsive to God.
  - b. Parts the mere camp-follower from the true (Acts 13:13; 2 Tim. 4:10; cf. Mt. 24:12-13).
  - c. If love God, will love others (Mark 12:31; 1 John 4:20-21).
4. Love shown in practical forms:
    - a. John 14:21: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."
    - b. Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
    - c. James 2:14-16: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"
  5. This positive answer encompasses all of our duty to God and man.
- C. Scribe's approving comment to Lord's answer: Mk 12:32-33.
1. Approval required courage/conviction; Lord surrounded by enemies.
  2. Scribe's job was to copy Law; part of Rabbinical system; looked up to as knowledgeable of OT.
  3. To sanction Lord's reply sure to displease his Jewish brethren.
- D. Commendation expressed by Jesus: 12:34.
1. Jesus knew this man not like usual scribes and other Jews.
    - a. Pharisees were far from kingdom because of their formalism; the Sadducees because of their skepticism; Jews because of ignorance.
    - b. This scribe was a cut far above the average. What made the difference? Same things that make the difference today:
  2. Intellectual sincerity.
    - a. Honest with self; knew the word but admitted not know enough.
    - b. Honestly sought truth: willing to change/desired to please God. Acts 18:24-26. Interested in welfare of own soul.
  3. Had moral integrity.
    - a. Words not pretended; not for show; clearly sincere.
    - b. But sincerity alone not enough:
      - 1) Acts 7:58: "And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."
      - 2) Acts 23:1: "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."
      - 3) Acts 26:9: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
      - 4) 1 Timothy 1:13: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."
    - c. Must be sincere but more necessary: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23).
  4. Faithfulness to the light he had.
    - a. Had studied and kept the Law; brought nigh to kingdom.
    - b. Non-Christian who attends with spouse—if sincere, teachable.
  5. Thus, not far from kingdom.
    - a. But still not in it:
      - 1) Acts 26:28: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

2) Acts 24:25: "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

- b. Journey not complete until last step taken; house or car not owned until last payment made.
- c. One near kingdom will enter or move away from it.

E. Many hindrances keep people out of kingdom today.

1. Pride:

- a. Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."
- b. Matthew 18:3: "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."
- c. Matthew 5:3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

2. Cowardice: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).

3. Self-righteousness:

- a. Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
- b. John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
- c. 2 Timothy 2:10: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

4. Objection of others:

- a. Matthew 10:37: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."
- b. If you had leprosy, you would take cure regardless of criticism.

III. Conclusion.

1. Don't falter near kingdom.

2. Enter while opportunity is yours.

- a. 2 Corinthians 6:2: "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."
- b. Hebrews 3:7-8: "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness."
- c. James 4:13-14: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

3. Almost cannot avail; almost is but to fail.

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## Mark 13

### A. Mark 13:1-13: The Great Stones of the Temple.

1. Verses 1-2: "And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
  - a. Coffman:
    - 1) Mark had just recorded, at the first of the preceding chapter, one of the three denunciatory parables in which Christ had categorically predicted that God would send his "armies," destroy "those murderers," and burn "their city," prophecies which, in context, cannot refer to anything other than the city of Jerusalem. The pall of that dire prophecy was still upon the disciples here who proudly pointed out the glory of the temple, implying two things, perhaps three: (1) what a shame it would be to destroy so grand a building., (2) how difficult it would be to destroy so great an edifice, and hinting, perhaps, that (3) God might spare the glorious temple dedicated to his name, the pride of every Hebrew, including the apostles. The sentiment of this exclamation by the four apostles proves that Matthew's account of the three parables is accurate; for, if only the single parable recorded by Mark (that of the wicked husbandmen) had been spoken, it would not have prompted this emphasis on the temple by the apostles. (See Matthew 22:7).
    - 2) Jesus and his apostles had just passed through the temple for the last time and were ascending the mount of Olives, which eminence afforded a most impressive view. Hailed as one of the wonders of the world, the Jewish temple was a building of exceedingly great magnificence; the wealth of the nation had been lavished upon it....
  - b. After his concluding public discourse presented in Matthew 23, the Lord departed from the temple, never to enter it again. His disciples sought to impress him with the grandeur of this great edifice. It had required 46 years to erect (John 2:20). The reconstructed temple erected by Zerubbabel was still standing when Herod the Great came to power in Palestine under the auspices of Rome.
  - c. "He tore away the old little by little and lavishly embellished each of the new parts. Work on it continued long after Herod's death. In fact work was still being done on it at the time of the Olivet Discourse and would continue for some years thereafter. Jesus and the surveying disciples might well have observed temple workers on the job as this dynamic discourse of Matthew 24 departed the Master's lips" (Robert R. Taylor, Jr., *Book of Matthew*, p.613).
  - d. Mark's report in chapter twelve, concludes with the Lord at the site of the treasury, where the rich Jews dropped in their large contributions, while the poor widow could only give a tiny amount, yet Jesus praised her offering. This lesson seems to be lost on the disciples, who called the attention of the Master to the massive stones of the temple.
  - e. Christ told them plainly and directly that the temple was to be completely destroyed! The Lord's terse and frightful reply was that every one of these great stones comprising the temple buildings would be thrown down.
  - f. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:43-44). These buildings are said to have been very impressive, and the stones massive in size, the base stones measuring about 37 feet in length, 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high (Boles, p.457).
  - g. The Rabbis asserted, "He who has not seen the temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building" (Coffman, p.381). Josephus described it as appearing from a distance like a mountain covered with snow, "the ungilded parts being exceedingly white. The golden facade reflected the rising sun with fiery splendor" (ibid.)
2. Verses 3-4: "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?"
  - a. Jesus and his disciples crossed over the little stream which flowed between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives; it was here on Olivet that the men named asked the Lord when these things would occur; and what sign would be provided when all these thing shall be fulfilled.
  - b. Compare: "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt.

24:3). Christ's reply startled the disciples. When they arrived in the Mount of Olives, and after he had seated himself, some of the disciples approached him with certain troubling questions. Mark identifies the disciples as Peter, James, John, and Andrew (13:3).

- c. "Their question is twofold, having reference first to the time, and secondly to the sign by which they might know that the event was near. He had said nothing about his own coming or the end of the world, but they inferred from the strength of the temple walls that the time when all these stones would be thrown down could not be sooner than the end of the world and the second coming of the Son of man. So much of this inference as was incorrect he corrected in the course of his answer: for he makes a very clear distinction, as we will see, between the time of his final coming and that of the destruction of the temple" (McGarvey, p.204).
  - d. Matthew's account gives three questions: When will the temple be destroyed? What sign will forewarn of your return? And what sign will signal the end of the world? Jesus' reply answers two questions: When will these things (the temple's destruction) be? And, what sign do you give for your return (and the resultant end of the world)? He answers the first of these two in verses 4-35, and the second beginning in verse 36 and continuing through chapter 25.
3. Verses 5-7: "And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet."
- a. Mark reports that Christ emphasized a warning against being deceived by false teachers. So also does Matthew's account: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4-5).
  - b. The Lord cautioned against any of them being deceived by the claims of false "messiahs." Acts 8:9-11 describes Simon the Sorcerer as one who claimed to have some special greatness, and with his enchantments and tricks he convinced many people into thinking he was "the great power of God." Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived during the first century and witnessed the overthrow of Jerusalem, describes several men who claimed to be "christs" and deceived many of the Jews during the turbulent weeks prior to the fall of the city.
  - c. Other uninspired writers of the ancient past also spoke of these men, these scholars including Justin, Jerome, Irenaeus, and Origen. At the very outset of the Lord's statement he warned against their being deceived. If this deception was not hazardous to the soul, he would not have issued the warning. The Lord did not teach or accept any foolish theory such as the "impossibility of apostasy."
4. Verse 8: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows."
- a. Luke 21:8-11: "And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven."
  - b. About forty years passed between the time Jesus uttered these words until the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This time was filled with warfare and rumors of wars; there were also famines, pestilence and earthquakes. These were all general signs, for such events have occurred in many periods of human history. They are put before the disciples as fairly common occurrences but which would be present prior to the "end" he is discussing in this part of the chapter. When they saw these signs, the end would not be immediately forthcoming; this end would occur only after the details [especially of Matthew 24:14] were fulfilled: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."
  - c. It is significant that peace prevailed in the Roman Empire at the time the Lord spoke these words. But this peace would not be long-lived. The wars Jesus mentioned involved first century kingdoms, not nations of our own twentieth century or later. "Between Olivet's discourse and Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70 smaller nations warred against Rome. Jewish wars in that period cost numerous lives. In just one battle against the Syrians 50,000 Jews were killed. These were decades filled with wars and war rumors" (Taylor, *ibid.*, p.615). Another 20,000 Jews were slain at Caesarea.
  - d. "Not wars in distant nations, but wars particularly affecting the Jews, as appears from the warning, 'see that ye be not troubled' (verse 6), and from the fact that the coming trouble of the Jews was the subject of discourse. The nations and kingdoms which were to rise up against each other were those whose military
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movements would affect the peace of Judea" (McGarvey, pp.204f). History shows that three threats of war were made against the Jews by three Roman emperors; three uprisings of Gentiles against the Jews are reported (ibid.).

- e. A severe famine is named in Acts 11:27-30, which occurred during the days of Claudius Caesar who died in 54 A.D. "One writer claimed it was the greatest the world had known up to that time" (Taylor, p.616). This famine is mentioned by Suetonius and Tacitus (Roman historians, unbelievers), and Eusebius. Josephus says that the famine was so severe in Jerusalem that many people starved to death. Four times during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) famines occurred in Rome, Palestine, and Greece (see Barnes, p.252).
  - f. Several great earthquakes are reported for that time period by ancient writers. "Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudius, at Rome, and says that in the reign of Nero the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse were overthrown, and the celebrated Pompeii was overwhelmed and almost destroyed by an earthquake ...Others are mentioned as occurring at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, and Samos" (Barnes, p.252). [Pompeii was not utterly destroyed until 79 A.D.]. Josephus described in detail an earthquake in Judea during this same time frame.
  - g. The Lord said pestilences would occur. Epidemic diseases often follow earthquakes. Josephus speaks of a pestilence afflicted Babylonia in 40 A.D. (Antiq. 18. 9,8). And Tacitus describes one that took place in Italy in 66 A.D. One pestilence in Rome resulted in 30,000 deaths.
  - h. These awful tragedies would not be the end itself, but merely the beginning of sorrows. Worse things were yet to come!
5. Verses 9-10: "But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations."
- a. Compare Matthew 24:9: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."
  - b. Persecution would be brought to bear on the saints. Some of them would be slain, and they all would be hated by the general population of the world. Some of these persecutions are named in Acts 4 (Peter and John), Acts 5 (the twelve), Acts 7 (Stephen), Acts 12 (James is slain and Peter is imprisoned), Acts 8 (the whole church was scattered by persecution).
    - 1) 1 Peter 4:16-19: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."
    - 2) 2 Corinthians 4:8-11: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."
    - 3) 2 Corinthians 11:24-27: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."
  - c. Tacitus wrote that Christians were "a class of men hated on account of their crimes" (McGarvey, p.205). This was a false accusation which was unproved and unprovable.
  - d. Johnson: *Take heed to yourselves.*
    - 1) Not as a means of escaping from persecution, but as a means of preparing for it, as Christ bade Peter take heed against temptation (Matt. 26:41). For... "Before all these things" (Luke 21 :12); i.e., before these public calamities come, they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogue ye shall be beaten. These refer to ecclesiastical proceedings against them. And ye shall be brought before rulers and kings. Before civil tribunals next. For my sake, for a testimony against them. Rather, "unto them"; to give you an opportunity of bearing testimony to me before them.

- 2) In the Acts of the Apostles we have the best commentary on this announcement (Matt. 10:17, 18). The martyrdoms and persecutions have ever called attention to the religion of Christ, and opened ways for its promulgation.
- e. Matthew 10:17-18: "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles."
6. Verses 11-12: "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death."
- a. NKJ: "But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death."
- b. *Take no thought beforehand*. This phrase "denotes more than 'to be anxious'—it is in the Greek, *melancholy*, and refers to a state of despondence, which reflects on the providence of God....It exhorts the disciples to that which would pacify their minds in the midst of a world of uncertainties, and any forebodings that would divert this singleness of mind is the forbidden anxiety" (Wallace, p.73). When the KJV was made, "thought" was the proper word, as is indicated by various English writers of the time.
- 1) McGarvey gives the following quotes (p.67): "Harris, an alderman in London, was put in trouble and died with *thought* and anxiety before his business came to an end" (Bacon). "In five hundred years only two queens have died in childbirth. Queen Catherine Parr died rather of *thought*" (Sommers Tracts). "These examples illustrate the expression as used by our translators who were contemporaries of Shakespeare. It expresses, not the mental act of thinking, but the state of feeling which results from a despondent view of the future."
- 2) The Lord's statement is a straightforward commandment. It is as binding as any other. To disobey it is to show distrust in our Lord; and without faith (and trust) we cannot please God.
- a) Luke 10:41-42: "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
- b) Philippians 4:6-7: "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (ASV).
- 3) The Lord is not forbidding foresight and prudence.
- a) 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."
- b) 1 Timothy 5:8: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."
- c. The apostles and New Testament prophets were provided with the message to present; this was first true of the Lord's apostles.
- 1) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
- 2) Ephesians 3:5: "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."
- 3) 1 Corinthians 14:37: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (ASV).
- d. Many of the saints would stumble, some would betray others, and some would hate the others.
- 1) Luke 21:16 says that they would be betrayed by parents, brethren, kinsmen, and friends. We may perceive how harsh this rejection and betrayal would be, from one's own relatives and close friends. But God and Christ must come first!

- 2) Matthew 24:10: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."
- e. For instances of Christians falling away, see the following:
- 1) 2 Timothy 1:15: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes."
  - 2) Acts 20:29: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."
  - 3) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
  - 4) 2 Timothy 4:10: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."
  - 5) 2 Timothy 4:16: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."
  - 6) 1 Timothy 1:19-20: "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."
7. Verse 13: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." NKJ: "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."
- a. The Roman historian, Tacitus, speaks of the early Christians as a hated race. It is difficult for us in these days to understand how literally this was fulfilled. The most shameful practices were attributed to Christians; and partly in consequence of these falsehoods, partly from hatred of good, they were treated as the off-scouring of the earth. *Endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* The primary meaning of this seems to be that whosoever remained faithful till the destruction of Jerusalem should be preserved from it. No Christian, that we know of, perished in the siege or after it. But it has ulterior meanings, according to which *the end* will signify, to an individual, the day of his death (Rev, 2:10), his martyrdom, as in the case of some of those here addressed; to the church, endurance in the faith to the end of all things—Alford. [Quoted by Johnson].
  - b. The "end" the Lord is speaking of in this section of the chapter [Matt. 24] is limited by the statement in verse 34 to "this generation." While it is true that a Christian must endure to the end of his life if he expects to go to heaven (Rev. 2:10; Matt. 10:22), this is not the "end" being discussed in this setting. It is the end of the Jewish system, for this is the present subject. The salvation is the preservation of their physical lives (cf. verses 15-20; Luke 21:18-24).
  - c. "The persecutions that shall come—unto the end; to the destruction of the Jewish polity, without growing cold or apostatizing—shall be saved, shall be delivered in all imminent dangers, and have his soul at last brought to an eternal glory.
    - 1) "It is very remarkable that not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, though there were many there when Cestius Gallus invested the city; and, had he persevered in the siege, he would soon have rendered himself master of it; but, when he unexpectedly and unaccountably raised the siege, the Christians took that opportunity to escape....
    - 2) "This counsel was remembered and wisely followed by the Christians afterward. Eusebius and Epiphanius say, that at this juncture, after Cestius Gallus had raised the siege, and Vespasian was approaching with his army, all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan; and so they all marvelously escaped the general shipwreck of their country: not one of them perished" (Adam Clark, Comments on Matthew 24).
  - d. "But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.
    - 1) "But the number of calamities which everywhere fell upon the nation at that time; the extreme misfortunes to which the inhabitants of Judea were especially subjected, the thousands of men, as well as women and children, that perished by the sword, by famine, and by other forms of death innumerable,
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—all these things, as well as the many great sieges which were carried on against the cities of Judea, and the excessive sufferings endured by those that fled to Jerusalem itself, as to a city of perfect safety,

- 2) “[A]nd finally the general course of the whole war, as well as its particular occurrences in detail, and how at last the abomination of desolation, proclaimed by the prophets, stood in the very temple of God, so celebrated of old, the temple which was now awaiting its total and final destruction by fire,— all these things any one that wishes may find accurately described in the history written by Josephus.” [Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, Volume 1; PC Study Bible].

#### B. Mark 13:14-23: Signs of the Approaching Destruction of Jerusalem.

1. Verse 14: “But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains.”
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 24:15: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand).”
    - 2) Luke 21:20: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.”
  - b. “When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand)” (Matt. 24:15, ASV). Notice that Jesus did not say, "Daniel said," but reported what was spoken "through" Daniel the prophet (ASV). Parallel records of the Lord's statement are found in Mark 13:14-20 and Luke 21:20-24. "This abomination cannot refer to something happening today or soon to transpire. Yet one of the most prominent preachers in the world today, Billy Graham, suggested in 1969, that the defilement of the holy place is certainly one of the sure signs of Jesus' second coming. He listed nine other things which will herald the Lord's second coming, and all ten of the Graham indicators are taken from Jesus' description of Jerusalem's fall and the temple's demolition in A.D. 70" (Taylor, *ibid.*, p.618).
  - c. Daniel spoke of this abomination of desolation: See Daniel 9:24-27.
    - 1) "God, through Gabriel, told Daniel: 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city.' The 70 weeks are divided into 3 sections: 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week. The 70 weeks were determined with a view to six things: (1) to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint or consecrate the Holy of Holies. “These six things obviously relate to the Christ—His being, His mission, and His church.
    - 2) “He came to deal with the problem of sin, to make possible God's plan for man's righteousness, to establish His church. The 70 weeks would bring to a completion the development of the Scheme of Redemption. Likely, the 'anointing of the Holy of Holies' refers to the establishment of the church. The 7 weeks span the time from the decree of Cyrus to the end of Nehemiah's work. The 62 weeks span the time from the end of Nehemiah's work to the coming of the Messiah. The 1 week clearly is the personal ministry of the Christ. The 62 weeks come after the 7 weeks, and the 1 week comes after the 62 weeks (thus, after 69 weeks). “During the final week the Messiah would confirm the covenant with many. In the midst of the week He would cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. In the midst of the week the Messiah would be cut off. In this connection the prophecy stresses that '...the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined' (v. 26).
    - 3) “The Record further says, '...and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate' (ASV, v. 27). It should be pointed out that the prophecy does not say that the city would be destroyed within the span of the one week. Rather, it says that within that week the destruction of the city was determined. One could hardly read verses 26 and 27 without recalling our Lord's words: 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate' (Mt. 23:38)" (Deaver, **Biblical Notes**, June, 1977, pp.24f).
  - d. That Daniel's prophecy pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is undeniable in view of the Lord's divine interpretation. Further evidence is seen from Luke's inspired description of this same statement: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains...for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon **this** people" (Luke 21:20-23).
  - e. Add to this the uninspired comment by Josephus, the Hebrew historian: "In this very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them" (Book X, Chap. XI,7, p.227). These facts, taken together with the context of Matthew 24:15, show conclusively

that the "abomination of desolation" was experienced when the Roman army surrounded the city of Jerusalem for the purpose of conquering it with force.

- f. "The armies referred to [Luke 21:20] are unquestionably the Roman armies which finally besieged and destroyed the city. They are called the abomination of desolation because, being heathen armies, they were an abomination to the Jews, and because they brought desolation on the country. The 'holy place' in which they were to stand is the holy territory round about the holy city" (McGarvey, p.207).
  - 1) The Romans worshiped the ensigns they carried before their armies. All Gentile idols and objects of worship were considered abominable by the Jewish people (Jer. 4:1; 2 Kings 23:13; I Kings 11:5,7). When these ensigns of idolatry were seen by the Jewish Christians, the next verses tell them to flee from Jerusalem. Perhaps most of them would be able to escape when the Roman army was first sighted; but historians record that the Roman army withdrew for a spell, and that during this break in the siege, the remainder of the Christians escaped. The escape was possible in either case only because of the Lord's forewarning given here.
  - 2) In Daniel 9:24-27 and 11:31, predictions concerning the cessation of the daily sacrifice and oblation, and the pollution of the sanctuary, are connected with the abomination; and this is connected with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in A.D. 70. The sacrifices legally ended at the cross (Col. 2:14); they literally ended when the temple was destroyed, and many of the Jews were slaughtered, many others taken as captives, and the rest of them dispersed—in A.D. 70.
  - 3) Daniel 9:24-27: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."
  - 4) Daniel 11:31: "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate."
- g. Josephus gives an added detail to the pollution of the sanctuary: "And now the Romans...upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings laying round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy" (Wars, Book VI, Chap. VI,1, p.583). Inspiration inserted a word of caution: "Whoso readeth, let him understand." Thus a warning against being deceived is issued. We are to be careful about jumping to a wrong conclusion regarding Daniel's prophecy and the New Testament's interpretation.
  - 1) We must examine all the evidence given, and take the natural meaning in the light of the clear New Testament information provided, taking into consideration also the historical facts relating to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.
  - 2) "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).
- h. The millennial view requires the restoration of the Jews, the rebuilding of the temple, the return of Old the Testament priesthood and worship, etc. But John 4:21 says that under Christ's system, the place of worship would no longer be in Jerusalem, and the book of Hebrews shows that the Old Testament system ended forever!
  2. Verse 15-16: "And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment."
    - a. The abomination of desolation is described in such vivid detail that it would be clearly recognized when it appeared—The approach of the Roman army (Luke 21:20-24). The information which follows would be useful only if the saints quickly recognized the sign the Lord had just given. Having previously discussed

some general signs which would be before "the end" being described, he has now given the disciples a practical sign which would signal the destruction of the temple. This sign (vs. 15) is not a universal sign, but one which would only be locally observable. If reference is to the second coming and end of the world, there would be no need for the flight commanded.

- b. The houses of Palestine were so-constructed that one could walk on the roofs, and even from roof to roof. The roof was a place where one could take advantage of the evening breezes during the summer, and have the sun's warmth during the colder times. If one was on the roof when the Roman army appeared, he was not to take the time to enter his house to get clothing or provisions; he would not have sufficient time. He could escape from the city by walking from roof to roof, at least for a distance, thus avoiding the jammed streets and turmoil below.
  - c. He must trust the Lord for the necessities of life as the journey was made. Modern houses are not constructed as in that day; the situation does not fit our time.
3. Verses 17-18: "But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter."
- a. They were to pray that the day of their flight would be on a weekday and in a time of good weather. The flight would be difficult for those who had small children and women who were pregnant. If they had to flee during winter time, greater hardships would be met, and difficulties in travel would be experienced due to cold and rain. If it were on the Sabbath, they would have difficulty escaping Jerusalem, for the gates of the city were closed on those occasions.
  - b. The Jews could even be expected to offer hindrance to their escape since they still enforced the rules limiting travel on the Sabbath. This detail shows that the time period involved was when the Sabbath would have been a problem for the Christians. Sabbath keeping was officially removed when Jesus died on the cross (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 7:1-7), and ended in reality with the literal removal of the Jewish system.
  - c. Today, even those who claim to observe the Sabbath do not enforce it on others and even they do not observe the limitations which were followed by the ancient Jews. A Sabbath day's journey was only about a half mile. This detail removes the event described from our day, and places it in the first century. Compare: "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day" (Neh. 13:19. At least part of their prayers was answered for the city fell during the summer (September). The siege began when many Jews were attending the feasts.
  - d. We are told that Christians escaped from Jerusalem, fleeing to Pella, which was about 100 miles away. When the Romans temporarily withdrew, the rest of the saints were able to escape. The Romans returned, laid siege to the city from April to about September, when the city fell. The Lord had promised in Luke 21:18 that the saints would be preserved, provided they followed his directions: "But there shall not an hair of your head perish."
4. Verse 19: "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be."
- a. Parallel passages:
    - 1) Matthew 24:21: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."
    - 2) Luke 21:23-24: "But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."
  - b. Notice that the time when this great tribulation was to be is the same as when the abomination of desolation came and when the saints were to flee from Judea and Jerusalem. We know that this great tribulation is not something that is to occur at the end of time because of the information preceding its mention and by the limiting statement of Matthew 24:34: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."
  - c. There is no reason for taking the statement of Matthew 24:21 and Mark 13:19 as a figure of speech. Jesus said plainly that the suffering of that period of time was unparalleled in history. It had greater suffering than that which was experienced during Noah's flood (those people died quickly, in a relatively painless way); it was greater than when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (their death was not preceded with any long
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period of agony); it was greater than the suffering felt by those who died in either of the Atomic explosions in Japan (for those mostly died instantly).

- d. In fact, when Josephus' record is consulted, we have much reason to understand it literally. Josephus gave the following reports:
- 1) 1,100,000 Jews died at Jerusalem during the siege and fighting, and another 97,000 were captured and placed in slavery. How foolish the Jewish bravado of Matthew 27:25: "His blood be on up, and on our children."
  - 2) Women ate their own babies, men broke into houses and stole food from children's mouths, and neighbor robbed neighbor for the food they had.
  - 3) Rich Jews swallowed gold, deserted to the Romans, hoping to get away with some of their wealth. When the soldiers discovered the scheme, they began killing those who surrendered, opening their bodies in search of the coins. Thousands died in this fashion, two thousand in only one night.
  - 4) Many were beaten and tortured by the Roman soldiers; thousands were crucified in various bodily positions as jests. This was done until all of the wood had been used as crosses, and even places to erect crosses were filled!
  - 5) By actual count, 115,880 bodies were carried through one gate in three months; there were 600,000 in all thus disposed of. When the bodies could no longer be thrown outside the city, they were stored in large houses within the city.
  - 6) Thousands of the captives were later forced to fight beasts and each other in arenas; this for the enjoyment of spectators.
  - 7) Jerusalem was overthrown and the temple was utterly destroyed; Matthew 24:2 was literally fulfilled. When the Romans broke into the city, Josephus said, "...They slew whomsoever they found, without distinction, and burned the houses and all the people who had fled into them; and when they entered for the sake of plunder, they found whole families of dead persons, and houses full of carcasses destroyed by famine, then they came out with their hands empty. And though they thus pitied the dead, they had not the same emotion for the living, but killed all they met, whereby they filled the lanes with dead bodies. The whole city ran with blood, insomuch that many things which were burning were extinguished by the blood" (Wars, Book VI, chap. 8,5; chap. 9,3). He also reports that the city fell to the Romans on the same calendar day that it had fallen to Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C.
5. Verse 20: "And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."
- a. God mercifully shortened the tribulation.
- 1) 1 Peter 4:15-19: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."
  - 2) "History records that Titus determined to reduce Jerusalem by famine, a long and destructive mode of conquest, and for this purpose he surrounded it with a wall and ditch. After completing his preparation for this attack on the city, he received news from Rome which urged him to hasten to Rome. He changed his plan and pressed the city by assault, that he might return to Rome, where his presence was greatly needed; hence, 'those days had been shortened.' The overruling providence of God shortened these days 'for the elect's sake.' 'The elect' has reference to the Christians who were among the Jews at that time. This elect group were to be preserved in order that the gospel might be handed down to future ages" (Boles, pp.466f).
  - 3) If the time of the siege of Jerusalem had lasted much longer, not one of the nation could have survived; all would have perished by war, or famine, or pestilence. The Romans raged against the Jews as an obstinate and rebellious nation, and would have exterminated them. But "the Lord" shortened the time of this frightful catastrophe, for the elect's sake, that is, partly for the sake of the Christians who could not escape from Jerusalem, and partly for that of the Jews, who subdued by this awful visitation, were converted to Christ or would hereafter be converted to him. We learn from hence how great is the love of God towards his elect, and his care for them. For their sakes he spared many Jews. For their sakes he created and preserves the whole world. Yea, for their sakes, Christ the eternal Son was made man, and

became obedient unto death. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." It may be added that a number of providential circumstances combined to shorten these days of terror. Titus was himself disposed to clemency, and friendly towards Josephus. Moreover, he was attached to Bernice, a Jewess, the sister of Agrippa. All these and other circumstances conspired in the providence of God to "shorten the days." [Johnson].

- b. Titus, the Roman general, acknowledged that the speedy overthrow of Jerusalem was to be attributed to the power of God: "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications, for what could the hands of men, or any machines, do toward over-throwing these towers?" (Quoted by Kik, p.120).
  - c. "As it is Jewish flesh alone whose sufferings are the subject of discourse, this passage means that but for the shortening of those days no Jewish flesh would be saved; and it follows that the elect, for whose sake those days were to be shortened were the elect Jews, or Jewish Christians. The Romans made no distinction between believing and unbelieving Jews, but slaughtered all alike. The only safety for Christian Jews, then, was in flight, and even this might not have saved them but for the providence by which those days were 'shortened'" (McGarvey, p.208).
6. Verses 21-25: "And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things."
- a. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before" (Matt. 24:23-25).
  - b. In connection with the siege of Jerusalem, deceivers would come. Josephus tells of one who got many to climb atop the temple, claiming God would show a miraculous sign to indicate their deliverance (p. 582). Jewish leaders hired men to say God had spoken to them, promising deliverance. This was done to deter desertion to the Romans (p. 582). Jesus predicted that false Messiahs would arise, claiming great signs and wonders. These would be false wonders (2 Thess. 2:9). So powerful would be the "signs" and "wonders" that the elect would almost be persuaded to believe them.
  - c. "The former reference to these pretenders (verse 5) was indefinite as regards the time of their appearance, but this shows that some of them would appear at the time of flight preceding the final catastrophe. These may have been either pretended signs and wonders .... The believer in Jesus in all ages and countries had this advantage, that no pretenders can present credentials equal to his, nor give us ground for such confidence in them as we have in him" (McGarvey, pp. 208f).
  - d. "Many persons, impostors, and self-deceived, aspire to fill the places of persons of honor. Many did come claiming to be the Christ. There is still a constant stream of men claiming to be God's chosen servants, leading multitudes into sin and infidelity with pretended claims" (Boles, p.469).
  - e. "But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things." Compare: "Behold, I have told you before" (Matt. 24:25). Christ had forewarned his disciples about false prophets on other occasions, but yet another warning would not be superfluous.
- C. Mark 13:24-31: This Generation Shall Not Pass Till these Thing Are Fulfilled.
1. Verses 24-31: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."
  2. There are other Biblical usages of the same and similar terminology, and fits the context of Matthew 24:4-35. Other accounts:
    - a. Luke 21:24-28: "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

- b. Matthew 24:29-31: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”
- c. Isaiah’s description of the fall of Babylon used similar language: “Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (Isa. 13:6-11). Babylon had not even risen to power when this promise of its destruction was foretold.
3. A discussion of the passage from Matthew will also pertain to our present text from Mark 13:24-31. The first word of this context is very significant in understanding the meaning of the statements which follow. If the word “immediately” is interpreted as strictly literal, then the descriptions thereafter given must be understood as figures of speech since nothing of a literal nature as described have happened since then (the first century). On the other hand, if the events pictured are taken as literal events pertaining to the second coming of Christ, then a figurative interpretation must be forced upon the word “immediately.” Both cannot be taken literally; both cannot be taken as figures. The context demands that one or the other be taken figuratively.
- a. Some ingenious writers try to make the events described throughout the chapter apply to both the destruction of Jerusalem and to the second coming of Christ. But verse 34 shows that all the things of the preceding verses were to take place during the time “this generation” was inhabiting the earth. Since that is so, then the things of the preceding verses have already taken place, thus no dual fulfillment was intended. A stark contrast exists between verses 4-35 and verses 36-51. It is obvious that the former signs apply to the destruction of Jerusalem and the latter to the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Hence, the Lord is answering the disciples’ first question in verses 4-35, and the second and third questions (which are equal since the end of time will occur at Christ’s second coming) in verses 36-51. Matthew 24:29-31 are the most difficult in the chapter.
- b. After the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” The Greek word the Lord used (*eutheos*) means “directly, straightway, forthright, at once” (Young’s Concordance, p.509; Vine, p.127). Uses of the word help us to appreciate the fact that it depicts events which quickly take place, without any extensive delay. As used in Matthew 24:29, the events described would occur soon after the ordeal previously identified (i.e., the tribulations involved in the destruction of the temple). The tribulation was that which was forced upon the Jews when their holy city was besieged and taken by the Romans. The horrible circumstances that occurred there were greater than had ever been (or ever to be) experienced. Nowhere else has so many people suffered so much in such a short period of time.
- 1) Notice the plural “days.” The coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the Judgment are spoken of in the singular—hour, day. The period of time in which the hardships of this passage occurred was described by the plural “days.”
  - 2) Some writers think that the tribulation referred to is some period of severe hardship which will descend upon the inhabitants of earth just prior to the Lord’s return. But this is not so because it would constitute a sign of the nearing end of time, a fact which Christ said would not be; there are no definite signs of the approaching end of time and the Lord’s return. Matthew 24:36-39.
- c. The four images presented in the remainder of the verse all have precedents in Old Testament usages. By showing that “immediately” is used in other contexts with the same meaning as our use of it today, and by also showing that the phraseology of the rest of the verse is also used in the Old Testament to describe figuratively the overthrow of ancient cities and nations, it is reasonable to understand the present verse in the same light.
- 1) The same terminology was used in predicting the eventual destruction of Babylon: Isaiah 13:1-11, 13-22.
  - 2) In foretelling the overthrow of Idumea, God used similar descriptions: Isaiah 34:4-5.

- 3) The same kind of figures are used in the Lord's picture of Egypt's overthrow as given in Ezekiel 32:2, 7, 8, 11, 15.
  - 4) Since the Bible has already used this language in describing the overthrow of ancient cities and nations, and since the term "immediately" cannot logically be used to describe events at least two thousands years in the future (and possibly many thousands more than that), and since the context makes it difficult to place this passage after the destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 34), it is far more reasonable to apply this verse to the Lord's overthrow of Jerusalem by means of the Roman army in 70 A.D.
- d. Therefore, immediately after the tribulation of the preceding verses, Jerusalem would fall. The sun, moon, and stars represent the Jewish nation, its laws, its rulers, and its influence as a nation. It is a matter of historical fact that Israel ceased to exist as a nation following the Roman victory over her. The Israeli nation of our modern time represents only a small portion of the Jewish race, and there is no certainty of its long existence as a nation. In 1948, when the Jews in Palestine, with the help of other nations, succeeded in establishing a foothold there, Premillennialists thought they saw in this evidence for the Lord's imminent return. Some went so far as to assert that a generation was about forty years, and that within forty years of the time Israel gained a foothold in Palestine, the second coming would occur; hence, Hal Lindsey said that 1988 would be the year! All such date-setters are proved wrong.
- e. The parallel accounts are given in these passages:
- 1) Matthew 24:29-31: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."
  - 2) Luke 21:25-26: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."
- f. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). If the preceding verse is to be taken as figurative, then this verse and the one following are also figurative. The statement in verse 34 is very clear, and thus limits that which goes before it in the chapter to events which are connected to the destruction of Judaism in 70 A.D. But is there any precedent of such language being used to describe a figurative coming of Deity? Is there a logical interpretation which permits this to be imagery?
- 1) Matthew mentions the sign and the coming of the Son of man; Mark and Luke only speak of the coming of Christ. Mark and Luke's accounts do not give an interpretation of the meaning of the sign. Matthew speaks of the coming plus the sign of the Son of man in heaven. Concerning the sign, what is said in the text? The sign of the Son of man (Christ) would appear. Appear is from the Greek *phaino* which means "to be brought forth into light, to become evident...shown to be" (Vine, p.64).
  - 2) "This sign was to be brought forth into the light *immediately* after the tribulation of verse 21 (vs. 30). It was to become evident before *this generation* should pass from earthly scenes (vs. 34). The Son of man has not come for the second time as yet (Heb. 9:28; 2 Th. 1:6-9; 1 Th. 4:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:10; John 5:28-29). Therefore, the sign must not be understood as the personal appearance of Christ in the sky. Notice that the location identified is heaven, not the "heavens" (the sky). Something (or someone) was to be in *heaven*. It is the Son of man who is to be in heaven. The sign would be of the Son of man in heaven. The sign would appear (become evident, be brought to light, shown) in connection with the sun being darkened, the moon not giving her light, the stars falling from heaven, and the powers of the heavens being shaken (the overthrow of corrupted Judaism). When this is done, THEN shall the sign be seen. The sign will be on earth; the sign is the destruction of Jerusalem; the sign would show that Christ is in heaven, and is behind all these frightful events, judging the nation which had rejected him as the Messiah. The destruction of Jerusalem would be the SIGN of the coming of the Lord, and would be conclusive evidence that He was reigning IN HEAVEN" (Deaver, *Biblical Notes*, Volume XI, June, 1977, p.27).
    - a) Matthew 23:36: "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."
    - b) Matthew 23:38: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."
    - c) Matthew 24:34-35: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

- d) Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
- e) Acts 2:33: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."
- g. All the tribes of the earth shall mourn. Luke's account gives this additional piece of information: "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26). [In the Greek, "heaven" is in the plural, showing that God's abode is not the location where this shaking will take place.]
- 1) The mourning would be the outgrowth of the terrible things included in this great tribulation. All the Jewish people, not only those who were present to face the terrible ordeal, but those who were living in many places throughout the Empire (Acts 2:5), would mourn over the evil which was befalling their nation. The consequences of this great tribulation would also have effects on other people and nations.
  - 2) The suffering and the resulting sorrow of such a tremendous tribulation, in which well over a million people died under the most horrible of circumstances during a 3-5 five month span, would certainly cause terrible mourning on the part of many. The word "earth" of this clause can be either earth or land, including the occupied earth in the former case, or the land of Palestine in the latter.
  - 3) Those mourning would include especially those who were enduring the suffering and death, and extend to all the others who were sympathetic to them, or who also had to endure the consequences of Israel's great plight. Think of the Jewish families and businesses in other lands which would be in turmoil after the destruction of Jerusalem.
  - 4) The coming of the Son of man in (on, ASV) the clouds of heaven. Can this be properly construed figuratively? The same terminology is used in Isaiah 19:1 in the prophetic picture of Egypt's punishment: "The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." The Lord said he would come on a cloud against Egypt, but no one understands that coming as literal.
  - 5) Given the context in which the present statement was made, no one should understand the coming of Christ in this instance as a literal coming. In fact, as noted earlier in this study, there are only two literal comings of Christ (at his birth and at the end of time). But there are other representative, figurative comings.
    - a) He came in a representative manner when he established his church (kingdom)—Matthew 16:28 (cf. Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). He did not come literally on that great occasion but the power by which he set up his kingdom was present, working with his handpicked apostles (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:5,8; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14; Acts 2:1ff; 2:23, 33). He set up his church (Matt. 16:18), but he was not literally present when he caused it to be established.
    - b) He promised to come in judgment against the saints at Ephesus unless they returned to their first love (Rev. 2:5), against the saints at Pergamos if they did not repent (Rev. 2:16), and into the lives of the penitent saints at Laodicea (Rev. 3:20). These were representative comings, and were not literal. He came into their experiences only in the judgments against, or in bringing blessings for, the people involved.
    - c) The context of the verse under consideration (Matt. 24:30) indicates that the coming on the clouds of heaven is another non-literal, symbolic, figurative coming. When the great destruction, suffering and loss of life are considered, the Lord's great power was brought to bear in the overthrow of Jerusalem. Indeed, the Roman general admitted that only with the assistance of God could the great walls of Jerusalem have been breached. Zechariah 14:1ff speaks of this coming.
- h. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." If the conclusions on Matt. 24:29-30 are correct, this verse is also figurative. Verse 34 limits the foregoing to events taking place while that generation was on the earth. Verse 33 also limits it to the lifetime of those addressed.
- 1) Luke 21:31 says: "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." [The Lord is not saying that the kingdom would then be about ready to be established for it came on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2 (33 A.D.), not in 70 A.D.]
  - 2) His meaning is that there would be no need for his people to fear, for the kingdom was with them, thus its protecting influence would be present. Our conclusions on verses 29-30 fit Biblical usage; this verse must also be figurative, and thus descriptive of events which are long past, not future to our day.
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- 3) The Greek word "angelos" is translated "angels" and carries the definition of "messengers." The nature of the messenger must be determined by each context since the word is sometimes used in reference to men. In Mark 1:2, John is called an angel; the same word is used in Matthew 11:10 in reference to John. John's disciples who were sent to speak with Jesus are called "angelos" (Luke 7:18, 24). In Luke 9:52, certain disciples of Christ have this same word used to describe them. James 2:25 uses this same word to describe the two spies sent into Jericho to spy out the city.
  - a) The Greek word translated "evangelist" means "a messenger of good (*eu*, well, *angelos*, messenger)" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.44). *Angelos* is elsewhere translated "angel." An evangelist is therefore an *angel*, in the sense that he is a *messenger*.
  - b) It is in keeping with Biblical usage of the word to understand the present occurrence of the word as a reference to human messengers, preachers of the gospel who proclaim the message of Christ to the lost world. This fits the context and is in keeping with the use of the word elsewhere.
- 4) These angels were assigned the mission of gathering the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Heaven is in the plural in the Greek text. The extent of this gathering was from all locations where the elect (the saints) were to be found. "Gathering the elect" is a beautiful way of depicting the great work of preaching the gospel. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10; cf. Acts 13:45-46). God knows the hearts of individuals; he knows whether they will be responsive to the gospel; thus, prospectively, they can be called the elect or God's people. As God's messengers go about proclaiming and teaching the gospel, there are those who will listen, examine it and themselves, and believe and obey the message.
- 5) The trumpet was used in ancient days to gather the people together. It was sounded when Israel was called together, especially at the start of Jubilee (Lev. 25:9; Num. 10:2; Judges 3:27). The trumpet of God will sound to announce the return of Christ at the end of time (I Th. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52). The sounding of the trumpet is used figuratively in the present text to describe the calling of many out of the world into the church of Christ.
- 6) The four winds is a reference to the cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west. The statement itself is manifestly figurative, for the elect are not gathered out of the air! From the four winds and from one end of heaven (s) to the other is the two-fold description of the extent the messengers were to canvass in gathering those who obeyed the gospel. See Matthew 24:14; Colossians 1:6, 23; Romans 10:18; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19.
- 7) The fall of Judaism made it easier for the saints to carry out the Great Commission, since they were not confused with the Jews, and ceased to be persecuted by the Jews. Compare: "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead" (Acts 14:19).
- i. The Bible uses most of the same descriptions in other settings to describe the second coming and the end of the world. The sun and moon being darkened, the stars falling, and the powers of the heavens shaken:
  - 1) Hebrews 12:26-29: "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."
  - 2) 2 Peter 3:4-12: "And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

- 3) Hebrews 1:12: "And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."
- 4) Revelation 20:11: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."
- j. The people of the earth mourning: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7).
  - 1) The Lord coming with the clouds of heaven: Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7.
  - 2) The sounding of the trumpet: 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
  - 3) The gathering of God's people to be with Christ: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 13:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7.
- k. The interpretation given in the preceding discussion does no damage to any passage, and is in harmony with other Biblical usages.
4. Verses 28-29: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors."
  - a. This discourse took place in the spring, at the Passover season, a time when the fig trees were beginning to put forth their leaves or were soon to do so. When these leaves began to appear, summer was near at hand. When robins begin to appear, we take that as a sign of the nearness of spring.
  - b. In the same way that the appearance of the fig leaves signaled the closeness of summer, so the appearance of the preceding signs were to be taken to mean that Jerusalem was soon to be razed. The marginal note says that "it" could be understood as "he." The American Standard translates it as "he." If "he" is taken as the correct rendering, then the reference is to the nearness of Christ; if the KJV is correct, the "end" (the overthrow of Jerusalem) is soon to be come. In either case, the meaning is the same: Jesus was to be present (representatively) in bringing about the overthrow.
  - c. At least some of the disciples would "see all these things." Because they would see them, they would thereby know of the nearness of the city's destruction, and so could flee to safety. The Lord is getting to the heart of his answer to their questions of verse three. If Matthew 24:29-33 [and Luke 21:25-33, Mark 13:24-31] describes his second coming, notice how shallow and superfluous it would be:
    - 1) "When you see the sun and moon darkened, and the stars crashing down, then know that my second coming is at hand! When you see me coming in the clouds, I'm on my way! When you see angels gathering the elect, look for my appearance!"
    - 2) Christ never engaged in such trite statements; he never uttered any mere truisms. If so, it would be like the silly truism we often hear: "It ain't over till it's over."
5. Verses 30-31: "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"(Matt. 24:34).
  - a. "All these things" is a statement made several times during the discourse and in the context. "Verily I say unto you, **All these things** shall come upon this generation" (Matt. 23:36). See also 24:2, 3, 8, 33, 34; Luke 21:19-33. The meaning of Matthew 24:34 is so crystal clear that it seems very strange that many overlook its significance, or else try to explain away its obvious point. Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32 are parallel verses and they express the same truth. Luke 21:32: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."
  - b. Premillennialists try to explain away the statement by twisting "generation" to mean the Jewish race. So also does Coffman (pp.394f). This would have the Lord saying that, "All these things will come upon this race, and this race will not pass away until all these things come upon it." But Christ was never redundant, never uttered a mere truism, and was never guilty of speaking such shallow nonsense. "Generation" means here exactly what it meant in these other passages:
    - 1) Matthew 1:17: "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations."
    - 2) Matthew 11:16-19: "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and

- they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.”
- 3) Matthew 12:38-42: “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”
  - 4) Matthew 16:4: “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.”
  - 5) Matthew 23:36: “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.”
  - 6) The same word that is used in these verses is the word used in Matthew 24:34. The reference is to the whole multitude of men who are living at the same time.
- c. "The true key to the interpretation of this much disputed passage is found in the expression 'all these things,' repeated from the preceding verse. It must here have the same meaning as there; for an identical expression repeated in consecutive sentences always has the same meaning, except when something is introduced in the new connection to force upon it a different meaning. There is certainly nothing of the kind here" (McGarvey, p.212). All the things Jesus has discussed in the preceding verses (3-33) will have taken place by the time "this generation" passes from the earth into eternity. These words were spoken in the spring of A.D. 33; Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, well within the time factor of one generation. The majority of the people who were living when Christ spoke these words were still alive in 70 A.D., even though many had died and many others had been born during that time frame.
- d. Many people have trouble with Matthew 24:29-31, but the same figures had already been used in the Old Testament to describe the overthrow of other nations and cities. Old Testament prophecies used these descriptions, and first century history verifies that events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem fit their similar use in these verses. And in view of the plain statement of Matthew 24:34, it would be most difficult to be consistent with its truth and understand the awesome pictures of verses 29-31 as still future from our day. As noted in the discussion of those verses, there are other passages which use similar terms in reference to the end of time, but in this context, they are used to depict the great tragedy of Judaism's demise. To be sure, the Jewish race will remain as a separate people until the end of time (Jer. 30:11; Num. 23:9), but Matthew 24 is not discussing that subject. A passage is to be taken literally unless there is clear evidence it is figurative.
- e. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." The statement here shows at least two things: the earth is not eternal and the Lord's words are unshakable. In nature, the universe and the earth seem to be the most stable and permanent of all. But the Lord affirmed that these would not always be (Cf. 2 Pet. 3:10; Heb. 12:25-29). Paul described material things as temporal and the things which cannot be seen as eternal (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Genesis 8:22 implies that the earth will have a limited history ("while the earth remaineth"). Just as surely as his words will never have an end, just that certain will the end of Jerusalem come as he had explained. They could depend on his pronouncements regarding the overthrow of the city.
- f. Notice some historical details describing the end of the temple and Jerusalem.
- 1) Titus gave order that the temple was not to be destroyed, but allowed to stand as an "ornament to their government while it continued" (Josephus, p.580). The outer gate had been set on fire prior to the general's order, so he now commanded that the fire be quenched. But the Jews attacked the soldiers who were sent to put out the fire, and a battle raged until the Jewish fighters retired into the inner court of the temple. "At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out of the materials that were on fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it" (ibid.)
  - 2) Although Titus took desperate measures to make his men put out the fire, they refused his orders. Their intense hatred for the Jews and their lust for the money they expected to find in the temple caused them to plunder and destroy it. Josephus says that Titus entered the Holy Place and found it to be superior to any such place he had seen and that the Jews who boasted about it had not exaggerated (ibid., p.580f).
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Christ had promised that the temple would be leveled; his word was fulfilled completely despite the efforts of the powerful Roman general to the contrary!

- 3) Josephus calculated that there were in Jerusalem when the Roman army arrived about two million, seven hundred thousand, and two hundred people that were pure and holy. He did not include those who were diseased or otherwise ceremonially unclean (p.588). The entire city was destroyed with the exceptions of the three greatest towers and a part of city's wall. The former were left to show the world how greatly fortified and strong the city had been but which the mighty Roman Legions had reduced to ruins. The west wall was left as shelter for the garrison Titus left on the site. "...But for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind" (ibid., p.589).
6. Verses 32-33: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).
  - a. This verse quite obviously marks a turning point in the Lord's discussion. Having said in Matthew 24:34 that all the things he had announced beginning in verse 4 to verse 34 would be fulfilled before that generation passed on into eternity, and having given assurance that his word would not fail, he now declares that there was a notable day and hour in earth's history when Christ would return. The contrasting word "but" shows a marked difference between the subject of the preceding section and the one beginning here. In the previous statements the Lord spoke of "days" and "these days." But now he speaks in the singular: "day and hour."
  - b. The general and specific signs given in the earlier section [of Matt. 24] pointed to and identified for the Christians in Judea the nearing end of Jerusalem. It was observable and recognizable to them in order for them to be able to escape the area without any harm coming to them. But in this section there are no signs given to identify the nearing end of the world at the Lord's second coming.
  - c. Many could know when Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, but only the Father knew when the end of time would be. "But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33).
  - d. The phrase "that day and hour" connects with "heaven and earth shall pass away" (Matt. 24:35). While they could know by the signs when to flee from Judea, no one can know when the time is when heaven and earth shall pass away, i.e., the time of the Lord's return. The great lesson of this section is "watch and pray." If the time had been specified then this great lesson would have been nullified. The Bible often speaks of THAT day:
    - 1) Matthew 7:22: "Many will say to me **in that day**, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"
    - 2) Matthew 11:22: "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon **at the day of judgment**, than for you."
    - 3) Matthew 11:24: "But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the **day of judgment**, than for thee."
    - 4) Matthew 12:36: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the **day of judgment**."
    - 5) 2 Timothy 1:12: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against **that day**."
    - 6) 2 Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me **at that day**: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."
  - e. The second coming of Christ is the time meant; it will occasion the destruction of the heavens and earth and all things material; it will include the resurrection of the dead and the changing of the living; it will result in the great Judgment event, which will be followed by the eternal destinies of us all. The Bible never speaks of the second coming and end of the world in the plural, but uses the singular "day" or "hour." The term "last days" is used in reference to the last dispensation of time between the cross and the second coming. The *last days* are the Christian Age; the *last day* is the end of time.

- 1) Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."
  - 2) Isaiah 2:2: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."
  - 3) Acts 2:16-17: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."
  - 4) 1 John 2:18: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."
  - 5) 1 Peter 1:20: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."
- f. When the last day will be is still a mystery (Mark 13:32-33). Christ had perfect understanding of both the Old and New Testaments; since he did not know when that day will be, it follows that the Bible does not reveal when it will be. Therefore, no man on earth today can identify that day. Those who say they know it are false teachers of the first rank.
- 1) Some claim that it is only the day and hour that is not revealed. But this implies that we can know the week, month, year, decade, century, and millennium when the Lord will return. Who is willing to be specific in identifying the exact week, or the exact month, or the exact year? It is inconclusive to announce the millennium or century since we would not be alive to see the end of either period. Every person who has announced a time for his return has met with failure! We cannot know the hour, day, week, decade, century, or millennium of his return. Mark 13:32 says we cannot know the day and hour, and verse 33 says we cannot know the time at all! "Day and hour" is used interchangeably with "time."
  - 2) The various passages which describe the Lord's return to be "as a thief in the night" show that the time of it is hidden in the inscrutable counsel of God. See 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6. While the Savior was on earth, he did not know when that time would be, but now that he has re-assumed the fullness of his Godhead, and is not limited by the flesh in any way, he may know (Col. 2:9; John 5:20).
- g. If Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 is the same as those events described earlier in the context, how can we reconcile the fact that Christ knew the precise details of the one and did not know when the other is to be? I once knew a man who became an atheist because he could not see the truth on this chapter [Matt. 24]. The truth is plain: Christ is answering two questions. In verses 4-35 he responds to the apostles' question about when the temple would be destroyed. In verses 36-51 he answers their questions about the signs of his coming and of the end of the world. It appears that the Lord used the destruction of Jerusalem as a *type* of the end of the world.
7. Verse 34: "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."
- a. McGarvey: "Here, under the figure of a man who starts on a journey to some distant place, leaving his servants each his work to do, and commanding the porter, as his work, to keep watch. Jesus indicates plainly his own departure from the earth, and teaches the lesson which naturally springs from the previously stated uncertainty as to the day of his return. Each must be always busily engaged at his proper work, that the master may so find when he returns" (p,350).
  - b. Compare: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:54-51).
  - c. The warning of preparedness is given in the form of a picture of an unfaithful servant. A faithful and wise servant is one who, having been given responsibilities by his master, is found to have been trustworthy in discharging those duties. When the master returns from a journey, and finding the servant busy doing his work, will reward the servant richly. But the servant is evil who says in his heart, "My master is long in returning." Thus, thinking he can do what he wills, he begins to mistreat the other servants, and eats and drinks with the drunkards. That servant will be found by his master in that state of rebellion, for he will return unexpectedly and punish him properly.

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- d. "In stating the punishment, Jesus passes from the figure to the reality, and merges the parable in the description: cutting him asunder (Matt. 24:51) terminates the parable which has been itself almost a description, and the description begins with appointing him his portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. At this point it may be well to remind the reader that all the warnings in reference to his second coming, given by Jesus in the preceding as well as in the following divisions of this discourse, are equally applicable to our departure to meet him. Whether he first comes to us, or we first go to him, the result will be the same, for as we are at death we will be at his coming, seeing that it is concerning the deeds done in the body that we will be judged. (2 Cor. 5:10)" (McGarvey, pp.214f).
8. Verses 35-37: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."
- a. These plain words from the Lord are for his disciples to be watchful; this warning is undergirded with the affirmation that we do not know when his coming shall be. If another statement was needed from the Lord to the end that we might know that we cannot learn when his coming will be, this statement would be sufficient.
- b. "The exhortation to watchfulness is based on the uncertainty of the day as declared in the previous paragraph and here repeated for the sake of emphasis: 'for you know not what day your Lord doth come.' Unlike the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, there is no sign by which its near approach will be certainly known" (McGarvey, pp.213f).
- c. "The comparison between the coming of Jesus and that of a thief is the more striking from the dissimilarity between the two characters. There is but one point of comparison—the uncertainty of the time of their coming. As the goodman of the house, had he known what hour the thief would come, would have watched and have prevented his house from being broken into, so we, by watching for the coming of the Son of man, may prevent it from finding us unprepared" (ibid., pp.214).
- d. Compare: "But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37-39).
- 1) Here the Lord draws a parallel between the second coming and the great flood. The common affairs of life were being conducted as usual until suddenly the deluge came and "took them all away." Marriage ceremonies were being planned and executed; people were eating and drinking; all of the ordinary activities were being conducted; sin was still being practiced. This was not the case during the days preceding the overthrow of Jerusalem, for in the affected areas, there were turmoils, tribulations, fighting, starvation, and confusion. It was truly "a time that tried men's souls."
- 2) The generation that perished in the flood suffered that penalty despite the warnings issued to them by Noah. The great patriarch was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). He obviously spoke to his generation, giving them warning about the impending flood. They rejected this message of righteousness (Cf. Ps. 119:172).
- e. The comparisons between the coming of the flood and the Lord's return are clear:
- 1) The flood came suddenly, there were no outward signs in nature of its approach, and human activities were normal, giving no indications of an imminent flood.
- 2) Normal human affairs were being pursued right up to the last.
- 3) No other such event had ever occurred in human history.
- 4) The only warning given came through the preaching of God's word.
- 5) "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." There will be no outward sign in nature to warn of his coming; human affairs will be going on as usual; no other such event has ever occurred in human history before; the only warning given is that which is issued through God's word on the subject.
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## Mark 14

### A. Mark 14:1-11: Events at the House of Simon the Leper.

1. Verses 1-2: "After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people."
    - a. Matthew's account: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matt. 26:2-5).
    - b. The Passover lambs were selected on the tenth day of the month; they were slain "between the two evenings" (Ex. 12), and eaten on the 14th. Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem; he was slain on the Passover day (Friday, the 14th of Nisan). His body was removed from the cross prior to the sabbath (the 15th). The Olivet Discourse took place on Wednesday (13th); the Lord ate the Passover with his disciples and instituted the Lord's supper on Friday the 14th (Thursday as we count time).
    - c. Matthew 26: "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill *him*. But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar among the people."
      - 1) The Lord's enemies, including the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, held a secret council in which they plotted the Lord's death. They decided that they should not arrest him publicly during the feast day lest there be a popular uprising by the people in Christ's favor and against the conspirators. At this time Jesus was still popular among the common people. A problem existed for they did not know where Jesus spent his time when not in public activity. They decided to arrest him on the sly but still had to find some occasion and place where this might be done. They were still smarting from the deadly blows Jesus had publicly dealt them in their various debates with him (Matt. 22).
      - 2) The chief priests were the heads over the twenty-four courses of priests (1 Chron. 24; Neh. 12; cf. Luke 1:5). Caiaphas was high priest and the head over the Jewish Sanhedrin. The high priest was to be appointed for life, according to the Law, but the legal high priest (Annas) had incurred the wrath of Rome and had been removed. Caiaphas was his son-in-law. The Jews still considered Annas, who lived to a great age, as the rightful high priest.
    - d. John 11:47-57 gives additional information about this conference. Little did they know that what they were saying and doing in secret would one day be exposed to the full view of the whole world! Our Lord knew of their scheme, and did not walk openly among the Jews. His arrest, trials and execution were to be perfectly timed. He had come to Judaea from Perea to Bethany. Now he and his disciples went to a place in the midst of a wilderness [where few people lived], and spend time there and in the town called Ephraim. He was to remain there until the Passover season arrived.
    - e. "And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him" (John 11:55-57).
      - 1) Many people, traveling in groups, came to Jerusalem for certain purification rites preceding the great feast. Compare: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai" (Exod. 19:10-11).
      - 2) There were some at the temple who talked among themselves, wondering if Jesus would come to the Passover. We know that the Lord's time was at hand, and that he would certainly be present.
  2. Verse 3: "And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head."
    - a. John 12:1-8 tells of the supper at Bethany. "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead" (12:1). The day Jesus and his disciples arrived at Bethany was six days before the Passover. This should help us to set the day of the week in which our Lord made his great entrance into Jerusalem. John reminds his readers that this village was the place where Lazarus had lived, died, and at which Jesus raised him back to life.
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- b. We remember from John 11:54 that the Lord led his band away from Jerusalem to avoid being taken into custody prematurely. They spent some time at a city called Ephraim, located in a wilderness area. The time came for him to begin his journey back to Jerusalem and face the ordeal planned from all eternity. Brother Woods reports:
- 1) Numerous events occurring on his journey to Jerusalem and its vicinity are passed over by John, but narrated in detail by the other biographers of Jesus. On the trip he cleansed ten lepers, blessed some little children, healed two blind men near Jericho, spoke numerous parables, delivered several sermons and arrived in Bethany, on Friday evening, six days before the passover.
  - 2) His arrival there undoubtedly preceded the onset of the sabbath, which began at sundown, since he would not have traveled on the sabbath day. The passover was celebrated on the 14th of the Jewish month Nisan (Lev. 23:5), between the evenings (that is, between sunset and the time darkness fell) (Ex. 12:6); the paschal meal was eaten at the end of the 14th day, and at the beginning of the 15th; six days previously would be on the 8th of Nisan, Friday. [John, p.252].
- c. On this day of the Lord's arrival a meal was prepared for Jesus and his group. We are told that it was Martha who served the guests. There would have been at least fifteen people to serve, including the family of Martha—no small task. We are not told who made this supper. The statement is "they" made him a supper. Matthew 26:6-13 places the meal in the house of Simon the leper. The details given by Matthew and John are too similar to be different occasions and locations. Many questions are not answered:
- 1) Was this Simon still a leper or was he one of the many the Lord had cleansed? [It would seem unlikely that the Lord and his followers would have eaten in the house of a leprous man].
  - 2) Was he still living at the time of this supper?
  - 3) Was Simon related to the family of Martha?
- d. A point of great importance is the fact that Lazarus was at the table. Here is a man who had been brought back from the dead a short time earlier; now he is alive and carrying on with the various acts of his regular life—including eating and conversing with friends. "As the law forbade a leper to mingle with the people (Lev. xiii. 45, 46), this man had probably been healed of the leprosy by Jesus, and was still called Simon the leper from habit. Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, was at the supper; the woman who anointed Jesus (verse 7) was Mary; while Martha, according to her well known habit (Luke x. 40), was one of those who served. (John xii. 2,3.) It was an interesting group of notable persons, who were full of gratitude for benefits conferred, and whose unfeigned love was about the only human solace enjoyed by the Savior during the last week of his sufferings" [McGarvey, Commentary on Matthew and Mark, p.223].
- e. "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (John 12:3). We are told by the scholars that the *pound* named in the passage would be equal to about twelve of our ounces. Johnson: "Spikenard, from which the ointment was made, was an aromatic herb of the valerian family. It was imported from an early age from Arabia, India, and the Far East. It was the costliest anointing oil of antiquity, and was sold throughout the Roman Empire, where it fetched a price that put it beyond any but the wealthy. Mary had bought a vase or flask of it containing twelve ounces" (p.187).
- 1) John said Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with this precious ointment; Matthew has her pouring it on his head. Both are logical and fitting actions. In pouring it on the head, the thick hair of the head would soak up the mixture; to apply it to the feet would require some degree of spreading the ointment. The fragrance of this precious ointment would spread through the house, with everyone being able to enjoy the pleasant smell. No one would describe this ointment as having a bad aroma.
  - 2) The same is said of "a woman that was a sinner" (Luke 7 :38). That occurrence took place in Galilee and is a different incident. That woman washed his feet with her tears of sorrow; those of Mary were tears of gratitude.
3. Verses 4-5: "And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her."
- a. "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:4-6).
    - 1) NKJ: But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

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- 2) Judas demanded to know why this precious ointment was not sold for three hundred [pence; shilling; denarii] and the proceeds be given to the poor. When brother Woods penned his great commentary on John in 1981, this amount of money would equal fifty-one dollars at that time.
  - b. Matthew's account: "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor" (Mat.26:7-9).
    - 1) "Not all of the disciples, for Judas alone made the complaint. (John xii. 4.) This is an instance in which Matthew uses the plural indefinitely to represent what came from a group of persons, although it was uttered by only one of them" (McGarvey, p.223).
    - 2) Judas carried "the bag" and was "a thief." This indicates that Judas was the treasurer for the group, and that he stole from the money he was entrusted to keep. Treasurers in local congregations have been known to rob the Lord. There are many ways to steal, but there is no escaping exposure ultimately. Judas had no concern for the poor; he had found ways to take some of the money for his own selfish use. Satan used this fatal weakness to turn Judas into history's most infamous thief.
  4. Verses 6-7: "And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always."
    - a. Compare: "Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always" (John 12:7-8).
    - b. Our Lord always had the proper response to arguments and situations. Here, he ordered them, to let Mary alone. He correctly stated that this anointing was in anticipation of his burial.
    - c. He reminded them that the poor would always be present. In the mid-nineteen-sixties, President Johnson declared a war on poverty. He thought that if he could win this war, he would have stamped out poverty throughout the country! At the time, there were many of us who thought of our present passage; the Lord declared that the poor (thus, poverty) would always be present, despite efforts by politicians or religionists. The best we can do, is to allay some of the suffering of the poor.
    - d. The Lord gave his church the following requirements: "For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, ASV). Edifying the saints; helping the needy; evangelizing the world.
    - e. The time Christ was to spend on earth was limited—about 33 years. His earthly ministry lasted only about three and a half years. Within a few days, he would be arrested, tried, convicted on a false charge, and executed.
    - f. Since the Lord ascended from earth to heaven, he remains seated at the right hand of God, having received the promises the Father had made to him, and from this place of eminence, he has been able to provide to his followers all the blessings they were intended to receive.
      - 1) Psalm 68:18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men...." Compare: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)" [Eph. 4:8-10].
      - 2) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."
      - 3) Acts 2:33-36: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
      - 4) 1 Peter 3:22: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."
      - 5) After his resurrection, Christ met with the apostles on several occasions. Following the last meeting, he ascended heavenward out of their sight: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why
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- stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).
- 6) Psalm 110:1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Acts 2:33-36 gives the fulfillment: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
  - 7) God set Christ at his own right hand by his infinite power: "And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*" (Eph. 1:19-20).
  - 8) This position is above all principality and power: "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21; cf. Heb. 7:23-28).
5. Verses 8-9: "She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."
    - a. Johnson: "It is worthy of note that this was all the anointing which our Lord's body received from the hand of Mary or her female friends, inasmuch as he had risen before they reached the sepulchre with their spices. It was, therefore, in verity, an anointing beforehand, although she was not aware of the full import of her act of love" (p.188).
    - b. "When Jesus understood *it*, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did *it* for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:10-13).
    - c. Jesus understood the problem which had developed, and rebuked the disciples for their complaint. The woman had done a good work upon him. The poor will always be present for you to aid; I will not be present for long. She has anointed my body in anticipation of my burial. This last comment indicates the strong spiritual stance of Mary. While the disciples had argued with the Savior over his announcements of his death, and had dismissed it from their minds or had been unable to grasp it, this lady who sat at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38-42) had apparently understood more about his mission than the others.
    - d. As a tribute to this woman's loyalty and love, Jesus included the report of her devotion to him in his word for all the world to see. "Persons frequently perform, without the least thought of notoriety, actions which are destined to make them famous. No human being could have foreseen what Jesus here declares concerning the future fame which would attach to Mary and her simple act of love. On the contrary, the act at first appeared reprehensible, and was favorably regarded by none present except Jesus. His divine foreknowledge is demonstrated by the literal fulfillment of his prediction, and as the knowledge of this incident reaches forward into coming ages and spreads abroad still farther in the earth, the demonstration becomes continually more surprising" (McGarvey, p.224).
    - e. Matthew and Mark do not mention her by name, possibly because she was still alive when they wrote; only John (who penned his account later than the others, at a time when this noble lady may have been deceased) names her.
    - f. "This is another fruitful example that what is given to Christ is saved; all else is lost. Of the lifetime earnings and estate of Mary of Bethany, if the sum total of it had been invested in any conceivable way and multiplied a thousandfold, it would have been powerless to achieve for her name even a fraction of the endowment provided by the 300 pence worth of spikenard lavished upon the body of our Lord" (Coffman, p.425). As the gospel was revealed in its entirety, Mary's loving sacrifice was included; and as it is preached throughout the world, her story is reported. Who but the Lord is able to know the vast amount of good that has resulted by the wonderful influence of the godly lady's expression of love.
  6. Verses 10-11: "And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him."
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- a. Matthew's account: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him" (Matt. 26:14-16).
- b. Judas went to the chief priests with his unholy proposal. It appears, from the placement of the story of the feast in which Judas had exposed his avarice, that he was upset over the stinging rebuke the Lord had meted out. This appears to explain his evil act reported here, which could have also been motivated by his greed.
- c. At any rate, he knew about the desire of the chief priests to learn of the Lord's secret haunts: "Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him" (John 11:57). Greed, wounded pride, and disappointment were involved in his betrayal. Judas asked how much they would give for the information he possessed. Luke's account (22:3-6) reports the gladness of the Jewish leaders on hearing from Judas. Luke also reports that Judas spoke with the chief priests and the captains. These captains "were the leaders of a guard of priests and Levites whose duty was to protect the temple and the sacred rites from being interrupted by riotous persons; they were at the command of the chief priests for such a work as this" (Boles, p.498).
- d. "The pieces of silver were most likely the Jewish shekel, and the amount \$15.00. This was a low price for so base a deed: but Judas anticipated no personal danger; he shut out from his mind the thought of all other evil consequences to himself, and he expected his task to cost him but a few minutes of labor when the time should come" (McGarvey, p.225). He had no way of knowing that his secret covenant with the Lord's enemies would be made part of God's public record for all to see. The covenanted price was the rate for a common slave (Ex. 21:32).
- e. How could these religious leaders, who supposedly knew the Old Testament intimately, have failed to see the connection between their wicked covenant and what Zechariah (11:12-13) had predicted? The prophecy contains an amazing number of details which were all present in the fulfillment. The sum was 30 pieces of silver; it was weighed out; it was cast unto the potter; it was thrown down ("cast"); the potter would get it; the recipient would do the casting; the transaction occurred in the temple (the house of the Lord); a haggling over the price is indicated by the prophecy: "If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear." (See Coffman, p.426). They "covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver," which implies bargaining.
- f. From that time Judas sought an occasion and opportunity to betray the Lord. The words "deliver him" and "betray him" are used interchangeably (verses 15,16). The opportunity was not long in coming. When evil is contemplated, the devil often quickly provides the means. Jonah ran from his God-given obligation; the ship and passage money were available for a hasty flight (Jonah 1:1-3).
- g. In the meantime, Judas continued his hypocritical pose as a loyal disciple, but sought opportunity to deliver Jesus to the rulers privately, when he was away from the multitude. His enemies could bring the Lord before the Sanhedrin, manufacture a charge, and put him to death.

#### B. Mark 14:12-26: The Passover.

1. Verse 12: "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?"
  - a. On Thursday, the disciples asked Christ where they should prepare the passover. The Passover day was followed by seven days in which unleavened bread was to be used—called the feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:14-20). The term "Passover" came to be used as a designation of the entire eight-day period of holy festivities: "Now the day of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover" (Luke 22:1; Mt. 26:17). A major controversy has prevailed through the ages regarding whether the meal Jesus and his disciples ate on the night of his betrayal, specifically whether this was the passover meal or if it was a common meal, or was the passover eaten a day early. If the only information we had was that contained in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there would be no controversy. But John's account indicates that the Jewish leaders had not eaten the Passover (John 18:28), and the day of his trial and crucifixion is also called "the preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14).
  - b. If Jesus had eaten it a day earlier, his act would have been an act of disobedience to an Old Testament command which specified that the passover feast was to be eaten on the night of the 14th day of the first Jewish month (Nisan, formerly called Abib). An act of disobedience is an act of sin, and Jesus did not commit any sin (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; John 14:30; 1Pet. 2:22). Did he have the authority to set aside one of God's commandments prior to his death, when he brought to a conclusion the whole Old Testament system?
    - 1) Barnes reports that in that day prior to the invention of modern calendars and more exact methods of determining days, the Jews "placed witnesses around the heights of the temple to observe the first appearance of the new moon; they examined the witnesses with much formality, and endeavoured also to obtain the exact time by astronomical calculations. Others held that the month properly commenced

when the moon was *visible*. Thus it is said a difference arose between them about the time of the Passover, and that Jesus kept it one day sooner than most of the people" (p.279). This would be a logical way of explaining the difficulty. Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 make it very definite that the meal to be prepared was the Passover.

- 2) John 18:28 might be explained also by understanding the statement as including the rest of the eight-day period of feasting: "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover" (Luke 22:1). John 19:14 could be understood as pertaining to the preparations made for the Sabbath which was to start that very afternoon at sundown: "And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he [Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!"
- 3) The Lord said: "Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples" (Matt. 26:18). Matthew does not identify how many and which disciples were sent to make the necessary arrangements, but Luke 22:8 tells us that Peter and John were selected.
  - c. Mark and Luke report some detailed instructions by which these two disciples would locate the place where they could eat the meal. They would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water; they were to follow him and ask him about the guestchamber "where I shall eat the passover with my disciples" (Luke 22:7-12; Mark 14:12-15). The procedure Jesus followed in locating the place and arranging for the feast would have kept Judas from learning about it, and thus disrupting the meal by having the enemy arrest Jesus prematurely.
  - d. "It was customary for all the residents of Jerusalem to open their houses for guests during this feast, and therefore Jesus might have presumed on the hospitality of almost any one; but the probability is that the man to whom he sent this message was an acquaintance and a friend" (McGarvey, p.225).
  - e. This is another case of the omniscience of Jesus. He could know about the man, that the disciples would meet him, that he would be carrying a pitcher of water, that he had a large upper room suitable for the feast, that it would be prepared with the proper furnishings, and that he would be willing to let the company use it. All of these details require his supernatural knowledge.
  - f. "The normal population of Jerusalem was something like two hundred or two hundred and fifty thousand people; but when the Jewish people who lived elsewhere came to the city for the feast days, the population was raised to some three million souls" (ALC, 1966, p.229). Josephus estimated that there were 2.7 million present in 70 A.D., not counting those who were "unclean."
2. Verses 13-15: "And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."
  - a. "And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve" (Matt. 26:20).
  - b. The disciples did as the Lord directed. Obviously they found the man, he was agreeable to their use of his house, and the proper preparations were made. If they had been doing this on the day prior to the real passover, the priest would not have been receptive to fulfilling his part of the operation on the wrong day (See Num. 23:10-14; 28; 16-25; Deut. 16:1-6).
  - c. These details had been added to the arrangement first given in Exodus 12. Instead of putting the blood on the door openings, it was now put on the altar, something the priest would do. It was after the arrival of "even" (evening) that they gathered for the feast, in keeping with the Old Testament requirement.
3. Verses 16-19: "And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?"
  - a. The other reports:
    - 1) Matthew 26:21-25: "And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said."

- 2) Luke 22:21-23: "But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing."
- 3) John 13:21-27: "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly."
- 4) As they were eating, he announced that one of them would betray him. He had previously told them that he would be betrayed but had been indefinite as to the guilty party. Now he plainly says it would be one of the twelve. John 13:18-21 reports that when Jesus made this announcement, he was troubled in spirit. Also, that he stated his reason for telling them about the betrayal ahead of time—that when it occurs, you will have greater reason for believing on me (vs. 19).
  - b. The disciples were very sorrowful for this grievous thought, and began to inquire, "Is it I?" They did not try to accuse each other at this point, but each wanted assurance that he was not the culprit. Judas also asked this question (vs. 25).
4. Verses 20-21: "And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born."
  - a. Our Lord said that the individual meant would be the one to whom he would give a sop when he dipped it. His answer to John would have been in a quiet tone of voice. There was upon the table a dish of bitter herbs, a kind of sauce that was always eaten at the passover. No knives, forks or spoons are used at an Eastern table, but the fingers only, which are always carefully washed before eating. These are dipped in the dish.
  - b. The Lord took a piece of the unleavened bread, dipped it into the dish of sauce and handed it to Judas. John saw the act and understood what it meant. The rest did not yet comprehend that Judas was the traitor. [See Johnson, p.211]. The one who was to betray the Lord is identified as Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Jesus did not say or show any malice toward this unfaithful disciple. He did not express any harsh anger even toward those who tormented him in his trials, scourging, and crucifixion.
  - c. The answer did not identify Judas to the rest of them, but it let Judas know that the Lord knew it would be him. This statement narrowed the field to those who were using the same bowl as the Lord; it is doubtful that all twelve could reach the same bowl.
  - d. John's account (13:22-30) furnishes some details not given elsewhere. Peter beckoned for John to ask the Lord for the betrayer's name. John asked, and was told that it was he to whom Jesus would give a "sop" which had been dipped into the food bowl. On saying this, Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to Judas, and told him, "That thou doest, do quickly." The others heard what the Lord told Judas but did not understand what he meant. Judas immediately arose and left the room—to complete the evil bargain he had made with the chief priests and captains.
  - e. Matthew shows that Jesus admitted to Judas that he was the traitor, a fact which was not heard or understood by the others. With John's report in mind, we can see that only the Lord, John and Judas knew the identity of the betrayer.
  - f. "Although it was written of the Son of man, and predetermined by God, that he should go as Judas had covenanted, yet the woe is pronounced on Judas, and it is said of him that it had been good for him if he had not been born. This shows that a man who, by a wicked act, brings about a purpose of God, bears the same guilt as though God had no purpose in it. It is his own act and motive for which he is judged, and not the results which God may have intended to bring out of his act. The statement that 'it had been good for that man if he had not been born,' is a denial of the doctrine of universal salvation; for if a man after any conceivable amount of suffering, shall at last enjoy everlasting life, it is not true of him that it had been better for him if he had not been born" (McGarvey, p.226).
  - g. The object of the direction the conversation took was to show the foreknowledge of Jesus and to give Judas ample warning against his evil intentions. "Yet so utterly callous had the conscience of Judas become that with brazen effrontery he asks, 'Master, is it I?' Such hardihood in crime is a more convincing evidence of deep depravity than his previous covenant with the chief priests" (ibid.).
5. Verses 22-24: "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all

drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

- a. Again, John's account gives an additional detail of importance. The Passover meal was over (13:1-2) when the preceding discussion was had. Immediately after Jesus had identified Judas as the traitor, that evil disciple left the room. Hence, Judas was not present for the institution of the Lord's Supper or for the detailed promises the Lord gave regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (13:30). But some think that Luke's account may imply that Judas did not leave until after the Supper had been instituted (22:18-23).
  - 1) Luke 22:18-23: “For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.”
  - 2) John 13:1-2: “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.”
  - 3) John 13:29-30: “For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.”
- b. The Lord took bread and blessed it. Luke 22:19 says he gave thanks for it. Thus, to bless means to give thanks. The Greek term used is "*eucharisteo*." There is nothing in the statement which implies that we make it holy by our prayer or other action. The bread that was present was without any leavening whatsoever. The Jews were not permitted to have any leavening in their houses during this special time. To say the least, we know that unleavened bread is the kind to be used in the Lord's Supper today because it was the kind the Lord used. Specific mention is made of it as unleavened bread (Matt. 26:17).
- c. Denominational doctrines assert that when the priest "blesses" the bread, it is miraculously turned into the actual flesh of Jesus. This is called "transubstantiation." Others think that the flesh of Christ is joined with the bread, thus call the process "consubstantiation." Neither of these notions is in the scriptures.
- d. When the Lord said, "This is my body," he was merely using a common figure of speech which he used in many other instances. He spoke of himself as a door (John 10:9), the way (John 14:6), the true vine (John 15:1), etc. No one understands these expressions as literal.
  - 1) The bread in the Lord's Supper is no more the flesh of Jesus than he is a literal door, vine, or road. We ought not allow denominational folly to drive us to any compromised position. The bread does *represent* the body of the Lord. It is bread before the prayer; it is bread after the prayer; it is bread while we eat it and digest it.
  - 2) "If, as Jesus spoke the words, 'this is my body,' he had suddenly disappeared, and the apostles had seen nothing but the bread, they would have understood that the body had been miraculously transformed into the loaf. But as his body was still there, and the loaf which he held in his hands was also there; and as his body still remained there after the loaf had been broken, and passed around, and eaten up, it is impossible that they could have understood him as meaning that the loaf was literally his body, and impossible that he could have intended to be so understood" (McGarvey, p.227).
  - 3) It is similar to his statement that "the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil (Matt. 13:38-39, 19-20, 22-23; Gen. 40:12; 41:26; Dan. 7:23; 8:21; 1 Cor. 10:4; Gal. 4:24).
- e. He took the cup and *gave thanks* (cf. "bless" in previous verse) for it. He told them all to drink of it. Mark 14:23 says that they each drank of it. He did not tell them to drink it all, but for all of them to drink. It seems strange that modern ways withhold the cup from the ordinary folks; this practice directly disobeys the Lord's very plain command.
  - 1) The thing they were to drink was the cup, meaning the contents of the cup. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). Matthew 26:29 calls the thing drunk the "fruit of the vine." In reference to the Lord's Supper, the word "wine" is not used in the sacred text.

- 2) "The particular type of drink at the passover was not specified at the time of our lesson; but Bible students, such as Vincent, Edersheim, and others, say that it was wine, diluted with water, 'generally in the proportion of one part to two parts of water.' There can be no reasonable doubt about the use of unfermented grape juice on the Lord's table; and that should satisfy the most discriminating mind, and especially since Jesus spoke of it as the fruit of the vine" (ALC, 1966, p.231).
  - 3) The items the Lord used in the Supper are commonly found around the world. They are very appropriate. The pale, white loaf pictures the lifeless body of Jesus on the cross. The rich color of the fruit of the vine (grape juice), aptly depicts the shed blood of the Lord.
  - 4) The Lord's Supper, when properly eaten, gives each participant a backward look to the cross, a forward look to the return of Christ, an upward look to the glorified Christ and an inward look as we examine ourselves [See Cor. 11:20-30].
- f. Compare: "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29).
- 1) The Lord declared that he would not drink the fruit of the vine (partake of the Supper) until such time as he did it in the kingdom of heaven. The Lord's Supper was intended to be eaten in the kingdom (Luke 22:18,29-30). Since the saints in the first century ate the Supper, the kingdom was present. Our eating the Supper today indicates that the kingdom is here. By virtue of the fact that the Lord's Supper is being eaten, this is absolute proof of the fact that the kingdom has been established. Yet many who eat the Supper deny the presence of the kingdom! If it is not here, neither they nor anyone else has the right to eat it.
  - 2) Notice that Jesus calls the contents of the cup "fruit of the vine," a clear statement that it was just that; it was not turned into his actual blood. The Lord's statement here is significant to the spiritually-minded. When we eat the supper today, he partakes of it with us. Hence, it is called "the communion of the blood of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16; cf. Matt. 18:20).
6. Verse 25: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."
- a. They sang a hymn and then went forth into the mount of Olives. This and all other references to New Testament worship speak of singing, never of playing an instrument. Johnson states that it was customary to conclude the passover by singing the Psalms from 115th to 118th
  - b. John 14-17 should be read in between verses 29 and 30 here; those chapters contain information which only John records, and fits in chronologically at this point.
  - c. At this point, the Lord and the eleven disciples left Jerusalem and went to the Mount of Olives. "Mount of Olives, also Mount Olivet, a limestone ridge, central Israel, east of Jerusalem, in an area which has been occupied by Israel since 1967. The ridge, reaching about 834 m (2,737 ft) at its highest point, is separated from Jerusalem only by the narrow Kidron Valley. Its name is derived from a grove of olive trees that stood on its western flank. The ridge has three summits. The northernmost, often called Mount Scopus, is the site of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1918). On the central summit is a village, once called Olivet, named at-Tur (Arabic, 'the mount'). Around this central summit, generally regarded as the Mount of Olives proper, many events of Christian history took place. At the top stands a Muslim chapel, on the supposed site of the Ascension of Jesus Christ, as described in Acts 1:2-12. On the slope is the site at which, according to tradition, Jesus wept over Jerusalem (see Luke 19:41-44) during his triumphal entry into the city" [Encarta © 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved].
- C. Mark 14:27-31: Christ Predicts The Weakness of the Disciples and Peter's Betrayals.
1. Verse 27: "And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."
    - a. The word offended has the idea of "stumbling." It is used figuratively to describe their fall when they forsook him and fled after his arrest in the garden. When the Lord voluntarily surrendered to the enemy, they fled from him.
    - b. The quotation is from Zechariah 13:7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." The Lord's enemies thought that they were the designers of the plot by which Jesus was seized, tried and crucified, but God was simply using them and the circumstances to work out his own plan. Thus, God smote the flock by using the evil men of the situation. The flock of the prophecy was the apostles; the shepherd was Christ.
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- c. This is another remarkable statement which shows the Lord's omniscience which could reveal ahead of time specific happenings which would result from the subjective actions of a group of men who were determined that the thing predicted would not come to pass.
2. Verse 28: "But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee."
    - a. Another remarkable prediction which amounts to an appointment to meet the eleven in Galilee *after* he had died and been raised from the dead! No where else in all of history has such an appointment been made and kept! Other references to the appointment are made in Matthew 28:7,10,16:
      - 1) Matthew 28:7: "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."
      - 2) Matthew 28:10: "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."
      - 3) Matthew 28:16: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them."
    - b. He had just made an unfavorable prophetic statement about them, but here he implies their regained faith by setting up the appointment to meet them in Galilee. Underlying the statement is the foreknowledge of his death and resurrection.
  3. Verse 29: "But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."
    - a. Peter, the ever-impetuous one, boldly declares that it may be the case that all of the others may be offended because of him, but he would not stumble! "We can not, for our own good, too frequently reflect on the incident, nor too earnestly pray, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (McGarvey, p.229).
    - b. Coffman points out three failings of Peter in the statement he made here: (1) He contradicted the words of Jesus, (2) he rated himself superior to others, and (3) he was relying on his own mortal strength (p.437). Peter honestly thought that no situation could develop in which he would be unable to maintain his faith in the Lord. He was not boasting, but stating the deeply felt belief in his own commitment to Christ.
    - c. Matthew 26:33-35: "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."
    - d. Luke gives additional information: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (22:31-33).
    - e. See Luke's account of this episode: "And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough" (Luke 22:33-38).
  4. Verses 30-31: "And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all."
    - a. The Lord knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. He knows the real condition of our hearts and lives (Heb. 4:12-13). Jesus announced that before the time of the cock's crowing, Peter would have denied him three times! Mark 14:31 says that before the cock should crow twice, Peter would have denied him thrice. Luke 22:34 says that Peter would deny that he knew Jesus.
    - b. The Jews spoke of the different divisions of the night by using various terms: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning" (Mark 13:35). The cockcrowing was at a time between midnight and morning, probably about three o'clock. Their roosters, therefore, would crow around three in the morning and, in the nature of these fowls, again at dawn. By the time of this second crowing, Peter would have made his third denial. The fulfillment of this wretched denial is described in the latter verses of this chapter.
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- c. "Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matt. 26:35). Peter maintains his firm conviction that he will not fall victim to this denial, and asserts his willingness to die with the Lord rather than deny him. We have no reason to disbelieve his sincerity. It was only after he had made an attempt to defend Christ that he and the others forsook him and fled. The others made similar claims to their own commitment to Christ.
- d. Johnson: "In this chapter (verses 68-72) we find the fulfillment of this prediction. It has been objected that it was forbidden to have cocks and hens in Jerusalem, but this prohibition (if observed, which is very doubtful) could not affect the Romans, who would certainly have kept fowls in the Castle of Antonia, and whence Jews could hear the cock crowing distinctly. The Romans used these birds, and even carried them with them when on the march, since they required chickens for the *auspices*. It is mentioned by one of the rabbinical writers that a cock, which had killed a little child in Jerusalem, was slain .... Mark alone gives the details—(a) that the cock should crow twice. (b) Peter's vehement, second declaration of fidelity."

#### D. Mark 14:32-42: The Lord Prays in Gethsemane.

1. Verses 32: "And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray."
  - a. The name of this place means "a place of oil presses." John 18:1 describes it as a garden. Barnes wrote:
    - 1) "The word used by John means not properly a garden for the cultivation of vegetables, but a place planted with the olive and other trees, perhaps with a fountain of water, and with walks and groves; a proper place of refreshment in a hot climate, and of retirement from the noise of the adjacent city....
    - 2) "American missionaries were at the place which is commonly supposed to have been the garden of Gethsemane in 1823. They tell us that the garden is about a stone's cast from the brook of Cedron; that it now contains eight large and venerable-looking olives, whose trunks show their great antiquity.
    - 3) "The spot is sandy and barren, and appears like a forsaken place. A low broken wall surrounds it....A recent traveller says of this place that it 'is a field or garden about fifty paces square, with a few shrubs growing in it, and eight olive-trees of great antiquity, the whole inclosed with a stone wall.
    - 4) "The place was probably fixed upon, as Dr. Robinson supposes, during the visit of Helena to Jerusalem, A.D. 326, when the places of the crucifixion and resurrection were believed to be identified. There is, however, no absolute certainty respecting the places" (Barnes, pp.285f).
  - b. On entering the garden, he left eight of the disciples at a certain place while he and the other three went farther into Gethsemane.
  - c. After the ravages wrought on Jerusalem and its environs by the Roman army when they laid siege and assaulted the city, the Garden of Gethsemane was most likely greatly changed, if not largely ruined.
2. Verses 33-34: "And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch."
  - a. Peter, James and John accompanied him to a deeper place in the garden; Jesus began to be "sorrowful and very heavy." He stated that he was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The weight he was bearing was almost overwhelming. Christ went a little further to pray.
  - b. "He felt as if he could not survive the pressure that was upon his soul, and the utter helplessness into which he had sunk is seen in the request to the chosen three, 'Tarry ye here, and watch with me.' He who had been their comforter in every hour of trouble and danger, now calls on them for the help which their wakeful sympathy would give him in the hour of his agony. Wonderful sight! The Son of God longing for the sympathy of human hearts, and leaning in a time of weakness on the arm of human friendship!" (McGarvey, p.229).
  - c. "It is perhaps in vain to attempt an explanation of the extreme agony which Jesus endured in the garden. That it was not an unmanly fear of death is sufficiently proved by the entire course of his previous life, and is demonstrated by the fortitude with which he actually endured his cruel fate when it came upon him.
    - 1) "The natural fear of death, it is true, was saddening to his soul, and the remembrance of the world's cruelty in the past, mingled with the anticipation of their still greater cruelty and their base ingratitude yet to be developed, must have greatly increased the intensity of this sadness; but when we consider all this, and all that we may by imagination distinctly realize, we feel that we are still short of the reality.
    - 2) "There was something in the dual nature of Jesus which gave him an experience when about to die for the sins of the world into which the human heart can not enter. Even when Paul attempts a remark on the subject, he contents himself with these words: 'Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death,

and was heard in that he feared; though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.' (Heb. 5:7,8.)

- 3) "Here let our attempts at explanation rest, and let us rather direct our thoughts to the everlasting bonds of love with which he has bound us by enduring agony so great in our behalf" (McGarvey, p.231).
- d. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). The Lord knew full well the awfulness of sin and the blessedness of being in fellowship with the Father. Although he was guilty of no sin, yet he bore the penalty of the sins of the world as he suffered on the cross. Since God can have no fellowship with sin (Isa. 59:1-2), he withdrew from his precious Son while he suffered alone on the cross.
- e. In the face of the cruelty of his enemies, and the indifference of the majority of Israel, and the shallow conviction of his disciples, plus the awful prospect of bearing the sins of the world and being separated from the Father during that ordeal, we can clearly see reason for the Savior's extreme sorrow and heaviness of heart!
- f. Luke 22:41-46: "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."
3. Verses 35-36: "And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."
  - a. Compare Matthew's account: "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (26:39).
  - b. "*Unto death*. Not a mere rhetorical addition. The weight of woe was ... crushing out the Saviour's life. In bearing it He was making more literal sacrifice of Himself than ever had been made on literal altar. The sacrifice would have been complete, then and there, had it not been that it appeared to Him and to His Father that certain momentous purposes of publicity, in reference to the conclusion of the tragedy, would be better subserved by shifting the scene. Remain here and watch. He had wished His chosen three to be near Him in His woe; and yet, as it advanced, He felt that He must retire even from them, and be alone with Himself and His Father. 'Of the people' none could be 'with Him' in the agony, none on the altar. Still He wished that His chosen ones should not be at a great distance, and hence He said, *remain here*. He desired to be the object of their active sympathy, and hence He said *and watch*" [Johnson].
  - c. "If it be possible..." From one point of view, it was possible. He could have given up the rest of his earthly mission, renounced the cross, and thus disobeyed God. He could have called for the twelve legions of angels to deliver him from the enemy.
    - 1) But such was impossible if he intended to obey his Father. "If that purpose, the salvation of men, could have been accomplished without it, the cup both could and would have passed from him" (McGarvey, p.230).
    - 2) It was the Father's will that his Son go through with the plan established from eternity; there was no other way possible for the purposes of God to be fulfilled.
  - d. The devil was not privy to God's long-kept-secret plan of providing a way of escape from sin by the death of his Son. Satan worked feverishly to bring about the Lord's death, only to be thwarted time and again. But now he seemed to be having everything go his way; he later learned that he had been utterly defeated by the omnipotent, omniscient God. But for now he could take delight in the prospect of killing God's Son and gaining even greater ascendancy over the world. If Satan was privy to God's plan, why did God speak of it in such veiled language? Could Satan eavesdrop on the Lord's private conversations with the disciples in which he revealed that he would be betrayed and crucified? If so, why did not the devil work to prevent the crucifixion instead of promoting it?
  - e. The word "cup" is a figurative description of the travail he was facing. In ancient times it was common to execute criminals by forcing them to drink a cup of poison.
    - 1) The famous Socrates of history was compelled to drink hemlock. (See also Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15).

- 2) Rommel, the famous German general of the Second World War, was forced to imbibe poison, when Hitler thought this great man had been part of the group which attempted to assassinate the Chancellor in July of 1944.
- f. Christ stated his willingness that God's will be done in all things; in no way, and at no time, did he ever seek to usurp God's authority, or try to make the Father's will null and void (Cf. Rom. 15:1-3; Heb. 10:7,9). His agonizing prayer, followed by his acceptance of the "cup," show that his death was entirely voluntary (John 10:17-18).
4. Verses 37-38: "And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."
  - a. Going a little farther into the garden, he left the three to wait and watch. They were to wait while he prayed, and watch for the approach of the enemy whom the Lord knew to be coming. Luke 22:41 says he went about a stone's cast from the disciples, and kneeled down to pray. Matthew's account says that he fell on his face. Putting the two pictures together we can visualize Jesus first falling to his knees and then prostrating himself upon the ground.
  - b. This is a picture of reverence for God, humility in view of his forthcoming ordeal, and great sorrow over the entire prospect. Since the Savior saw the great need for the strength that can come only through prayer, how Christ stated his willingness that God's will be done in all things; in no way, and at no time, did he ever seek to usurp God's authority, or try to make the Father's will null and void (Cf. Rom. 15:1-3; Heb. 10:7,9). His agonizing prayer, followed by his acceptance of the "cup," show that his death was entirely voluntary (John 10:17-18).
5. Verses 39-40: "And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him."
  - a. Finished with his prayer, Jesus returned to the three disciples only to find them sleeping. Luke 22:45 attributes their slumber to sorrow. Adding to that, they had been very busy for several days and had been up all night. They had heard some very disconcerting statements from Jesus, including the fact that the temple would be cast down, that he would be betrayed and crucified, that one of the twelve would be the traitor, that they would all be offended because of him, and that Peter would deny him. Added to that was the unusual sight of seeing Christ in such a sorrowful state of mind. Under such conditions, we may well understand their inability to remain awake and alert. But the Lord had expected them to do so! He rebuked them for being unable to watch with him "one hour."
  - b. "Though sinking under the weight of his own sorrow, he forgets not the danger which threatens his disciples. He exhorts them to watch for it and against it, and to pray that they 'enter not into temptation;' that is, into the power and dominion of the temptation which was coming. They, as they awaken full of self-reproach, he apologizes for them by the remark, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (McGarvey, p.230).
6. Verses 41-42: "And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand."
  - a. He returned to his former location and prayed again. "It should be particularly observed that Christ did not repeat this triple prayer over and over in rote fashion; but on the other hand, after each heart-breaking petition, he paused, sought companionship, and waited for God's answer...
    - 1) "Repeated' prayers are indeed acceptable, provided they are *prayers*. Furthermore, there is absolutely no precedent for rote prayers, mumbled or shouted over and over, without intermission. Christ did nothing like that; and one needs a strong imagination to find any permission in the Lord's thrice-repeated prayer for any such thing as that exhibited in the Rosary....
    - 2) "There is a definite progression in the prayers, and they were, in each case, separated by intervals of time sufficient for Christ to return to the sleeping disciples. Add to this the significant change in the second prayer from the first, and a probable further change in the third from the second, and this solemn triple prayer plainly refutes the type of glib, rote prayer it is alleged to allow" (Coffman, pp.440-442).
  - b. He found the disciples sleeping once again, "for their eyes were heavy." He offered a similar prayer again, "saying the same words." That is, the tenor of the prayer was akin to those two which preceded it.
  - c. Luke 22:42-46 offers the added information that an angel came and strengthened him, and that his prayers were offered in agony and earnestness, and that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." "Agony" is from the same word used in Luke 13:24 ("strive"): "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

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**E. Mark 14:43-52: Jesus is Arrested.**

1. Verse 43: “And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.”
    - a. John 18:2-9: “And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”
    - b. Luke 22:47-48: “And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”
    - c. The movements of Judas, after the Last Supper, we may readily picture to ourselves in their outline. Going immediately to Caiaphas, or to some other leading member of the Sanhedrin, he informs him where Jesus is, and announces that he is ready to fulfill his compact. It was not their intention to arrest Christ during the feast, lest there should be a popular tumult (Matt. 26:5); but, now that an opportunity offered of seizing him secretly at dead of night, when all were asleep or engaged at the paschal meal, his enemies could not hesitate. Judas knew the place, for it was a frequent resort of Jesus with his disciples. He had been there oftentimes. No hallowed associations with that sacred spot deterred his treason for one moment. [See Johnson, p.281].
    - d. It was necessary for Judas to identify Jesus directly, for the garden would be dark and his exact location within the garden would be unknown to the posse. Not everyone had been close enough to Jesus to quickly identify him. Christ did not seek out this out-of-the way site to conceal himself from his enemies. They had already made an agreement with Judas to deliver the Lord into their hands.
    - e. Johnson’s notes on John about the multitude:
      - 1) It consisted (1) of the band (John 18 :3,12), or Roman cohort, which, consisting of 300 to 600 men, was quartered in the tower of Antonia, overlooking the temple, and ever ready to put down any tumult or arrest any disturber. Probably so much of the band as could be spared was present. (2) There were the captains of the temple (Luke 22 : 52), with their men, who guarded the temple and kept order. (3) Some of the chief priests and elders (Luke 22 : 52). (4) And, finally, their servants, such as Malchus.
      - 2) The priests, ignorant of the spirit and purposes of Jesus, expected resistance. The "lanterns and torches" show that they expected that he might hide in the dark shadows of the valleys and crags. Otherwise they would not have been required when there was the full passover moon.
    - f. It might have been that Judas and his band checked the upper room first, for this was where the Lord had been when sinful disciple left to get his little army. But knowing that usual place where Jesus and the apostles often resorted to spend the night, he went on to Gethsemane. It appears that Judas was now so perverted in his mind that he felt no pain of conscience at this time. Later, he became so overwhelmed with sorrow that he hanged himself: “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:3-5).
    - g. The identifying sign by which Judas would reveal Jesus to his mob was a kiss.
      - 1) Luke 22:47: “And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.”
      - 2) Matthew 26:48-49: “Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.”
    - h. Woods: “The participation of the Roman cohort along with the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin) in the arrest of Jesus, thus involved both Jew and Gentile in this wicked scheme to destroy him who alone could give the world the peace and joy for which it yearns but will not seek in the proper way” (John, p.370).
  2. Verses 44-45: “And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.”
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- a. The kiss, the usual action of affection and fidelity, was misused by Judas as the means of identifying the sinless victim to a multitude of enemies who had wicked intentions toward our Lord. Thus, Judas reached the depth of hypocrisy, pretending love but demonstrating hatred.
  - b. John 18:5-6: "They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground."
    - 1) The spokesman for the mob answered, that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth. Notice that the Lord did not try to hide his identity; he stepped forth and identified himself. In fact, there would have been no need for the kiss from the depraved betrayer. Jesus fearlessly acknowledged that he was the one they sought. He showed not the least particle of fear! The Lord's supernatural powers were not unknown to this multitude; this would explain the terror that caused the men to go backward and fell on the ground. We are also told that Judas was standing there with them.
    - 2) "Was standing with them ... suggests that John could still remember, over the gulf of years, the traitor, standing there in the flickering torchlight, his very presence with the Lord's enemies stabbing the hearts of them who had been his friends" (Coffman).
    - 3) Because inspiration placed him directly on the scene, as the guide to them who came for the Lord, he could not cut himself off from his complicity and guilt!
  - c. The strength of his reputation of Jesus likely contributed to the fear with which the men were overcome. Judas certainly knew of the miraculous powers the Lord had shown on many occasions. He may have expected the Lord to defend himself with some powerful miracle. This remarkable out-flashing of Jesus' power explains why the arresting party so readily consented to permit the apostles to leave without being arrested. It was perfectly clear to that entire company that Jesus could do anything, and therefore they allowed his arrest upon his own terms, not theirs. Can there be any other possible explanation of why the whole group was not arrested? It will be further noted that Jesus referred to his prevention of their arrest as a fulfillment of his prophetic words in the great prayer (John 17:12); and from this the deduction stands that if the apostles had been arrested they might have been killed also. [Coffman on John].
  - d. Then follows a scene designed to show all the world that the Lord laid down his own life. His foemen were powerless in his hands. As he answers, either his majesty and their own terror so impressed them, that, awed, they fell backward to the earth .... Then the Lord submitted himself "as a lamb to the slaughter," and his power is not again exerted until he rises from the tomb, except to heal the smitten servant of the high priest. [Johnson, p.262).
3. Verses 46-47: "And they laid their hands on him, and took him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear."
    - a. Our Lord was passive toward them; he personally offered no resistance. "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:21-23).
    - b. Mark reports that one of the disciples, having a sword used it to cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. We are given more information by John: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear" (John 18:10). Prior to the events on the Pentecost day following the Lord's resurrection, Peter was known as being forward and impetuous, quick to speak and to act.
    - c. Luke 22:47-53: "And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."
      - 1) Woods: From Luke we learn that following the deceitful kiss of Judas the question was raised, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" and very likely before the Saviour replied Peter promptly slashed out with it thus severing the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Peter's purpose is clear; he intended to cut the man's head off and would have but for the fact that Malchus dodged to the left thus causing the sharp blade of the weapon to come between the head and the ear.
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- 2) The detail of this narrative is remarkable, rendering it impossible to have been contrived. In undesigned coincidence, the possession of the sword is explained; the name of the apostle who wielded it given; the identity of the person Peter struck is mentioned; his relationship to the high priest is included and the fact that it was the right ear which was cut off is not overlooked. This is the report of an inspired eyewitness.
  - 3) The possession of the sword itself, during the feast, was in violation of Jewish law but the apostle undoubtedly justified it because of the imminent peril the entire company of disciples felt. The action was rash, in conflict with the nature and purpose of the Lord's mission and threatened its future.
  - 4) Jesus quickly acted to counteract its effects. Luke informs us that Jesus touched the ear of Malchus and "healed him," thus replacing it. There is some reason to conclude that the ear, though severed, was still attached by the skin to Malchus' face from the fact that Jesus, in performing the miracle, is said to have touched it in the act of restoring it.
- d. We are not inclined to speculate about what happened to Malchus in the time following this important event in his life. We are not told any more about his life going forward than we are told about Barrabas after he was released from custody by Pilate (Matt. 27:20-26). We would have been told about these matters if there was anything important for us to know. "Abbott surmises that the attack on the guard followed their sudden terror. All the disciples were eager to make it (Luke 22:49), though Peter was the only one who carried the will into action. In Luke 22:49. Peter first asks if they shall fight. He waits not for the answer, but impelled by the natural courage of his heart, and taking no heed of the odds against him, aims a blow at one, probably the foremost of the band, the first that was daring to lay profane hands on the sacred person of the Lord" (Johnson, pp.262f).
- e. John tells us that, "The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (18:11). We are given the name of the high priest's servant—Malchus. John reports that it was this man's right ear that was injured, which Luke tells us the Lord healed. Instead of receiving a commendation from Jesus, Peter was rebuked for his impulsive act. He did not tell the apostle to destroy or throw away the sword, but to return it to its sheath.
- f. Matthew adds this: "And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (26:51-54).
- g. McGarvey:
- 1) "As it is not true in history that all *individuals* who take the sword perish with the sword we must understand this remark rather of organized communities of men, both political and religious. In this sense the statement has proved true, so far as history has had time to test it. Every kingdom which was built up in ancient times by violence has perished, and doubtless those of modern times will. Popery, also, which established itself by the sword and the fagot, has been compelled at last to succumb to military power, and will probably be eventually overthrown by the same instrumentality. So with Moham-medanism.
  - 2) "It should be further observed here, that the reason for commanding Peter to put up his sword, was not drawn from the circumstances of the case. It was not because the use of the sword would prevent Jesus from dying for the world; nor because its use was wrong in the cause of Jesus but innocent in other causes; but because '*all* who take the sword shall perish with the sword.' The universality of the proposition made it applicable to the case of Peter. The statement has the form of a prediction, and the force of a prohibition in reference to appeals to the sword, whether by churches, nations, or other organized bodies of men" (McGarvey, pp.232f).
- h. The Lord never intended for his cause to be propagated or defended by carnal weapons; he never intended that his people avenge themselves on their enemies by the use of such means (Rom. 12:17-21; 2 Cor. 10:4-5). But notice that the Lord did not tell Peter to throw away the sword; he simply told him to put it back in its place. This suggests that there is a proper place for the sword (Rom. 13:1ff; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).
- 1) Romans 12:17-21: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

- 2) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: “(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”
  - 3) 1 Peter 2:13-17: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”
- i. Woods:
- 1) “Rivers of blood have been shed by great armies in defense of religion and in defiance of this edict of the Saviour. His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36); and it is, therefore, not to be propagated by worldly means.
  - 2) “This includes, but is by no means limited to the use of the munitions of war; it embraces every human device to which men may resort as substitutes for the gospel which alone is God's power to save. (Rom. 1:16.) Ornate and expensive church buildings, detailed and complex organizational efforts and psychological schemes are all under the ban of him who ordained that it is by the preaching of the gospel that men are to believe. (1 Cor. 1:21)” (p.373).
- j. There were at least four reasons assigned by the Lord why Peter's method was inappropriate:
- 1) It was the Father's will that he should go "by way of the cross."
  - 2) The use of violence prompts to opposing violence and they that take the sword shall perish by it.
  - 3) Peter's pitiful effort could not possibly achieve its purpose; were such a proper defense Jesus could call twelve legions of angels to his side.
  - 4) The plan must proceed so that the scriptures may be fulfilled since in them is revealed the immutable counsel of God. [*ibid.*].
4. Verses 48-49: “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.”
- a. We are told by John (18:12) that they bound the Lord, although he had offered no resistance. Christ remonstrated with the posse, that they came out against him with swords and staves, to arrest him. He was no criminal. He represented no threat to the Jewish or Roman authorities.
  - b. Why did they not arrest Jesus as he taught at the temple? The Jewish enemies of Christ feared that this would cause a popular uprising; the people perceived the Lord to be a prophet.
5. Verse 50: “And they all forsook him, and fled.”
- a. The prophecy that must be fulfilled was the one predicting the scattering of the disciples of the Lord. Compare: “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Matt. 26:31).
  - b. The disciples saw that nothing was to prevent his arrest. He had forbidden their defending him by carnal means, and had even healed the ear of Malchus (Luke 22:51). "In their alarm the disciples forgot the prediction about their dispersion like sheep when the shepherd is smitten ... or else they thought it was best to fulfill it; and Jesus had himself demanded for them the privilege of retreat, by saying, 'If you seek me, let these go their way.' (John 18:8)" (McGarvey, p.233).
  - c. Notice that Matthew [26:56] included himself in the report that *all* the disciples forsook him and fled. This is another of the many evidences that the Bible is inspired, for what man would have written a record in which he convicted himself of such a cowardly act? Subsequent records show that Peter and John recovered enough to be near the Lord during some of his forthcoming trials (cf. John 18:15).
  - d. "If Jesus had been put to death after violent resistance, or after exhausting all means within his reach to escape death, he could not have been preached to the world as a voluntary sacrifice for sin; and his cross, if robbed of this element, would have been robbed of the chief part of its power over men. In the preceding section,
- 1) “Matthew has exhibited more fully than before the fact that his death was voluntary. Again and again, within the section, have we seen Jesus referring to it as an event about to take place; the symbols which are to commemorate it throughout all time had been appointed; the final consent of his soul, after a protracted struggle in prayer, had been given; all aid looking to his release, whether from earth or from

heaven, had been declined; and he now extended his hands to receive the bonds which were to be loosed only at the foot of the cross.

- 2) "The second object of the section is to show that the death of Jesus, which was thus voluntary on his part, was brought about by malice and corruption on the part of his enemies. It shows that the plot for his arrest was instigated by malice and tainted with hypocrisy (3-5); that it was rendered practicable by bribery and corruption, as exhibited in the covenant with Judas; and that its execution was marked by that cowardice which usually attends corrupt transactions. All of these circumstances constitute an argument for his innocence, by proving the malice, the hypocrisy, and the cowardice of his enemies" (McGarvey, pp.233f).
- e. Our Lord plainly affirmed that he willingly accepted the cross, with all that was entailed in it: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18).
6. Verses 51-52: "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."
  - a. Mark tells of an unidentified young man who fled this garden scene and eluded the efforts of the guards to apprehend him (14:51-52). It has commonly been postulated that this young man was Mark himself.
  - b. From this mode of designating the person, we infer that this young man was not one of the twelve; but who he was, and how he happened to be present, can be only a matter of conjecture. Among the many conjectures which have been advanced, the most plausible is that which supposes him to have been Mark himself. As the guards laid hold on none of the other disciples, it is probable that his loose dress, only "a linen cloth cast about his naked body," attracted their attention, and that they seized hold of it only for mischief. When he slipped out of the cloth and ran away naked, it was fine sport for them, though any thing else to him. [McGarvey, p.357].

#### F. Mark 14:53-65: Our Lord Before the High Priest.

1. Verse 53: "And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes."
  - a. Other accounts:
    - 1) John 18:24: "Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest."
    - 2) Luke 22:54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off."
    - 3) Matthew 26:57: "And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."
  - b. The Great Sanhedrin had already hurriedly assembled in the palace of Caiaphas (Mk. 14:53). Luke 22:66 says that they had come together as soon as it was day (but this is a reference to their second gathering as in Matthew 27:1: "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.")
  - c. John reports that it was very early when this trial was over (18:28), so the trial was held in violation of the Jewish legal system since it took place before the morning sacrifice. It was held at a location unauthorized for the Sanhedrin to meet, the palace of Caiaphas. The scribes, elders, chief priests—the entire Sanhedrin was present.
  - d. John 18:12-13: "Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year."
  - e. "So the band and the chief captain, and the officers of the Jews, seized Jesus and bound him, and led him to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, who was high priest that year" (ASV). The large group seized the Lord, not knowing whether he would personally resist. Their puny bonds could not keep him under their control any more than the various bonds were able to control Samson.
    - 1) Judges 16:9: "Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known."
    - 2) Judges 16:12: "Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread."

- 3) What kept Jesus bound as he was led into Jerusalem was the same thing that kept him on the cross: His determination to do the will of the Father!
- f. “Though not mentioned by John, and for the details of another tragic action we must look to Matthew and Mark, it was at this point that not only Peter, but the rest of the disciples, with the possible exception of John, took to their heels and fled.
- 1) “This evidences the fact that they simply were not psychologically prepared for the events of this tragic night. In view of their confusion of mind, the vagueness with which they viewed the work and mission of the Lord, and the surprising turn of events culminating in the seizure of their Leader, it is not surprising that each, thinking of his own safety, determined to put himself beyond the reach of the authorities.
  - 2) “They had been forbidden to defend the Lord; at the moment, their choice seemed to be either to remain close to the Saviour and thus submit to possible arrest themselves or to escape while they could; and they may have drawn from the words of Jesus in verse 8 that this is what he expected them to do” (Woods, pp.374f).
- g. Notice this depiction of Annas from Edersheim’s *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*:
- 1) “No figure is better known in contemporary Jewish history than that of Annas; no person deemed more fortunate or successful, but none also more generally execrated than the late High-Priest. He had held the Pontificate for only six or seven years; but it was filled by not fewer than five of his sons, by his son-in-law Caiaphas, and by a grandson. And in those days it was, at least for one of Annas' disposition, much better to have been than to be High-Priest. He enjoyed all the dignity of the office, and all its influence also, since he was able to promote to it those most closely connected with him. And, while they acted publicly, he really directed affairs, without either the responsibility or the restraints which the office imposed.
  - 2) “His influence with the Romans he owed to the religious views which he professed to his open partisanship of the foreigner, and to his enormous wealth. The Sadducean Annas was an eminently safe Churchman, not troubled with any special convictions nor with Jewish fanaticism, a pleasant and a useful man also who was able to furnish his friends in the Praetorium with large sums of money. We have seen what immense revenues the family of Annas must have derived from the Temple-booths, and how nefarious and unpopular was the traffic. The names of those bold, licentious, unscrupulous, degenerate sons of Aaron were spoken with whispered curses.
  - 3) “Without referring to Christ's interference with that Temple-traffic, which, if His authority had prevailed, would, of course, have been fatal to it, we can understand how antithetic in every respect a Messiah, and such a Messiah as Jesus, must have been to Annas. He was as resolutely bent on His Death as his son-in-law, though with his characteristic cunning and coolness, not in the hasty, bluff manner of Caiaphas.
  - 4) “It was probably from a desire that Annas might have the conduct of the business, or from the active, leading part which Annas took in the matter; perhaps for even more prosaic and practical reasons, such as that the Palace of Annas was nearer to the place of Jesus' capture, and that it was desirable to dismiss the Roman soldiery as quickly as possible, that Christ was first brought to Annas, and not to the actual High-Priest.”
2. Verse 54: “And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.”
- a. Compare: "But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end" (Matt. 26:58).
  - b. Peter followed far behind the band which had arrested the Lord; when he came to the palace, he went in and sat with the servants. John 18:15-18 shows that another disciple (John) preceded him into the place since he was known by the High Priest: “And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.”
  - c. At first, Peter stood outside until John went to the entrance and spoke to the lady at the door, who permitted Peter to enter the courtyard where the servants and officers were gathered. They were all assembled around a fire for it was cold. Peter was convinced that the Lord's end was imminent, but at least he was willing to be in the near vicinity of the trial to see the end.
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- d. The Lord was now before Caiaphas, the man who was recognized as high priest by the Roman authority. We are told that Annas had been deposed and his son-in-law Caiaphas had taken his place.
- e. The Jewish Council [see Johnson]:
- 1) The court convened to try Jesus Christ was the Sanhedrim, or Sanhedrin. It consisted of chief priests, that is, the heads of the twenty-four priestly classes; scribes, that is, rabbis learned in the literature of the *church*; and elders, who were chosen from amongst the most influential of the *laity*, Jewish tradition puts the number of members at seventy-one. The high priest usually presided: the vice-president sat at his right hand. The other councillors were ranged in front of these two in the form of a semicircle. Two scribes or clerks attended, who on criminal trials registered the votes, one for acquittal, the other for condemnation.—Abbott. [Notice the italicized misnomers].
  - 2) The priests were there, whose greed and selfishness he had exposed; and, worse than all, the worldly, skeptical Sadducees, the most cruel and dangerous of opponents, whose empty sapience he had confuted.—Farrar.
  - 3) The Sanhedrin had power to try those charged with capital offences, but it had no power to execute the sentence of death (John 18:31)
3. Verses 55-56: “And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.”
- a. Compare: "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days" (Matt. 26:59-61).
  - b. The authorities sought for false witnesses to bring some serious charge against the Lord; even in their depravity, they did not try to murder him without a semblance of legal procedure. By their seeking out false witnesses, they admitted that they were merely disposing of an enemy, not seeking justice. But they found no false witnesses *whose testimony agreed* (Mark 14:56). They were looking for some kind of testimony affirmed by two or more witnesses on some charge that would give them the right to execute Jesus.
  - c. The members of this August court were to be defenders of the accused as well as judges, and under no circumstances could they originate charges against the defendant. Yet these men acted more the part of prosecuting attorneys than judges: "The chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death."
  - d. The order of the events leading up to the authorization for his crucifixion by Pilate: After the arrest, and its incidents:
    - 1) Jesus was taken first to the house of Annas, ex-high priest (John 18:13),
    - 2) Next to the palace of Caiaphas, Peter and John following (John 18:15).
    - 3) Here was a preliminary examination before Caiaphas (John 18:18-24).
    - 4) The trial before the council, illegal because held at night—before three o'clock the cock-crowing (Matt. 26:59-65. Mark 14:55-64).
    - 5) Peter's three denials during the trial (Matt. 26:69-75. Mark 14:66-72).
    - 6) After the Sanhedrin had pronounced him guilty, it suspends its session till break of day.
    - 7) During this interval Jesus is exposed to the insults of his enemies (Matt. 26:67, 68. Mark 14:65. Luke 22:63-65).
    - 8) At the dawn of day the Sanhedrin reassembles (Matt. 27:1. Mark 15:1. Luke 22:66).
    - 9) After hearing Christ's confession again, he is formally condemned to death for blasphemy (Luke 22:66-71.)
    - 10) He is bound, and sent to Pilate (Mark 15 :1)
4. Verses 57-59: “And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.”
- a. John 2:19-22: “Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”
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- 1) "Jesus met the demand for a 'sign' of his mission by pointing to the eventual resurrection of his body. This would be the ultimate test of his claims. By it he was declared to be the Son of God with power. (Rom. 1:4.) By the temple, Jesus meant his body; by raising it up, his resurrection from the grave. These unbelieving Jews either could not, or would not, attempt to follow him and they were thus without any comprehension of his prophetic and symbolic words" (Woods, p.56).
  - 2) Their reply was to tell Jesus that the temple had been under construction for forty-six years, and scoffed at the notion that he could rebuild it again in three days! Johnson: "It had been forty-six years since Herod the Great had begun his work. At this time the work was not fully completed and workmen were still engaged on some of its parts. It was eighty years from the time it was begun before it was fully completed by Herod Agrippa II. A. D. 64.... To the obstinate and hostile unbelievers he often spoke in parables. To honest seekers for truth his language was plain and simple" [p.55].
  - 3) Following his resurrection and their new-found faith in the risen Savior, his disciples remembered. At the time of this passage, they did not comprehend this powerful truth. When they saw and talked with him after the resurrection, then they believed the Scripture which foretold his death and resurrection, though they had never understood it before.
- b. There were many who came to bear witness against the Lord, but their testimony did not agree (Mark 14:56; Mt. 26:60). Finally, two false witnesses were found who twisted the Lord's statement concerning the destruction of the temple, which he would raise up in three days (Mark 14:57-58). John 2:18-22 reports the statement and shows he was not speaking of the literal temple, but his physical body.
  - c. "These two came nearer giving the required testimony than the others: but while their statement, if true, would have convicted Jesus of what might be considered a very boastful speech, it could hardly have been construed as blasphemy; and consequently, though Caiaphas demanded of Jesus, in a tone of triumph, 'Answerest thou nothing,' he was evidently unwilling to rest the case on this testimony" (McGarvey, p.235).
5. Verse 60: "And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?"
    - a. NKJ: And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:60-62).
    - b. But even the testimony of these two men did not agree, so could not be used. Caiaphas tried to bluff Jesus by railing on him, saying, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" The chief judge was being the prosecutor.
    - c. Compare: "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:63-64).
    - d. Jesus wisely refused to respond to these questions. To have answered would have been to give up his legal rights. The Hebrew legal system said a man could not be required to give evidence against himself. The High Priest demanded whether Jesus were the "Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (Mark 14:61-62).
    - e. Matthew reports his use of the word "adjure." This meant "to strongly demand an oath." The high priest understood correctly that Jesus had made claims about being the Son of God. The demand of Caiaphas made it imperative that the Lord give an answer. If he had remained silent he would be admitting to being an imposter. But to confess the truth would mean to be condemned to death. The Lord courageously confessed the truth. What a show the high priest put on! He claimed to be utterly shocked and dismayed over the claim Jesus made, but actually he was delighted to hear the Savior say it.
    - f. Nothing was said or done about the Lord's claim; he could have fully vindicated his statement, but these men had no interest in truth; they had already been given more than ample evidence to prove that Jesus is the Christ, which they had rejected out of hand. They had known of, and probably some of them had personally seen, the miracles of Jesus. By this time in the Lord's ministry, even his avowed enemies did not deny the reality of his miracles; they simply ignored the evidence, or attributed the power behind them to the devil! Their modern counterparts are legion.
  6. Verses 61-62: "But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."
    - a. Johnson:

- 1) It was no part of his duty, as a defendant, to unravel the contradictions of his unprincipled accusers. Our Lord was silent; for in answering he must have opened to them the meaning of his words, which was not the work of this hour, nor fitting for that audience. Truth is never mute for want of arguments of defense, but sometimes silent, out of holy wisdom. *And said unto him, "I adjure thee"* (Matt. 26:63). This was the regular legal formula for administering oaths, and was binding on witnesses without their answering (Lev. 5:1). *Art thou the Christ?* Caiaphas became desperate, and adopted a resource which our own rules of evidence would declare most infamous, and which was also wholly adverse to the first principles of Mosaic jurisprudence, and the like of which occurs in no circumstance of Hebrew history. It was that of putting the prisoner upon his oath to answer questions framed for his own crimination.—Kitto.
  - 2) *And Jesus said, I am.* His declaration of his divine Sonship constitutes Christ's solemn testimony to himself, uttered at the momentous crisis of his life, under the solemn sanction of an oath, in the course of judicial proceedings, in the presence of the highest council of the realm, in the far more sacred presence of God and his recording angels, at the peril of his life, and with a clear comprehension of the meaning which not only priests and people would attach to it, but with which it would be forever invested by humanity. If it had not been true it would have been blasphemy—Abbott.
  - 3) *Ye shall see.* The "shall ye see" is to the council, the representatives of the chosen people, so soon to be judged by him to whom all judgment is committed.... ["The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31, ASV)].
    - b. "Had Jesus answered, and explained what he really meant by the speech about building the temple in three days...it would have made his cause appear no better in the eyes of his judges, and it would have given his enemies a fresh notice, which he did not wish them to have, of his intended resurrection. He wisely chose, therefore, to hold his peace" (McGarvey, *ibid.*). The Lord responded first by plainly saying, "Thou hast said." This was the Hebrew way of an affirmative reply. Mark 14:62 has Jesus stating, "I am." He further announced that the time was coming when they would see him sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.
    - c. "Not content with answering the question, Jesus announces another meeting between himself and the assembled elders, in which their relative positions will be reversed; then he will be on the right hand of power, and they will be the prisoners before his bar" (*ibid.*). "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7; cf. Acts 17:30-31; Mt. 25:31ff; 2 Cor. 5:10).
7. Verses 63-64: "Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death."
- a. Compare: "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death" (Matt. 26:65-66).
  - b. *The high priest rent his clothes.* The act was almost as much a formal sign of condemnation as the putting on of the black cap by an English judge.—Plumptre. The practice of rending the clothes on occasions of supposed blasphemy was based on 2 Kings 18:37. Originally it was a natural outburst of intense grief, and was involuntary; but at a later period it became a mere form regulated by special rules. The rent made in the garment was from the neck downward, and about a span in length. The body dress and outer garment were left untouched.—Lange. *What need we any further witnesses?* They had called but one true witness; his testimony they rejected; and yet on the strength of his testimony they were about to condemn him! [See Johnson].
  - c. The Sanhedrin was forbidden to investigate any capital crime during the night, and according to the Roman law a sentence pronounced before dawn was not valid. This test vote, however, they considered as settling the question.—Schaff. The council now adjourned, to meet at daybreak, when they could legally pronounce the sentence. In the mean time occurred the maltreatment by his lawless enemies described in the next verse. The daybreak meeting, at which the sentence already pronounced was formally ratified, is described in Luke 22:66-71. John only relates the examination before Annas; Matthew and Mark give the account of the packed and illegal meeting of the Sanhedrin before day, presided over by Caiaphas. Luke only gives the account of the ratification meeting of the Sanhedrin at the dawn of day. All the accounts must be studied in order to get the full account of the Jewish condemnation of the Lord. [*ibid.*].

- d. The high priest quickly changed the charge from sedition (destroying the temple, taking over as king, uprooting the established order) to blasphemy. "Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (Mark 14:63-64). There was immediate, unanimous agreement that he be put to death. They were perverting justice by going against the legal principle. The Talmud provided that a "simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilty, rendered on the day of trial, had the effect of an acquittal."
- e. They had also originated the charge of blasphemy, and had compelled the Lord to offer testimony that was self-incriminating, both of which violated the Hebrew Law of Jurisprudence. This was not a court of justice, but of injustice. "Here Caiaphas acted the hypocrite. He was glad to hear the statement of Jesus; it was the answer he was trying to extort from him; and yet he pretended to be exceedingly shocked when he heard it" (ibid.).
- f. "Amazingly, if Christ's claim as the divine Messiah was untrue, that verdict was altogether proper and correct [that he was worthy of death]....Without calling further witnesses, not even Christ; without waiting for an instant, let alone the legally required three days, the judge put the question to the court, and the pre-determined verdict was promptly given....In all history, the Hebrews were the leaders in religious thought, and the Romans were leaders in the fields of law and government. How unspeakably tragic that humanity could so wretchedly fail that Roman justice and Hebrew religion should alike concur in sentencing the Son of God to die for testifying under oath to the truth of that sublime fact that he was actually the Son of God" (Coffman, pp.455f).
- g. "The law under which they condemned him was that recorded in Le. 24:10-16, which sentenced him that was guilty of blasphemy to death by *stoning*. The chief priests, however, were unwilling to excite a popular tumult by stoning him, and they therefore consulted to deliver him to the Romans to be crucified, *under the authority of the Roman name*, and thus to prevent any excitement among the people" (Barnes, p.295).
8. Verse 65: "And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands."
- a. Compare: "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" (Matt. 26:67-68). To spit on the face is at least one of the highest means of insult; to slap another is also intended as an affront. This was all done in a semi-riotous setting, totally unfitting for a session of the Jewish Supreme Court! This kind of abuse heaped upon the victim may have been common in that cruel time.
- b. Their behavior now degenerated to show their true condition of heart: They began to spit upon him, to mock him, and to strike him. What a disgrace by the highest court in the land! To appreciate just how perverse these men were we need only to imagine such conduct by our own U.S. Supreme Court. If not personally done by the Sanhedrin, this cruel treatment of Christ was at least condoned by this haughty council.
- c. Luke 22:63-65: "And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." "The spitting and buffeting were done, not by the members of the court, but by 'the men that held Jesus.'" (Luke 22:63-65.) Matthew speaks indefinitely, not using the pronoun in close connection with the preceding context. He also omits the blindfolding mentioned by Luke; about his statement that they demanded, 'Prophecy unto us; who is he that smote thee,' implies the blindfolding. Had he not been blindfolded he could have seen who smote him. Here one of the sacred narratives incidentally supplements the other, and furnishes evidence for the truthfulness of both" (McGarvey, p.236).
- d. To give a semblance of proper procedure, the Sanhedrin held another session in the morning before sending the Lord to Pilate for their sentence to be executed: "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death" (Matt. 27:1; cf. Luke 22:66-71; Mark 15:1). This was the official pronouncement of their verdict, but they did not have authority to execute anyone (John 18:31).
- e. "The word *prophecy* does not mean only to foretell future events, although that is the proper meaning of the word, but also to declare anything which cannot be known by natural knowledge or without revelation. Luke adds, 'And many other things blasphemously spake they against him'" (Barnes, p.296).
- G. Mark 14:66-72: Peter's Denials.

1. Verses 66-67: "And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth."
  - a. The other accounts:
    - 1) Matthew 26:69-75: "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."
    - 2) Luke 22:54-62: "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."
    - 3) John 18:15-27: "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew."
  - b. Matthew says a damsel came to Peter and asserted that he was with Jesus of Galilee. Mark says that a maid of the high priest saw Peter warming himself, looked at him, and stated that he was with Jesus of Nazareth; and that the cock crew when Peter denied the allegation. Luke writes that a certain maid looked at Peter and announced, "This man was also with him." John merely states that some of those around the fire asked Peter whether he was one of the Lord's disciples. John 18:17 shows that the young lady who kept the door was one of those who charged him with being a disciple of Jesus. The Lord's prophecy was that before the cock would crow twice, Peter would have denied him thrice (Mark 14:30; Mt. 26:34). All four of the gospel writers give a report of his denial. Peter denied that he knew the Lord.
    - 1) Compare Matthew 26:70: "But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest." Peter stoutly denied the charge. We do not condone the denial the apostle made here.
    - 2) "Peter might have thought that he was wanted by the authorities for his attack on Malchus; he was frustrated and embarrassed because his plan to attend the meeting incognito had failed, and he had suffered massive psychological shock during the earlier hours of that momentous night. In view of all this, how remarkable it is that none of the gospels offered any extenuation of Peter's lapse. Whatever the reasons or temptations, they were considered subordinate to the sad facts of the denial itself" (Coffman, p.457).

- c. Compare Matthew 26:71-72: "And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man."
- 1) He removed himself from the location, possibly back into the shadows of the entrance way. This was not a porch in our sense of the word, but "was the arched passage (*phulon*) which led from the street through the front part of the building into the court" (McGarvey, *ibid.*).
  - 2) "By comparing the parallel passages the reader will see that after the charge was first made by the portress, it was repeated by quite a number of others, both male and female, and that Peter made various answers, though all amounted to but three denials" (*ibid.*). It was not necessarily the case that the young lady was intending to cause him any harm, but to identify him as a disciple of Jesus, possibly wondering at his staying so near to the Lord in his time of trouble.
  - 3) This was denial number two. He denied with an oath that he knew Jesus. Notice that this accusation does not necessarily say that it was a girl who made it. The account in Mark indicates the second one was also from a maid, but Luke's report speaks of it being a man.
  - 4) Luke 22:56-60: "But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew."
- d. Matthew 26:73-74: "And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew."
- 1) Matthew says that a little time had passed before this next charge was leveled against Peter; Luke reports that the interval of time was about one hour later. This time the spokesman accused Peter of being a Galilean which he supposed proved he was really a follower of Jesus.
  - 2) His speech betrayed him. Obviously, there was a difference in accent which identified Peter as a man of Galilee. The KJV has "bewrayeth" which is an old word for betray.
  - 3) Peter began to curse and swear. Mark's account uses the Greek word *anathematizo* which is translated "curse." This word means "to declare anathema, i.e., devoted to destruction, accursed, to curse (Mark 14:71), or to bind by a curse (Acts 23:12,14,21)" (Vine, p.262). Matthew's account uses *katanathematizo*, a strengthened form of the word Mark used. This word "denotes to utter curses against" (*ibid.*). To swear (*omnumi* or *omnuo*) is used of affirming or denying by an oath (cf. Mark 6:23; Luke 1:73; Heb. 3:11,18; 4:3; 7:21). (Vine, p.98).
  - 4) It does not necessarily follow that he was using profanity, but was very strongly denying his knowledge of Jesus. His denial constituted sin: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 10:32-33).
  - 5) Perhaps Peter had now become angry; he was certainly desperate and fearful. One can only wonder why he did not remember the words the Lord had spoken to him just hours earlier about his forthcoming denial.
  - 6) Matthew says that a little time had passed before this next charge was leveled against Peter; Luke reports that the interval of time was about one hour later. This time the spokesman accused Peter of being a Galilean which he supposed proved he was really a follower of Jesus. His speech betrayed him.
  - 7) Brother McGarvey's comment about there being several different individuals making the charge is doubtless true. At any rate, Peter made three denials.
- e. From my material on John:
- 1) Coffman:
    - a) "One of the servants of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter therefore denied again: and straightway the cock crew.
    - b) "The additional element provided by John in this episode is that of the introduction of an eyewitness of Peter's association with the Lord in the garden. The synoptics mention the Galilean accent; but, in the circumstance of one of Malchus' kinsmen having actually seen him with Jesus, there was hardly

any way Peter could deny it. Therefore, he did so with an oath, which has ever been the support of lame propositions. John softened the account of Peter's denial by leaving out any mention of the oath.”

- 2) "He was without as regards the apartment in which the Sanhedrin was in session, but within as regards the palace; for he was in the open court around which the palace was built" (McGarvey, p.236). John 18:15-18 shows that John was known to the high priest and entered his palace with Jesus; he then got Peter admitted. Mark's account places Peter "beneath" in the palace, suggesting that Jesus was inside the palace perhaps in a higher room. Matthew defines Peter's location as "without." Luke identifies the location as "in the midst of the hall" and that it was there the fire had been built. The Lord had earlier in Matthew 27 predicted Peter's denial; this section gives the fulfillment of the prophecy.
  - 3) "That the fall of Peter is recorded by all the evangelists is high proof of the honesty and candor of our sacred historians. They were willing to mention their own faults without attempting to appear better than they were. An uninspired historian would have omitted the fall of Peter and mentioned only his good qualities. This shows the difference between an inspired and an uninspired historian and is strong evidence that the Bible is from God" (C.E.W. Dorris, *Commentary on Gospel of John*, p.354).
  - 4) Inspired writers did not heap any bitter words upon Judas for his betrayal; they did not spend many words in describing the martyrdom of James; and Peter's denial is described in a simple, straight-forward manner. Matthew says a damsel came to Peter and asserted that he was with Jesus of Galilee. Mark says that a maid of the high priest saw Peter warming himself, looked at him, and stated that he was with Jesus of Nazareth; and that the cock crew when Peter denied the allegation. Luke writes that a certain maid looked at Peter and announced, "This man was also with him." John merely states that some of those around the fire asked Peter whether he was one of the Lord's disciples. John 18:17 shows that the young lady who kept the door was one of those who charged him with being a disciple of Jesus.
  - 5) The Lord's prophecy was that before the cock would crow twice, Peter would have denied him thrice (Mark 14:30; Mt. 26:34). All four of the gospel writers give a report of his denial.
  - f. "Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew" (Matt. 26:74), Peter began to curse and swear. Mark's account uses the Greek word *anathematizo* which is translated "curse." This word means "to declare anathema, i.e., devoted to destruction, accursed, to curse (Mark 14:71), or to bind by a curse (Acts 23:12,14,21)" (Vine, p.262).
  - g. "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:75). Peter remembered the Lord's words now, but a statement in Luke 22:60-62 gives the reason for his sudden remembrance—after the third denial, Jesus turned and looked at him.
    - 1) Obviously, the Lord was now visible, and perhaps during the whole trial before Caiaphas, had been visible to Peter and the others in the courtyard. At any rate, the Lord was where he could see Peter now. How this look, no animosity or reproof is suggested by Luke's description, must have pierced the soul of this apostle. It was sufficient to drive home the full enormity of his cowardly acts.
    - 2) Luke 22:60-62: "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."
  - h. Compare: "One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew" (John 18:26-27).
    - 1) This servant, whose name was Malchus, would surely recognize Peter as the one who had used a sword to cut off his ear! Though the events in the Garden took place at night, we are told that at that time of the year, the moon was shining.
    - 2) "The previous charges Peter met by simple denials; the questioners made it easy for him to do so by the form in which the query was made. Here, however, the situation becomes vastly more grave and the fearful apostle is now confronted by an eye-witness who was prepared to testify that he was indeed in the company of Jesus in the garden and had attempted to defend him with the sword .... Peter thus found himself in imminent peril of being arrested not only for being a disciple of Jesus but also for his assault to kill Malchus, the servant of the high priest" (Woods, p.381).
2. Verses 68-69: "But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them."

- a. Johnson [on John]: “As the oaths were sullyng the lips of him who had declared that he would die for the Master, the cock crew the second time to herald the approach of day. At that very moment the Lord, probably now being led to the meeting of the Sanhedrim which Luke tells us met at daylight, turned and looked on Peter with a look that pierced his soul. “The recreant disciple went out into the night, like Judas; broken down, however, by repentance instead of remorse, and ‘wept bitterly’ (Matt. 26: 75). ‘They upon whom Jesus looks mourn their misdeeds. Peter at first denied and wept not, for the Lord had not looked upon him. He a second time denied, yet wept not; for the Lord hitherto had not looked on him. He denied a third time, and Jesus looked on him and then he wept most bitterly.’—Ambrose” (p.269).
  - b. “One may well sympathize with Peter. It was none of that maid's business whether Peter was or was not a disciple of Jesus; and Peter's purpose was clearly that of observing the proceedings unrecognized; but now this nosey maid was blabbering about his being a follower of Jesus. It is evident that Peter only wanted to get her to shut up. It was thus only a little deception that he proposed at first; but once a leak in the dyke appeared, the flood quickly overwhelmed him. Peter tried to avoid further questioning by going out on the porch; but the maid saw him. As the devil's particular servant in that hour, she made it her business to run him down and pin the truth on him. Hearing the cock crow while he was on the porch did not help Peter's nerves at all; and he returned to the unequal contest with the maid. She, on her part, sounded the alarm and appealed to everybody present. From John, it is plain that a relative of Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off was in the assemblage, and he took up the questioning also. This explains the fear and panic which came upon Peter and issued in his triple denial of the Lord.” [Coffman].
3. Verse 70: “And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.”
    - a. NKJ: But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it."
    - b. There was something about Peter's accent or dialect that revealed to these listeners that he was from Galilee. The accents and dialects of many Americans can reveal the part of the country from which that come. Until the eighteenth century, the various provinces of Italy spoke their own distinctive dialect; about the same time of our war for Southern Independence, General Garibaldi caused the many provinces to be united into one nation, and made the dialect he spoke to become the national language. The people still used their original dialects as well as the official Italian tongue.
  4. Verse 71: “But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew.”
    - a. “Only Mark records the incident of the cursing and swearing; only John introduced the factor of Malchus' kinsman being in the company of accusers; only Matthew recorded the fact of Peter's language being the basis of the charge that he was from Galilee. Each sacred author made his contribution to our understanding of this tragic episode” (Coffman).
    - b. But he began to curse, *anathematizein* — 'to *anathematize*,' or wish himself accursed if what he was now to say was not true, And to swear - or to take a solemn oath, "saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak." (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)
  5. Verse 72: “And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.”
    - a. Compare: "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:75).
    - b. Peter remembered the Lord's words now, but a statement in Luke 22:60-62 gives the reason for his sudden remembrance—after the third denial, Jesus turned and looked at him. Obviously, the Lord was now visible, and perhaps during the whole trial before Caiaphas, had been visible to Peter and the others in the courtyard. At any rate, the Lord was where he could see Peter now. How this look, no animosity or reproof is suggested by Luke's description, must have pierced the soul of this apostle. It was sufficient to drive home the full extent of his cowardly acts.
    - c. Luke 22:60-62: “And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

- d. Matthew and Luke report that Peter then went out and wept bitterly. These bitter tears indicate the deep penitence he now experienced. The conversion story of Saul of Tarsus does not specifically say that that man repented, but it is obvious that he did because of his fasting and praying and by the divine dictate that no impenitent person shall be saved (Luke 13:5).
- e. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry [*elupathate*], but that ye sorrowed [*elupathate*] to repentance [*metanoian*]: for ye were made sorry [*elupathate*] after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow [*lupa*] worketh repentance [*metanoian*] to salvation not to be repented [*ametamelaton*] of: but the sorrow [*lupa*] of the world worketh death." The Greek word in Acts 2:38 is *metanonsats*. Acts 17:30 has *metanoein*.
- 1) Metanoeo: "to perceive afterwards (*meta*, after; *noeo*, to perceive); to change one's mind or purpose; always, in the N.T. involving a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except in Luke 17:3,4, of repentance from sin." (Vine, pp. 279f).
  - 2) Lupe: "grief, sorrow, is translated 'sorrow' in Luke 22:45; John 16:6,20-22; 'heaviness' in Rom. 9:2). (Vine, Vol. 4, p.53). Under *grief*, "Signifies pain, of body or mind" (Vine, Vol. 2, p.178).
  - 3) Metamelomai: "to regret." (Vine, p.268). This is the word used in Matthew 21:28-32.
- f. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow; repentance is a decision to alter one's life from that which is wrong to that which is right; it is followed by a reformed life (cf. Matt. 21:28-32; 2 Cor. 7:10; Acts 26:20; Matt. 3:8). There is a difference in worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. It is evident that Judas was afflicted with worldly sorrow when he returned the 30 pieces of silver and then hanged himself. It is just as evident that Peter was moved by godly sorrow to weep bitterly and thus repent in that process.
- g. Brother McGarvey:
- 1) "The wonder is that he did not remember the words of Jesus the moment he began to fulfill them; but the excitement of the moment rendered him oblivious of every thing except the present danger, until a cock, perhaps at roost in the very court where he was, rang out his clarion notes on the morning air, and brought back the entire speech of Jesus to Peter's memory.
  - 2) "A glance from the eye of Jesus at the same moment helped to bring him to consciousness. Overwhelmed and forced to tears, he went out, that he might hide his bitter weeping.
  - 3) It is surprising that Peter was capable of such a denial, but there are several considerations that help to account for it. When he said, the night before, that he would follow Jesus to prison and to death, he spoke his real sentiment; and that he would, under ordinary circumstances, have been true to his pledge, is proved by the fact that when the guards appeared he was ready to fight the whole band single handed. But when Jesus commanded him to put up his sword, and then allowed himself to be bound and led away, Peter foresaw the result; his hope of the coming kingdom expired, his faith in Jesus as the expected Messiah wavered, and with the loss of faith and hope he lost all courage.
  - 4) "Then, having denied once, he was driven to desperation, and plunged headlong into guilt, and until the reproachful glance of Jesus accompanying the shrill signal of the cock roused again the man that was in him, and brought him to repentance. His speedy recovery attests the nobility of his character: for the good man is not he who never sins, but he who quickly repents of sin and makes all possible atonement for it.
  - 5) "The honesty and candor of the sacred historians are strikingly exhibited in the fact that they all mention Peter's denial. When the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were published, Peter was in the midst of his career as chief of the apostles to the Circumcision; and when John's was published he had ended his career, and his memory was embalmed in the hearts of millions. His reputation was a large part of the reputation of the entire Church, and while he was still alive it would be supposed that undue mention of so discreditable an incident in his history would be offensive to him.
  - 6) "Yet, without regard either to the feelings of Peter or to the good name of the Church, they all mention it. They mention it, too, after having omitted many things, in preference to which we would suppose that they would have omitted this. An uninspired historian would have been certain to omit it, or to give the most ample apology for it" (McGarvey, pp.236f).

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## Mark 15

### A. Mark 15:1-14: Pilate, Jesus and Barrabas.

1. Verse 1: "And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate."
    - a. To give a semblance of proper procedure, the Sanhedrin held another session in the morning before sending the Lord to Pilate for their sentence to be executed. This was the official pronouncement of their verdict, but they did not have authority to execute anyone (John 18:31).
      - 1) Matthew 27:1-2: "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led *him* away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor."
      - 2) Luke 22:66-71: "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask *you*, ye will not answer me, nor let *me* go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth."
    - b. Mark and John report that it was early in the morning when these events took place. The trials before Annas and Caiaphas had occurred previously, during the night, and when daybreak came, they assembled the Sanhedrin for formal deliberations. However, they had already decided on the fate of Jesus; this present consultation was for the purpose of deciding just how they should approach Pilate to obtain his agreement to execute the Lord.
    - c. According to John 18:31, the Romans had taken away from the Jews the power of execution; that power was retained by the Roman authorities. Thus, they must convince the Roman governor Pilate that Jesus ought to be executed.
    - d. The pagan Romans would not recognize their charge of blasphemy against Christ; another charge must be manufactured. When they first approached Pilate, and he inquired as to their grievance against the accused, they asserted that he did not have to trouble himself with the details: *We wouldn't have accused him and brought him before you unless he was guilty of death* (cf. John 18:29-30).
    - e. The charges they finally decided on are set forth in Luke 23:1-2: Perverting the nation, forbidding the Jews to give tribute to Rome, and claiming to be a king. They knew that Pilate would execute Jesus if they could show that he was guilty of sedition against the government of Rome. But the burden of proof was on them, and they were unable to sustain any of these charges. "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matt. 27:18).
  2. Verses 2-3: "And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing."
    - a. Pilate held both civil and military authority. He was primarily required to collect taxes, and in certain cases, to rule in special legal cases. Paul was later brought before two different governors.
    - b. John 18:28 describes this trial taking place in Pilate's judgment hall, located in the governor's palace. He also reports that the Jews would not enter lest they be defiled and be unable to participate in the religious festivals in progress. So Pilate would speak with them a while, enter the palace to speak with Jesus, and go back out to the Jews. Apparently he was aware of the Jewish thinking, and conceded them this point, for no mention is made of any confrontation about the arrangement.
    - c. Pilate had been appointed by Tiberius Caesar to be governor, or procurator, of Judea about six years earlier. He served in this capacity for about ten years. "Pilate was described by King Agrippa who knew him well as a man naturally inflexible and obstinately self-willed. He frequently defied the Jewish people until the clamor against him succeeded in effecting his disgrace with the emperor Caligula. He was banished to Vienne in Gaul, where he is said to have died by his own hand" (Boles, Matthew, pp.524f).
    - d. God used both Judas and Pilate's natural tendencies to bring about certain aspects of his great plan. Both went down in history as weak, misguided, and evil individuals. Pilate's story is given in some detail by Josephus; see also Smith's Bible Dictionary. The following is from Fausset's Bible Dictionary:
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- 1) He mingled the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices, probably at a feast at Jerusalem, when riots often occurred, and in the temple outer court (Luk\_13:1-4). Probably the tower of Siloam was part of the aqueduct work, hence its fall was regarded as a judgment; the Corban excluded the price of blood, as Mat\_27:6.
  - 2) It is not improbable that Barabbas' riot and murder were connected with Pilate's appropriation of the Corban; this explains the eagerness of the people to release him rather than Jesus; the name may mean "son of Abba," an honorary title of rabbis, from whence the elders were strongly in his favor. Livy (5:13) mentions that prisoners used to be released at a lectisternium or propitiatory feast in honor of the gods. That Jerusalem was not the ordinary residence of Pilate appears from Luk\_23:6, "Herod himself also (*as well as Pilate*) was at Jerusalem at that time." Caesarea was the regular abode of the Roman governors (Josephus, Ant. 18:4, section 1; 20:4, section 4). The Passover brought Pilate to Jerusalem, as disturbances were most to be apprehended when the people were gathered from the country for the feast.
  - 3) He had a fear of offending the Jews, who already had grounds of accusation against him, and of giving color to a charge of lukewarmness to Caesar's kingship, and on the other hand a conviction of Jesus' innocence (for the Jewish council, Pilate knew well, would never regard as criminal an attempt to free Judas from Roman dominion), and a mysterious awe of the Holy Sufferer and His majestic mien and words, strengthened by his wife's (*Claudia Procula, a proselyte of the gate: Evang. Nicod. 2*) vision and message. Her designation of Jesus, "that just man," recalls Plato's unconscious prophecy (Republic) of "the just man" who after suffering of all kinds restores righteousness. Jesus' question, "sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" implies suspicion existed in Pilate's mind of the reality of His being "King of the Jews" in some mysterious sense.
  - 4) When the Jews said "He ought to die for making Himself Son of God" Pilate was the more afraid; Christ's testimony (Joh\_18:37) and bearing, and his wife's message, rising afresh before his mind in hearing of His claim to be "the Son of God" His suspicion betrays itself in the question, "from whence art Thou?" also in his anxiety, so unlike his wonted cruelty, to release Jesus; also in his refusal to alter the inscription over the cross (John 18; 19). (See HEROD ANTIPAS for his share in the proceeding.) Jesus answered not to his question, "from whence art Thou?" Silence emphasized His previous testimony (Joh\_18:37); but to Pilate's official boast of his power to release or crucify, Jesus' answer, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above;" answers also "from whence art Thou?" Thy power is derived thence from whence I am. Pilate had no quaestor to conduct the trial, being only a procurator; but examined Jesus himself.
  - e. "A 52' pyramid stands at Vienne on the Rhone which purports to mark the place of his suicide. He was also supposed to have drowned himself in Lake Lucerne, where an adjacent mountain is called Pilatus. It is known that he was summoned to Rome to face charges; but when he arrived, Tiberius had been succeeded by Caligula, and Pilate was deposed. Eusebius affirmed that soon afterwards Pilate, 'wearied with misfortunes, killed himself'" (Coffman, pp.461f).
3. Verses 4-5: "And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled."
- a. Johnson:
    - 1) *Pilate asked him.* The Jews, carefully suppressing the religious grounds on which they had condemned our Lord, had advanced against him a triple accusation of, (1) seditious agitation; (2) prohibition of the payment of the tribute money; and (3) the assumption of the suspicious title of "King of the Jews" (Luke 23:2). This last accusation amounted to a charge of treason—the greatest crime known to Roman law. Of the three points of accusation, (2) was utterly false; (1) and (3), though in a sense true, were not true in the sense intended. Art thou the King of the Jews?
    - 2) The question is asked because the Jews charged that he made such claims. Pilate may well have been perplexed. Christ had claimed to be King; promulgated laws; organized in the heart of Caesar's province the germ of an imperishable kingdom; entered Jerusalem in triumph, hailed by the throng as King of the Jews; and his arrest had been forcibly resisted by one of his followers. These facts a wily priesthood could easily pervert and exaggerate so as to give color to their accusation.
    - 3) *Thou sayest.* This is not to be taken as a doubtful answer, but as a strong affirmation, The answer of defense of Jesus (John 18:34-38) is that he is King, but that his "kingdom is not of this world," therefore (it is inferred) the "perversion of the people" was not a rebellion that threatened the Roman government. The defense was complete, as Pilate admits: "I find no fault in him" (Luke 23:4). This is Pilate's first emphatic and unhesitating acquittal (John 18:38). [Johnson].
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- b. Pilate was amazed at the silence of the Lord. We are also told that he refused to answer Herod (Luke 23:9). The governor reminded Jesus that serious charges had been made against, thus he ought to reply to these accusations.
- c. John 18:33-38: "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all."
- d. Commenting on these verses, brother Woods observed:
- 1) From Mark's report we learn that Jesus answered, "Thou sayest" (14:3-5), a Hebrew way of expressing an affirmation; and this he followed with the question of our text which, by implication, made clear to Pilate that Jesus did not claim to be a king in any way which would constitute any threat to Roman power. It said, in effect, "Does this inquiry stem from personal knowledge that I have made such claims or were you prompted to this by others?"
  - 2) It was vitally important to the Lord's cause that it be made clear in what sense the phrase, "king of the Jews," was being used. Was it as the Romans would use it, or as the Jews did? .... Moreover, the question pinpointed the fact that his accusers were Jews, not Romans, the latter having no interest in the claims of Jesus. (pp.385f).
- e. If a Roman had preferred the charge of insurrection, it might be examined, but when did the Jews find fault with a man who sought to free them? Pilate knew well how restive they were under the Roman yoke, how ready to rebel, and the very hate shown Christ was proof that he was not aiming to be such a King as they desired. Pilate comprehends the point, for he exclaims at once, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me." That disproves their charge. But what hast thou done? [See Johnson, on John].
- 1) Those who brought charges against Jesus before the Roman ruler were the nation's representatives. Romans had not done so. What crime have you committed that you should be brought before me? Pilate was between a limestone rock and a chunk of anthracite coal. Neither would collapse! Certainly he did not want this situation to morph into a full-blown rebellion of the Jews, rising against Rome.
  - 2) He did not even want a small incident which might reflect badly on his record. He could not ignore the matter; he could not wash his hands and turn away from the problem. Ideally, he would be happy to render justice to Jesus without incurring the wrath of the population. But the Jewish leaders refused to allow this solution. Pilate had to make a decision, just as every accountable human being must, in regards to the Christ, the anointed one of God!
- f. It was never in the eternal plan for Christ to be a king or any kind of earthly ruler. Indeed, he will shortly declare [in John 18] that his kingdom was not of this world. Therefore, he was no threat or rival to Rome's authority. It was in God's eternal plan for Christ to be king over an eternal, spiritual kingdom. This kingdom would be no menace any worldly political entity. Having great interest in spiritual values, the kingdom over which the Lord would rule, would pertain to the spirit of man.
- 1) Colossians 1:13-14: [God] "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
  - 2) Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."
- g. Despite their assertion (John 18:29-30) that Pilate did not need to concern himself with the details of the case, the governor pressed them to identify the charges. To this they replied in Luke 23:1-2 that he had been found guilty of perverting the nation, forbidding the Jews to give tribute money to Caesar, and claiming that he was himself Christ a King. On hearing these charges, Pilate entered the Judgment Hall where Jesus was being held and made inquire of him (John 18:33; Luke 23:3).
- h. Matthew's account takes up at this point with Pilate asking the Lord whether he was the king of the Jews. John's account now adds some more information. Before giving a direct reply to the question, the Lord asked Pilate a question: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" It was vitally important
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that the record be set straight as to the originator of this charge: If the Jews had made the charge, he must answer affirmatively for he was to be the regal head of spiritual Israel; if Pilate as a Roman authority originated the charge, his answer would be in the negative for his kingdom "was not of this world," thus his kingship was of no threat to the throne of Caesar. Pilate said that it was the Jews who had made the charge. "Thou" is in emphatic position in the Greek text (John 18:33), thus signifying, "Thou, one so humbled, the king of the Jews!"

4. Verses 6-8: "Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them."
  - a. Matthew and Mark do not discuss the trial before Herod; only Luke does so in Luke 23:8-12: "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing .... And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."
    - 1) This pleased Herod greatly for he had for a long time desired to see Jesus in order that he might see him perform some miracle: "And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him" (Luke 9:9).
    - 2) But when questioned by Herod, Jesus made no reply. The accusers were present and "vehemently" pressed their unfounded charges against him.
    - 3) Herod, with his soldiers, mocked him, arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back to Pilate. To "set at nought" means "to treat with utter contempt, to despise." "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:3).
  - b. John 18:39-40: "But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."
    - 1) The Romans had established a long-held practice of releasing, during this religious season of the Jews, some notable prisoner. This was intended to be a sop to the population, to help keep them from becoming restive against the rule of Rome.
    - 2) Pilate's purpose was to secure the agreement of the Jewish leaders for the release of Jesus. That he was innocent of a crime against the Empire was obvious. The charges which had been brought upon Christ were based in the religion of the Jews. The Jewish leaders were the instigators of the present difficulty, and their hatred grew out of their envy of the huge success of Jesus [Matt. 27:18].
  - c. Woods:
    - 1) From Mark we learn that Barabbas had been a member of a band who participated in an insurrection against the government and had committed murder in so doing. Matthew refers to him as "a notable prisoner," thus indicating that he had attained to considerable notoriety because of his crimes. Him they chose instead of Jesus; and thus, by a strange irony of fate they caused to be released a man actually guilty of the crime with which they had falsely charged Christ—treason and sedition.
    - 2) Jews, in general, were sympathetic toward such insurrectionary movements because they bitterly resented the presence of the Romans who occupied their land and Barabbas had done that which Jesus refused to do—oppose by political means the Roman power. The Jews accused Jesus of being a dangerous man to the Romans when he was not and they asked for the release of Barabbas who was!
    - 3) The bitterness of this angry and vengeful crowd beggars description. Led on by corrupt and malignant priests and civil officers the stupefied people joined in the shout, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Gone was any remembrance of his gentle life, his gracious words and his marvelous works of mercy; spewing forth from the volcanic vortex of their corrupt and hardened hearts was the wild passion of hate, malignancy and consuming desire for his death; and they had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear any alternative to the murderous mission they were bent on bringing to completion.
    - 4) The light which had once radiated through them as keepers of the oracles of God was now darkness and the favored position they once held as the chosen people they had long since forfeited. Never did human beings sink so low as these professedly religious leaders when they deliberately chose to have a murderer released so that the sinless Son of God might die.

- 5) It is little wonder that when the blessed Lord was experiencing the shame and ignominy of those last hours and then suffered the horrors of crucifixion, the earth became darkened and the sun refused to shine upon a race whose leaders had fiendishly sought and secured the death of the noblest, purest and most precious person who ever lived upon the earth.
  - 6) Humanity must collectively bow its head in shame that the cry, "not this man, but Barabbas," should have brought it so low. The chief actors of this tragic drama live only in the sombre darkness of their evil deeds; Pilate, the Jewish authorities, the Roman soldiers, the sullen mob; they have long since gone the way of all the earth, and live in the memories of men largely because of the inhuman disposition and conduct they exhibited, while he whose destruction they desired and eventually accomplished came forth from the grave, ascended in triumph into the heavens, from which he will one day return to claim his own and to administer just punishment to his tormentors.
  - 7) Tragically, many people of the world are still choosing the world rather than Jesus, thus not in word, but in deed, also saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Their myopic eyes are resistant to spiritual light and their dull ears are out of resonance with the clear, sweet voice of truth and thus they see only what is material and hear only the alluring sounds of the world, their hearts being hardened to the appeals of a higher, nobler nature. Sadly, these, too, like the rebellious Jews of old, will discover their error only when it is too late. [pp.289f].
- d. See the article at the end of this chapter's notes for more information about Barabbas, written by our brother, Guy N. Woods.
5. Verses 9-10: "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy."
- a. Compare: "And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:16-17).
  - b. There was a notable prisoner in Roman custody at that time. "Notable" means that this prisoner was distinguished. The prisoner was named Barrabas who had been convicted of sedition, robbery, insurrection, and murder:
    - 1) Mark 15:7: "And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection."
    - 2) Luke 23:19: "Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison."
    - 3) John 18:40: "Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."
  - c. His plan quite naturally assumed that they would rather release Jesus than a murderer and robber. He gave them the choice, plain and simple. But he had not reckoned their hearts to be so callous and their hatred of Jesus so fervent. Pilate knew the real motive behind the hatred of the Jews for Christ was envy. We are not told how he knew this, but probably he had had enough experience with them to learn of their zest for prominence, and knowing of the popularity of Jesus among the people (the triumphant entry into Jerusalem would hardly have missed his attention), he could conclude that they were envious of Christ. [Matt. 27:18].
  - d. That they were envious is shown in John 11:47-51: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation."
    - 1) "Nothing had transpired during that morning to convince Pilate that they were moved with envy toward Jesus, except as he connected it with what he had known of their feelings before. This shows that he was familiar with the issues between the parties" (McGarvey, p. 241).
    - 2) Being aware of their true motive, Pilate was under moral obligation to release the Lord. But had he done so, the plans, prophecies, and purposes of God would have come to nought.
    - 3) "The word 'envy' in ancient writings implies somewhat more than it does now. It signified all those hostile feelings which are included under the general term 'unpopularity.' Fear of his power with the people, jealousy at his purity, his wisdom and miracles, a mean desire to crush a good and great man, with
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all the wicked, malicious feelings of a fickle multitude are ranked under the word 'envy' as used here" (Boles, p.532). "...Behold, the whole world is gone after him" (John 12:19).

6. Verse 11: "But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them." "But the chief priests stirred up the multitude, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them" (ASV).
  - a. Compare: "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas" (Matt. 27:20-21).
    - 1) The chief priests and elders *persuaded* the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas when the governor called for their choice (Mark 15:11).
    - 2) We are not told just how the religious leaders moved and persuaded the people to call for the release of Barabbas. They likely circulated through the crowd, arguing and cajoling them to do so. Perhaps some of them were strategically placed among the people and raised a chant which the multitude joined. When one person laughs, others are moved to laugh with him even if they see nothing funny. Rabble rousers are able to manipulate a crowd to do their will. Consider the "Popular Pentecostal Perverters" of our day and their ability to "work an audience."
  - b. McGarvey:
    - 1) "The common people who had by this time assembled about Pilate's pretorium, were not of themselves so disaffected toward Jesus as to prefer Barabbas: on the contrary, Pilate made the proposal to them in the expectation that they would call for Jesus, and that he would thus get rid of the case; but 'the chief priests and elders *persuaded* the multitude,' and their persuasions prevailed.
    - 2) "They doubtless represented to the people that Jesus had been guilty of blasphemy, and that he had already been tried and convicted by the highest tribunal of their nation. This story strongly supported by the most influential men of the city, produced a sudden revolution in public sentiment, so that the multitude whose friendship for Jesus had two days' ago made the Pharisees afraid to arrest him (25:4,5), were now persuaded to cry out for his crucifixion. 'This was doubtless a part of the plan agreed upon at the counsel before they brought Jesus to Pilate. (Verse 1.)'" (pp.241f).
  - c. Pilate asked the multitude which of the two they willed to be released: Jesus or Barabbas. The chief priests had done their work well, and the multitude is about to give its unholy answer. Barabbas is their choice! This illustrates the persuasive power of false teachers (cf. 2 Tim. 4:4).
7. Verses 12-14: "And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him."
  - a. Compare: "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified" (Matt. 27:22-23).
    - 1) "Pilate's question was pertinent and demanded an answer; but in the response we see nothing but the unreasoning spirit of a mob; no argument; no answer to objections; no patience with opposition; no attention to entreaties; nothing but an insane clamor for the one thing desired" (McGarvey, p.242).
    - 2) The question of Matthew 27:22 is one which everyone must sooner or later, directly or indirectly, answer for himself. The reality of Jesus Christ is so manifest that we all are faced with the decision of, "What shall I do with him?"
  - b. Pilate's second question (Matt. 27:23), raised in response to the roar of the mob to crucify Jesus, was raised three times (cf. Luke 23:22). But the unthinking mob was in a frenzy beyond reason. They cried out all the more, "Let him be crucified!"
  - c. There was a similar case at Ephesus: "And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 10:33-34).
  - d. Johnson:
    - 1) That [Pilate] did not permanently protect him, rose partly from his character, and partly from his past history as procurator. 'Morally enervated and lawless, the petty tyrant was incapable of a strong impression of righteous firmness, and besides, he dreaded complaints at Rome from the Jewish authorities, and insurrections of the masses in his local government.—Geikie.

- 2) *Do unto him*. This is remarkable; since it shows that Pilate made, so to speak, a second offer. He was called upon by the people to release one prisoner only at the festival; but his question implies, that, even after their declared preference of Barabbas, he was willing to leave the fate of the man to their decision—Cook.
  - 3) *Cried out again*. There had been various outcries of the people; and with this fresh outburst of fury there was the demand for death.
  - e. Compare: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Matt. 27:24). Pilate had tried several ill-fated plans in his attempt to release Jesus and still keep peace in his province. He had tried to shift the responsibility to Herod; he had offered to chastise him and release him; he tried to get the people to agree to release Jesus under the "Passover Pardon Plan." He failed in all of his attempts. In his failure he vainly tried to disclaim any responsibility for this perversion of justice by washing his hands. Washing hands was practiced in related cases in the Old Testament.
    - 1) Deuteronomy 21:6-7: "And all the elders of that city, *that are* next unto the slain *man*, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen *it*."
    - 2) Psalms 26:6: "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD."
  - f. Jesus was an innocent man; the only sinlessly perfect accountable person ever to live on earth. "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away..." (Acts 8:33). Though he was innocent, yet was he pronounced guilty; with violence and hatred, justice was denied him.
  - g. "Pilate could have done nothing to more forcibly declare the innocence of Jesus. If the people had not been frenzied, when they saw him solemnly washing his hands, and declaring himself free from the innocent blood about to be shed, they would surely have been deterred from their purpose.
    - 1) "But while Pilate's act had this significance, it also displayed his own weakness and hypocrisy. He was there with his men of war to execute justice among the people and to restrain them when tempted to deeds of lawlessness; but instead of this, he consents to the murder of a man in the same breath in which he pronounces him innocent, and hypocritically pretends to wash away a responsibility which rested more on him than on any other man.
    - 2) "For this act his name must ever stand intimately associated with that of Judas Iscariot, and the world scarcely knows which to look upon with greater loathing the time-serving politician, or the money-loving traitor" (McGarvey, pp.242f).
  - h. He could not evade personal responsibility in this tragedy by simply declaring his innocence and washing his hands as a shallow show of non-responsibility
- B. Mark 15:15-21: Jesus is Scourged.
1. Verse 15: "And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified."
    - a. The events leading up to the crucifixion of our Lord: This listing may not be precise in the chronology:
      - 1) First there was the trial before Annas, recorded only by John (18:1:3-24); this man sent Jesus, bound, to Caiaphas.
      - 2) Jesus next faced a preliminary examination conducted by Caiaphas aided by a section of the Sanhedrin [Matt. 26: 57-68; Mark 14: 55-65].
      - 3) We are told by Luke about the formal meeting of the great Sanhedrin, at about daybreak [Luke 22:66-71].
      - 4) Then came the formal accusation before Pilate, which all of the accounts report.
      - 5) The interview between Christ and Pilate is recorded in John 18:33-38.
      - 6) Pilate's first acquittal; further charges; Christ's silence [Matt. 27: 12-14; Mark 15: 3-5; Luke 23: 4-5].
      - 7) Pilate sent the case to Herod (Luke 23:6-12).
      - 8) Our Lord is then sent back to Pilate, where the second acquittal is declared [Luke 23: 13-16].
      - 9) Pilate then offered to release Jesus or Barabbas [Matt. 27:15-18; Mark 15:6-10].
      - 10) Pilate's wife sent her husband a message warning him to have nothing to do with "this just man" [Matt. 27:19].
      - 11) The Jews stirred the multitude to demand that Barabbas be released [Matt. 27:20-22; Mark 15:11-13].

- 12) The governor made further attempts to convince the Jews that Jesus should be released [Matt. 27:20-22; Mark 11-13].
- 13) Pilate washed his hands, thinking to absolve himself of any crime [Matt. 27:24].
- 14) Barabbas released, to the cries of “Crucify him”—meaning Jesus [Matt. 27:26].
- 15) Jesus is given over to the hands of the soldiers to be crucified [Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24-25].
- 16) Pilate made still other efforts to secure the Jewish approval to release him [John 19:4-16].
- 17) Following the mocking and scourging, Jesus is led away to the crucifixion [Matt. 27:31; Mark 15 : 20].
- b. Compare: “ Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!” (John 19:1-5).
- c. This scourging was a horrible ordeal, sometimes even causing the death of the victim. "The scourge was a whip with leather thongs, the ends fastened to lead balls or sharp spikes. The victim was usually bound to a stake naked and made to bend over thus tightening the skin which usually split open at the first blow. When it was over often the sufferer was unconscious, a bleeding mass of torn flesh. It is quite possible that the reason Jesus was unable to bear up under the weight of his cross was due to the terrible beating he had but recently suffered" (Woods, p.391).
- d. Our Lord was returned to Pilate in the most pitiable condition we could imagine. Doubtless, the prophet Isaiah was describing the Suffering Savior when he penned this declaration: “As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isa. 52:14). Immediately after this statement, the prophet delivers the wondrous material of chapter fifty-three. Pilate went outside to once again confront the Jewish enemies of Jesus. Brother Woods:
- 1) “Three times on that fateful Friday morning Pilate asserted and declared the innocence of Jesus, innocence he had determined by thorough examination. He had tolerated the mockery of the crown perhaps because it was in keeping with the impression he had that the claims of Jesus were too absurd to merit serious consideration and he hoped that this contemptuous treatment might be sufficient to prompt the Jewish leaders to drop their demands of his prisoner's death....
  - 2) “The meekness with which Jesus suffered the evil-treatment of his accusers must have made considerable impression on Pilate and to have reenforced his view that Jesus was deserving of no punishment, not having committed any crime. That he would allow the bitter mockery to be directed at his prisoner and order him to be scourged evidences how devoid of shame and how little regard Pilate had for the basic principles of justice and right.
  - 3) “His utterance, "Behold the man!" *Ecce Homo!* was his weak and ineffective effort to appeal to the better nature of the crowd, a nature which no longer existed, having long since been submerged in the bitterness and spiteful hate they felt toward Jesus. The exclamation has lived in history as Pilate's unconscious and unintended tribute to the greatest character of the ages” (pp.392f).
- e. Jesus underwent this dreadful punishment. Pilate's intent in the scourging inflicted upon Jesus was an attempt to evoke sympathy in his accusers toward him so that they might agree to his release.
- 1) Luke 23:22 "And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go."
  - 2) Isaiah 52:14 "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."
  - 3) John 19:1-5 "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put *it* on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. Pilate there-fore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, **Behold the man!**"
- f. John 19:6: “When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.”
- 1) Pilate’s “own heart is touched. He no longer speaks of him as King, but points to him as a human sufferer. Pilate, unconsciously, described the sufferer aright. That mocked and despised prisoner, with the thorny crown and the streams of blood trickling down from his brow, humiliated, beaten and insulted,

was THE MAN, the one perfect man of the human race, the type of ideal manhood. To him all ages point and exclaim, *Ecce homo!* Behold the man” (Johnson, p.278).

- 2) It is hard to envision men more cruel or hearts more depleted of compassion than these wicked Jewish leaders! As was the case of the Roman soldiers who tormented Jesus, these despicable men have had long centuries in eternity to bemoan their own evil hearts, words and actions!
  - 3) The governor was ready to their demands, but stated that he had found no fault in him. “Take ye him, and crucify him.” You wanted him executed on the cross; take him and carry out your demands.
2. Verses 16-18: “And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!”
- a. The governor knew what was involved in scourging; he also knew of the innocence of Jesus; yet he turned the Lord over to his cruel soldiers for this horrible experience! How could any person with any grain of sympathy and sense of justice thus condemn an innocent man to this unspeakable ordeal? It would take more than a pan of water to cleanse his evil heart.
    - 1) These soldiers had the items at hand with which to torture and ridicule the King of Glory. They platted a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head. We do not visualize this as a gentle action. Not only was this a means of mockery but of torture. The sharp spines of the thorns would easily penetrate the scalp and more than a little blood would be emitted. Mark reported that they smote him on the head with the reed—the pain would have been harsh, especially if the blow was directed to the crown.
    - 2) Mark also tells us that the whole band of soldiers were at hand to participate in the cruelty and mockery that followed. The life of a Roman soldier was certainly harsh and brutal; they met with all kinds of adversities in the field and in battle which would have hardened them against the gentle qualities of life. It is hard to picture them as having any compassion for our Lord. Perhaps they were competing with each other as to which forms of torture and mockery to use!
  - b. They put on him a purple robe, usually worn only by royalty. “And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11). It might well be this same purple robe which Pilate’s men put on the Lord. One of the first thing they did to Jesus was to stripe off the clothing he wore. We are not told that Herod’s men removed the robe they had used in their mockery.
    - 1) The soldiers of Pilate bowed before their victim, who had been dressed in a robe of royalty and crowned with a crown of thorns. Mockery can be exceedingly painful to the inner man. No one likes to be made fun of. As the old truism declares, “Sticks and stones might break my bones, but names will never harm me!”
    - 2) They laughingly saluted him as “King of the Jews.” These men were stationed in Palestine among a population which they controlled by brute force. They hated the Jews and the Jews hated them. The prominent exception to this rule was Cornelius (Acts 10:2, 22).
    - 3) They smote the Lord with their hands and spat upon him. These are especially insulting to the usual victim, but doubtless Jesus was enured to their beatings and insults.
    - 4) When Jesus was arrested, he stated that there was unlimited power available to defend him, if he had so-chosen: “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 27:53). That great power was still as his call—but these men had no conception of who it was they were tormenting! Compare: “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...” (Luke 23:34). This brief prayer was answered only for those who would later obey the Gospel of Christ—Acts 2:36-47.
3. Verses 19-20: “And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.”
- a. Compare: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of *soldiers*. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head" (Matt. 27:27-30).

- 1) The soldiers took Jesus into some part of the great palace where they began to "set him at nought" in certain inhuman ways, using certain well-practiced methods. Remember that the Lord had already undergone the cruel scourging, and to that awful ordeal was then added this devilish treatment.
  - 2) "The place of the mockery was the praetorium, so named from the barracks of the emperor's personal guard in Rome, being presumably, therefore, the common hall where the soldiers held their drill and other exercises, adjacent to the governor's residence and perhaps a part of it" (Coffman, p.475).
  - 3) What follows is a description of the unholy and brutal abuse the *whole band* of soldiers heaped upon the Lord. Their attempts centered around their rejection of his regal standing. A band of Roman soldiers is said to have numbered into the hundreds, depending on the size of the legion to which they belonged. The band was a *cohort*, the tenth part of a legion, and was commanded by a tribune (Vine, pp.95f). The number of a cohort could be as many as 600 soldiers. Into this band of men the lowly Lord of heaven was given. As the vicious treatment was meted out against him, one can imagine seeing several sadistic soldiers taking the lead in the abasement of Christ, to the delight of the rest of the band.
- b. Their first act was to strip him of his own clothing, and knowing that the Jews had charged him with falsely claiming a regal standing, they placed on him a robe which was of the type worn by men of exalted position (kings, governors, etc.). It was intended as a mockery. The "scarlet robe mentioned in this place was called "purple" by Mark (15:17).
  - c. Perhaps part of the garments placed upon him in derision were purple, the whole attire being topped off with a scarlet robe; for it is significant that Mark does not actually refer to the robe as purple, but to his clothing. Coffman:
    - 1) "How appropriate that during the dark drama of the crucifixion Christ should have worn the very colors of the symbolical veil. It is through the veil that is to say his flesh, that the new and living way is opened up (Heb. 10:19-22).
    - 2) "In view of this, one cannot resist the speculation that the robe was probably three colors, blue and scarlet, with a commingling blue and scarlet to form purple in the center, after the manner of the veil of the ancient tabernacle....
    - 3) "Far from being a contradiction, the New Testament mention of two different colors opens a wide vista in which men may see Christ, throughout his passion, wearing the very colors (and surely *two* of them) of that veil which is called his flesh (Heb. 10:20)" (Coffman, p.475).
  - d. As Mark describes the color as purple and Matthew says scarlet, some Bible critics see a contradiction. Brother Coffman suggests one possible solution. Of a more practical nature is the solution offered by Barnes: "The ancients gave the name *purple* to any colour that had a mixture of *red* in it, and consequently these different colours might be sometimes called by the same name. The *robe* used here was the same kind worn by Roman generals and other distinguished officers of the Roman army, and also by the Roman governors. It was made so as to be placed on the shoulders, and was bound around the body so as to leave the right arm at liberty. As we cannot suppose that Pilate would array him in a new and splendid robe, we must suppose that this was one which had been worn and cast off as useless, and was now used to array the Son of God as an object of ridicule and scorn" (p.307).
  - e. They continued their mistreatment and mockery by plaiting a crown of thorns and putting it on his head and by placing a reed in his right hand. This was in keeping with the "theme" of their abuse—taunting him because of the truth he had taught about his kingdom. The Jews had been enraged at his teachings, but the pagan soldiers found occasion for black humor in it.
    - 1) Thorn bushes were common in Palestine we are told. Perhaps some were growing nearby. Some evil mind devised the plan to weave thorn branches into a crude crown and put it upon the Savior's head. For a scepter, they placed a reed in his hand. No doubt to uproarious laughter, they then bowed in mock submission.
    - 2) They greeted him with an insincere salute, "Hail, King of the Jews!" This false homage will have turned into genuine worship by the Judgment when "every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14:11).
    - 3) "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-12; cf. 1 Tim. 6:14-15).
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- f. They then spat upon him and smote him on the head with the reed, causing the thorns to injure his head. "The scene which commenced in sportive mockery terminated in more serious feeling and more contemptuous conduct. Exasperated, perhaps, by the meek demeanor of Jesus, the soldiers turned their mockery into indecency and violence. Next to the crucifixion itself, here was the greatest extreme of the world's cruelty to its Maker and its Benefactor. This was a strange sight to the angels. It can not be contemplated by men without a shudder" (McGarvey, p.244).
4. Verse 21: "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross."
- a. Other accounts:
- 1) Matthew 27:31-34: "And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."
  - 2) Luke 23:26-33: "And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."
  - 3) John 19:16-17: "Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha."
- b. Brother Woods offer these comments on John 19:16-17:
- 1) On the way to the place of crucifixion Jesus stumbled under the weight of his cross, his strength greatly weakened from the long hours of torture, scourging and lack of rest; and the soldiers seized a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, compelling him to take up the cross in Jesus' stead.
  - 2) Eventually, the procession arrived at the place of execution called *Golgotha*, a Hebrew word meaning, "the place of a skull." The word "Calvary" is the Latin equivalent of the Hebrew word, and from it comes our English word *Calvary*. This was beyond the city gate (Heb. 13:12), since the law of Moses forbade capital punishment within the confines of the city (1 Kings 21:13; Acts 7:58; Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35).
  - 3) There is today a natural formation in rock on the side of a hill not far from the Garden tomb bearing great resemblance to a skull, and it is very possible that this was the site of the crucifixion. [p.401].
- c. Pulpit Commentary:
- 1) It seems from Matthew (Matt 27:32) that our Savior bore his own cross from the palace to the gate of the city. The tablet, with the inscription afterwards attached to the cross, would be carried before him; and a certain number of soldiers would be appointed to go with him to the place of execution, and to see the sentence carried out. Having passed out through the gate of the city, they met one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and they compel him ... literally, they impress him. The Cyrenians had a synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9), and this Simon may probably have been one of those who had come up to keep the Passover.
  - 2) He must have been a Hellenistic Jew, a native of Cyrene, on the north coast of Africa. Alexander and Rufus, his sons, were no doubt, at the time when Mark wrote his Gospel, well-known disciples of our Lord. Paul, writing to the Romans (Rom 16:13), sends a special salutation to Rufus, "chosen in the Lord, and his mother, and mine;" a delicate recognition by Paul of something like maternal care bestowed upon him by the mother of Rufus. It is probable that his father Simon, and perhaps his brother Alexander, may have been dead by this time. Rufus is also honorably mentioned by Polycarp in his Epistle to the Philippians .... To go with them, that he might bear his cross. Luke (Luke 23:26) adds the touching words, "to bear it after Jesus."
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- d. The Bible does not say why the soldiers leading Jesus out to the crucifixion site forced Simon of Cyrene to bear the cross. John 19:17 shows that he started out bearing his own cross, as was customary. In virtually the same location, about two thousand years earlier, Isaac had borne the wood which was to be used by Abraham in sacrificing his son of promise.
  - e. The way to Golgotha is known by the term, "Via Doloroso" ("the sorrowful way"). It is common practice for sectarians to walk with their priest surrounding an old wooden cross up this narrow passage in ceremonial display. Other equally sincere individuals will travel the roads of our country bearing a cross. However, this entirely misses the point in the Lord's command that we take up our cross and follow him. To bear a **literal** cross is as foolish as it is sinful. Such practices bring no glory to the Almighty. We are required to bear the obligations he gave us to do (including carrying the gospel to the lost, remaining faithful, etc.), and humbly to bear the persecutions which come to us because we serve him.
  - f. The Lord began the journey to Golgotha bearing his cross, but due to his weakened condition, he either could not bear up under its weight, or could not travel fast enough to suit the soldiers. The Roman soldiers, wishing to expedite the proceedings, seized a man in the crowd, Simon of Cyrene, and forced him to carry the cross after Jesus (Luke 23:26). Jesus trudged on with the procession (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21).
  - g. "Jesus at first bore his own cross (John 19:17), as was customary. Tradition says that our Lord sunk to the ground beneath the load; but the more exact expression of Luke 23:26 shows that the after-part of the cross alone, which usually dragged upon the ground, was put upon Simon.—Schuf. Here, as always, the Savior bears the heaviest part of the burden" (Johnson).
  - h. Luke 23:27-31 relates that a great multitude of people followed him, and a company of women lamented him: "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"
  - i. "Cyrene was a flourishing city in the north of Africa, but Simon, as his name indicates, was Jewish. They compelled him to carry the cross merely because he was a stranger, and they met him at the moment that a man was needed for the purpose, Jesus himself having borne it thus far (John 19:17), and being in all probability exhausted by the effort. Simon, like all of us when called on to bear the cross, took it up reluctantly, no doubt, but like us when we have borne it faithfully, he was brought to Calvary and to the blood of atonement. There were many Cyrenians afterward engaged in spreading the gospel (Acts 2:10; 11:20; 12:1), and we may indulge the thought that in all probability Simon was one of them" (McGarvey, p.244).
- C. Mark 15:22-32: Christ is Crucified.
1. Verses 22-23: "And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not."
    - a. The great company came eventually to a place known in the Hebrew language as Golgotha, which means "Place of a Skull" (John 19:17). Luke 23:33 identifies this place by the name "Calvary" which has the same meaning. Luke uses the Greek equivalent (*kranion*) for the Hebrew word "Golgotha." From the Latin equivalent our English word "Calvary" is derived. The Greek word gives our word "cranium."
    - b. We are not told why the location was so-named. It could be named this because so many crucifixions took place there; it could be because skulls were found there; or it could simply be because the place resembled a skull. It was located outside the city of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:12), and was "nigh to the city" (John 19:20).
    - c. The traditional site is now marked by the "church of the Holy Sepulchre." But this location would be within the walls of ancient Jerusalem. Another place, located to the northwest of the city, more accurately fits the picture. It is a rocky eminence, an extension of the hill the temple was located on; it is rounded, and has large holes in the side which cause it to resemble a skull when viewed from certain angles (Coffman, pp. 478f). Ken Beard and other missionaries to Italy made a trip to Jerusalem in the early 1960s and took some color slides of this place; it truly resembles a skull.
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- d. On arriving at Golgotha, they crucified him. In those days, executions were done by stoning (Acts 7), by beheading (Mark 6:24-29; Acts 12), and by strangulation. The Jews did not crucify and the Romans did not execute by stoning. While it was the Jewish leaders who insisted on the death of Jesus, it was the Roman governor who sentenced him to die, and it was Roman soldiers who actually executed him. These soldiers were simply doing their gruesome duty; Pilate put politics before justice and principle; the Jewish leaders put jealousy and hatred of the Lord before Truth. And each sinful person had an indirect part in his crucifixion because of our own sins (1 Cor. 15:3; Matt. 26:28; 1 John 2:2).
  - e. Someone offered Jesus a drink of vinegar mingled with gall (Mark describes it as wine mingled with myrrh, 15:23). Gall and myrrh are words describing something very bitter; vinegar was a sour wine. The combination was a potion which had the ability to deaden the sensibilities and to alleviate some of the suffering. He declined this offer after he had tasted it and saw what it was. The offer was one conceived in a sympathetic heart. This is a different drink from that which John reports. He accepted a drink in the latter case (19:28-29). This was given to him after he had been on the cross for a good while; the former apparently was offered to him when they first arrived at Golgotha, perhaps even before he was nailed to the cross.
2. Verse 24: “And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.”
- a. Crucifixion was unanimously considered the most horrible form of death, even worse than burning. [We are told that when a person is burned, the sensory nerves in the skin quickly are destroyed]. Aside from the physical agony, it denoted an awful shame: among the Gentiles, it was reserved for slaves and criminals; the Jews had a revulsion for it since the Law placed a curse on one who was hanged on a tree (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13).
    - 1) Crucifixion usually began with scourging, a terrible ordeal of itself. Jesus underwent this dreaded punishment (John 19:1-5; cf Isa. 52:14). Pilate's intent in the scourging inflicted upon Jesus was an attempt to evoke sympathy in his accusers toward the Lord so that they might agree to his release (cf. Luke 23:22).
    - 2) The victim was usually forced to carry his cross, and sometimes even goaded and beaten on the way. The execution site was in some public place, often along a prominent road, or on a hill where the victim could be easily seen. The victim was stripped naked, with perhaps a loin cloth being allowed.
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- 3) The cross was in the usual shape we envision, or formed as a "T," or in the form of an "X." The victim was laid upon the cross and nails were driven through his hands and feet. Sometimes thongs were also used to prevent the body from slipping from the cross if the flesh should tear. The cross was erected so that the feet of the subject was only a foot or two above the ground.
  - 4) A large nail was driven through each hand, and another through each foot or one nail through both feet (Psalm 22:16; Luke 24:39; John 20:24-28). A wooden rod was inserted between the legs as support for the sagging body to prevent the nails from tearing from the hands and feet.
  - 5) One of the very few acts of mercy attendant to crucifixion was the practice of giving the subject a drink of medication, wine mingled with myrrh (gall), which would induce grogginess, and deaden the pain. Christ refused to accept this drink so that he might fully taste death (Mark 15:23; Matt. 27:34; Heb. 2:9). He later was offered a drink of vinegar in a sponge (John 19:28-30). This was a mixture of sour wine and water which was used by the soldiers. The hyssop stalk (reed), on which the sponge was raised to the Lord, grew from one and a half to three feet in length.
  - 6) The wounds of crucifixion did not result in a great loss of blood, and were not directly fatal. The causes of death are given as follows:
    - a) The unnatural position and violent tension of the body caused great pain from even a small movement. The great agonies experienced contributed to death. The nails were driven through the hands and feet where a great number of nerves are located, thus great agony resulted.
    - b) The exposure of the many wounds and lacerations, including those from the scourging, brought on inflammation which tends to become gangrene; the pain thus increases moment by moment.
    - c) "In the distended parts of the body more blood flows through the arteries than can be carried back into the veins: hence too much blood finds its way from the aorta into the head and stomach, and the blood-vessels of the head become pressed and swollen. The general obstruction of circulation which ensues causes an internal excitement, exertion, and anxiety, more intolerable than death itself" (*Smith's Dictionary of The Bible*, p.515).
    - d) The gradually increasing and lingering agony, and unbearable thirst, and the difficulty in breathing, eventually brought about death. Depending on the constitution and condition of the subject, death might be several days in coming. McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia reports the case of a young Turkish slave named Mameluke who lasted from Friday to Sunday during his crucifixion, and he was noted for being an exceptionally rugged individual.
    - e) Woods described the process of crucifixion with these words: "As unspeakably inhuman as this mode of execution was, it stopped just short of producing merciful death and delivery from its agony and those thus executed often lingered for days on the cross unable to live, unable to die. The wretched position made every movement one of agony; the pierced hands and feet soon became inflamed and then infected, arteries were distended and blocked, fever shot upward, intolerable headaches often drove those thus being put to death into insanity. It was to such a death that our Lord was condemned, and this by men who affected to be the guardians of the truth and the favored of Jehovah!" (*Commentary on John*, p.402).
    - f) The Romans often left the body hanging on the cross until it decomposed or was devoured by birds. In the Lord's case, the Jews besought Pilate that the legs of Jesus and of the two thieves be broken so that death might be hastened. They were unconcerned about the length of suffering these men were under-going; they merely wanted their bodies to be out of sight when the Sabbath came! (John 19:31; cf. Dt. 21:23; Josh. 8:29). The breaking of the legs would hasten death, according to some scholars, because it would make it impossible for the victim to push himself upward in order to breathe. The legs were broken by a strong blow with a hammer or mallet.
  - b. The soldiers parted the Lord's garments. This was in payment for their "services." They divided the clothes into four parts (John 19:23-24), but cast lots to determine who would get the seamless coat. Each crucified person was under the control of four Roman soldiers who in turn were supervised by a centurion. Thus, it appears that there were twelve soldiers on hand, with four assigned to each of the three people being executed on this occasion, plus a centurion who was in charge of the overall operation. The soldiers divided the Lord's smaller garments among themselves in keeping with custom. The articles of clothing commonly worn were the sandals, the girdle, the outer robe, the headdress. "The tunic, or undergarment, made of linen or wool, was without seam, being wholly woven and thus not of parts sewed together, a rule the priests followed. (Woods, *Commentary on John*, p.405; Vine, pp.198f).
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- c. John records what these four men decided; remember that the apostle wrote his gospel account many years later, near the end of the first century. He could know that these men said and did by his inspiration. John was close enough to hear what Jesus said when he consigned his mother to the apostle's care. He witnessed the close actions and words of the soldiers. John adds, that they did what they planned.
    - 1) Psalm 22:18: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." This prediction was made about a thousand years before the event! We are told that the LXX (the Septuagint Greek of the Old Testament) was the source of the quotation.
    - 2) Notice that these pagans were willing to gamble over the special garment of Jesus; they had no conception at the time of what the Lord's death meant. Their means of gambling was to cast lots (using something like the dice of our time). In the face of death, they were to engage in sinful gambling.
  - d. It was for this garment that the soldiers cast lots. Matthew informs us that the soldiers thus fulfilled the prophecy given in Psalm 22:18. "Here again Matthew states a fact needing explanation, and John incidentally furnishes the explanation needed. There appears from Matthew's account no reason why they should have cast lots in order to divide the garments; but we learn from John that the coat, which was the principal garment, was seamless, so that the goods in it could not be divided, and that it was on this the lots were cast" (McGarvey, pp.244f).
  - e. After attending to their business of nailing Jesus to the cross, and raising it and positioning it in the ground, the soldiers next sat down to watch him. This suggests their indifference to his suffering, and indicates that they were guarding the victim lest some of his friends should remove him from the cross and nurse him back to health.
3. Verse 25: "And it was the third hour, and they crucified him."
- a. Brother Woods wrote on John 19:14:
    - 1) The "sixth hour" was 6 a.m., according to Roman reckoning which John followed, and is in complete harmony with Mark's statement (Mark 15:25), that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, by Jewish computation (which Mark followed), was 9 a.m.
    - 2) Under Roman law, sentence could not be pronounced earlier than 6 a.m. and it is therefore likely that this is the reason the time is designated. The proceedings against Jesus began at 6 a.m.; it is probable that an hour or so elapsed before the court proceedings were completed and Jesus was delivered up to be crucified. (pp.397f).
  - b. The Jews had demanded of Pilate that they wanted Jesus to be crucified; Johnson thus comments, which are distressing to read:
    - 1) Nothing demonstrates more forcibly the malignity of the Jews than their persistent and boisterous demand that Jesus should be crucified, Other forms of execution were common; stoning, as in the case of Stephen; killing with the sword, as in the case of James; beheading, as in the case of John the Baptist, and, among the Romans, strangling, Crucifixion had never been adopted by the Jews. Even to hang a corpse upon a tree was accounted among them a great indignity (Deut. 21:22, 23), It was inflicted on Jewish malefactors by the Romans because it was regarded with such horror, Cicero called it a punishment most inhuman and shocking, and wrote of it that it should be removed from the eyes and ears and every thought of man.
    - 2) The Romans reserved it for slaves and foreigners whom they despised. Yet it was this most shameful and terrible of all deaths which the Jews call on Pilate to inflict upon a prisoner whom he had pronounced innocent. The terrible details of such a death should be noted in order to comprehend what our Savior suffered for us, and I have condensed from Parrar and Gentile the following description of a death on the cross: He was stripped naked of all his clothes. He was laid down upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross-beams, and at the center of the open palms the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which, by the blow of a mallet, was driven home into the wood. Then through either foot separately, or possibly through both together, as they were placed one over the other, another huge nail tore its way through the quivering flesh.
    - 3) To prevent the hands and feet being torn away by the weight of the body, which could not "rest upon nothing but four great wounds," there was, about the center of the cross, a wooden projection strong enough to support, at least in part, a human body, which soon became a weight of agony. And then the accursed tree, with its living human burden hanging upon it in helpless agony, and suffering fresh tortures as every movement irritated the fresh rents in hands and feet, was slowly heaved up by strong arms and the end of it fixed firmly in a hole dug deep in the ground for that purpose.
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- 4) The body was terribly wrenched when the cross was raised and dropped into its place; the concussion often dislocated the limbs. Inflammation of the wounds in both hands and feet speedily set in, and ere long rose also in other places where the circulation was checked by the tension of the parts; intolerable thirst and ever-increasing pain resulted; the blood, which could no longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, swelling the veins and arteries in it unnaturally, and causing the most agonizing tortures in the brain; besides, it could no longer move freely from the lungs; the heart grew more and more oppressed, and all the veins were distended.
  - 5) Had the wounds bled freely it would have been a great relief, but there was very little lost. The weight of the body itself, resting on the wooden pin of the upright beam, the burning heat of the sun, scorching the veins, and the hot winds which dried up the moisture of the body, made each moment more terrible than that before. The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles brought on painful convulsions; and this numbness, slowly extending, sometimes through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death.
4. Verse 26: "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS."
- a. It was customary to place a placard above the victim's head which gave the reason for his execution. This would not only inform the public what the charges were, but also serve as a strong warning against anyone else committing the crime indicated. Each of the four accounts give a slightly different wording for this sign:
    - 1) Matthew: This is Jesus the King of the Jews.
    - 2) Mark: The King of the Jews (15:26).
    - 3) Luke: This is the King of the Jews (23:38).
    - 4) John: Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews (19:19).
    - 5) Full account: This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.
  - b. Bible critics assert that the different wording indicates that the writers were not inspired, and that their accounts conflict. Some well meaning people, in trying to explain away the "difficulty," assert that what is seen here is the common matter that different witnesses to a certain scene usually give reports that differ; some seeing a hit-and-run accident might claim that the car was red, blue, green, and white. But such cannot be the case in the Bible for each of the writers was inspired. If there is a difference in their reports, the difference is not real. When a logical explanation resolving the apparent problem is given, the problem disappears.
  - c. One explanation is suggested by Luke's account (23:38) in which he reports that the sign was written in three different languages: Hebrew (the language of the Jews), in Greek (the language of the educated), and in Latin (the language of the Romans). It is possible that the wording in each of these languages varied from the others.
  - d. Matthew was writing initially to the Jewish people, thus would have quoted from the Hebrew version; Luke wrote initially to those of a Grecian background, thus would have quoted from the Greek version; Mark wrote initially to the Romans, thus would have cited the Latin version. If the three languages used, worded the information differently, this would explain the differences in the synoptics; and John's wording would be a compilation of the three.
  - e. Another explanation is to simply say that neither of the four gospel writers gave the full inscription. Nothing in either of the four versions contradicts anything given in the other three accounts. But if we put the information contained in all four of the accounts together, the full inscription is obtained: **This Is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.**
  - f. The statement was also intended to be a rebuff to the Jewish leaders who had hated Jesus so much that they forced Pilate to condemn him. They tried to get the governor to change the wording of the statement (John 19:19-22). They wanted it to read, "I am the King of the Jews." Pilate abruptly denied their demand, saying, "What I have written, I have written."
5. Verses 27-28: "And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors."
- a. Other versions:
    - 1) ASV: "And with him they crucify two robbers; one on his right hand, and one on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was reckoned with transgressors."
    - 2) NKJ: With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with the transgressors."
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- b. These two malefactors are called "thieves" in the KJV, but "robbers" in the ASV. The original bears out the latter rendering. Vine says it (*lestes*) means "a robber, brigand...one who plunders openly and by violence" (p.301). "They had been condemned to death for robbery, and were executed at this time probably to save the trouble of a separate execution..." (McGarvey, p.245).
  - c. Isaiah 53:12: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and **he was numbered with the transgressors**; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."
  - d. Another prophecy was fulfilled in these events. "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death..." (Isa. 53:9; cf. Mark 15:27-28). The word "wicked" in the original Hebrew is plural (thus there must be at least two malefactors), and the word "rich" is singular (there being only one Joseph of Arimathaea, in whose tomb the Lord's body rested three days).
6. Verses 29-30: "And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross."
- a. As he suffered, those who passed by (either entering or leaving the city, or coming out from the city to view him), wagged their heads as they reviled him with certain unholy, hateful statements.
  - b. To wag the head was an insulting gesture:
    - 1) 2 Kings 19:21: "This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee."
    - 2) Job 16:4: "I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you."
    - 3) Psalm 22:7-8: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."
  - c. There was no sympathy for Jesus. How hard indeed must the heart be which could look upon him in this wretched condition and not feel a pang of conscience or be touched by his plight.
  - d. "It is strange how tenaciously the minds of the people clung to the old slander that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple and build it again in three days. The remark from which it sprang was made during his first visit to Jerusalem after his baptism (John 2:18-22), and yet it is now thrown in his teeth while he hangs on the cross, as though it were the most boastful speech that he had ever made" (McGarvey, p.245). Their meaning was that he made a boastful statement which he could not fulfill—a statement they grossly misunderstood.
  - e. They challenged him to come down from the cross and they would then believe him. But one who has rejected the obvious miracles which he had done on many occasions would not likely be willing to accept the significance of any new miracle. There is a limit to divine patience; they had had their chance.
7. Verses 31-32: "Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him."
- a. His enemies were unwilling for him to die without tormenting him further with these evil words. Little did they know that they were actually killing the Lord of Glory, a crime for which they themselves would later receive unspeakable punishment. No doubt some of his enemies later became his followers when they learned more (Acts 2:37; 6:7).
  - b. But self-willed men being what they are, we expect that most of them continued to reject the Lord. These chief men of Israel perhaps had fears, knowing of his many miracles, that he would come down from the cross; but seeing he did not do so, they now berated him for not coming down. This might merely be bravado. Had he removed himself from the cross they would not have fulfilled their promise to believe on him.
  - c. They felt sure that if he had been the Messiah, God would have delivered him from the cross; but seeing that he had not, they were hardened in their unbelief. They taunted him with his profession to be the Son of God, assuming that since God did not intervene to deliver him from the cross, he was not God's Son. "All of these revilings are indicative of guilty fear mingled with cruel exultation" (McGarvey, p.245).
  - d. "The shameful behavior of the rulers of Israel in this instance has no parallel or precedent. Their blasphemous quotations from the sacred Scriptures, being then and there fulfilled before their very eyes, only emphasize the moral blackout of their nobler natures. The taunting promise that they would believe on him if he then came down from the cross was, of course, a lie....As a matter of fact, Christ did a more marvelous
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thing three days later by coming forth from the tomb, though they had it sealed and guarded, and yet they did not believe on him even after that" (Coffman, p.484).

- e. "They knew he performed the marvelous works of God (he raised the dead, restored sight to the blind, had healed the lame, etc) yet they refused to accept the implication (that he was the Son of God, as he claimed) of that fact" (ALC, 1973, p.162).

#### D. Mark 15:33-41: Jesus Cries Aloud on the Cross

1. Verse 33: "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour."
  - a. From the sixth to the ninth hour would be from noon to three o'clock in the afternoon in our terminology. "This darkness cannot be attributed to an eclipse because of the great length of time it prevailed upon the land, and because at that time of the year, the moon was full as it always was on the first day of the Passover" (McGarvey, p.246).
  - b. "Whether the darkness was over 'all the earth,' in our sense of the terms, or only over the small portion of it to which the Jews often applied these words, is uncertain. It came suddenly at noon, and passed away at three o'clock; consequently it prevailed during the three hours in which the sun has usually its greatest heat and brilliancy" (McGarvey, *ibid.*).
  - c. It cannot be explained by attributing it to a dense fog, mist, or dust storm, for this would have caused no consternation among the people, and would hardly have been worthy of mention by the inspired writers. Luke's account states that the "sun was darkened" (23:44-45). In some miraculous way, God caused the sun to cease giving its light, or did not permit its light to reach at least this part of the earth!
  - d. "Appropriately, while the Sun of Righteousness was suffering humiliation and death, the literal sun refused to shine....Tertullian said, 'In the same hour, too, the light of day was withdrawn, when the sun at the very time was in his meridian blaze. Those who were not aware that this had been predicted about Christ, no doubt thought it an eclipse. You yourselves have the account of the world portent still in your archives!'
    - 1) "In that quotation, Tertullian appealed to Proculus, a Roman senator; and it is certain Tertullian would not have made such an appeal to Roman records if it had not been true.
    - 2) "Pontius Pilate sent the following report to Tiberius, emperor of Rome, 'And when he had been crucified, there was darkness over the whole earth, the sun having been completely hidden, and the heaven appearing dark, so that the stars appeared, but had at the same time their brightness darkened, as I suppose your reverence is not ignorant of, because in all the world they lighted lamps from the sixth hour until evening. And the moon, being like blood, did not shine the whole night, and yet she happened to be at the full.'
    - 3) "From these two quotations, to which many others might be added, it is plain that one of the strong arguments used by early Christians in urging the truth of the gospel was their appeal, again and again, to persons in highest authority, to whom they invariably imputed the universal knowledge that such a wonder had indeed occurred.
    - 4) "This manifestation of God's power should cause the soul to tremble. Only the true God and Creator of the universe could step forth and lay his hand upon the established routine of the natural creation and bring to pass such a darkness as that which enveloped the world during three full hours of the crucifixion. Why did God do it? It was a singular witness to the power and godhead of him who was crucified. It was a signal that even the most brutal and depraved could understand. The sneers and jibes of the mockers froze on their evil faces at the onset of that supernatural gloom; and as the somber hours dragged on, the awful fact must have occurred to many that, for all any of them knew, the sun would never shine again! That awe-inspiring darkness was God's seal upon the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ's identity and mission upon earth. It was a sign of God's personal presence in the crucifixion. 'Thick darkness was under his feet' (Ps. 18:9)....
    - 5) "The darkness symbolized the magnitude and effect of Jesus' sufferings. It clothed the Saviour's humiliation with decent privacy. No man could have gone home that night and said, 'I saw the whole thing.' That darkness also marked the summary end of the sabbath day. Amos 8:9; Isaiah 13:10; Jeremiah 15:9 and Micah 3:6 are OT scriptures bearing on this significant truth. That was the day that the sun 'went down at noon, and the earth was darkened in a clear sky,' as Amos prophesied. That termination also extended to the dispensation of the prophets and the entire religious economy of the Jews. It was likewise a fitting symbol of God's wrath upon all who reject the world's only Redeemer" (Coffman, pp.487-489).

- a) Amos 8:9: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day."
- b) Isaiah 13:10: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.
- c) Jeremiah 15:9: "She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD."
- d) Micah 3:6: "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them."
- e. "Darkness was typical of the powers of darkness which seemed to be prevailing; it was also typical of the great sufferings of the atoning for sin and the dark hour of sin and depravity that could crucify God's beloved Son; it could also typify the darkness of sin over all the earth, which was to be dispelled by the cross of Jesus and by his resurrection from the dead, when he brought light and life by his resurrection" (Boles, on Matthew, p.543).
- f. This was significant and miraculous. It was at a time of a full moon because the Jews' lunar month started with the new moon, and the Passover was observed on the 14th (Num. 9:3). An eclipse at high noon cannot occur when the moon is full; and an eclipse cannot last three hours! (see Hamilton, p.191). This apparently fulfills Amos 8:2-9. It signified a dark day for Israel for she had been judged and found wanting, and her Law was taken away. It signified the sadness felt in heaven in the suffering of its Prince. It signified sadness to humanity for the pure One was suffering for the sinful.
- g. Compare: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day" (Amos 2:9).
  - 1) The sun would go down (set) at noon, and the earth would be dark on a clear day. This is a figure of speech. The people would be carried away into captivity just when they were in prosperous circumstances and their prospects for the future appeared great. At the very time when they thought they were enjoying their "golden age," their judgment would come. This kind of language is frequently employed in the prophets in reference to the overthrown of nations (Isa. 13:1,6-11,13-22; 34:4-5; Ezek. 32:2,7-8,11,15).
  - 2) There may be more to the meaning of this verse than is first seen. One of the significant features of the Old Testament prophets is to discuss a matter that concerned the time then present, then without warning to jump to some event of the distant future:
    - a) 2 Samuel 7:12-14: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men." Peter showed in Acts 2 that this prophecy primarily described the establishment of Christ's kingdom (2:29-36).
    - b) 1 Peter 1:10: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you."
- h. Many scholars believe that in this passage is found an allusion to the darkening of the sky at the crucifixion of Christ. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour" (Matt. 27:45). That would be from noon until three in the afternoon, in our system of dividing the day.
2. Verse 34: "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
  - a. At the ninth hour, the Lord cried out with a loud voice, raising the wonderful question, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Some have thought that the Lord was merely quoting from Psalm 22:1, which is a Messianic prophecy. But if so, why did he speak the line in such a loud voice? Perhaps so that those who heard him could know that he is the Messiah. But it is more likely that he was actually living out the anguish of which the statement speaks.
  - b. "The depth of meaning contained in this bitter outcry can never, we suppose, be fathomed by human thought, yet the word 'forsaken' directs our thought in the right channel. If a good man who has long trusted in God and delighted in his favor could suddenly realize that God had *forsaken* him, he would enter, at least partly, into the Savior's feeling. But the peculiar relation which Jesus sustained to the Father rendered this feeling

more intense than human hearts can experience, and at the same time it renders most mysterious to us the forsaking itself. It is enough to know that in it lay the chief bitterness of the Savior's death" (McGarvey, p.246).

- c. Although Christ was utterly sinless, yet he suffered as though he were a sinner—separated from God. But this statement is beyond human comprehension; it enters into the eternal, and has to do with such deep considerations that we are not able to fathom them. This is the only statement of the seven statements from the cross, recorded by more than one inspired writer.
- d. "The cry is the result not only of His suffering body, but also from the fact that Jesus is the sin-bearer of the world. God in his holiness could not have fellowship with sin and therefore is removed from the Son (Ex. 33:3; Josh. 7:11-12; Ps. 66:18; Isa. 59:1-2; Isa. 64:7; Hos. 5:6).
  - 1) "The Greek verb translated in English translation '*forsaken*,' is in the aorist tense. Therefore, indicating the forsaken state had taken place in that time period in the past (the three hours of darkness), and had now reached its climax, thus the Lord's loud outcry.
  - 2) "Paul states that Jesus, by His death had redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). Jesus was our sin offering (II Cor. 5:21). Therefore, Jesus died in our place, that He might bring us near to God" (Laws, *The Book of Matthew*, p.685).
- e. Barnes offered the following thoughts on *My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me*:
  - 1) This expression is one denoting intense suffering. It has been difficult to understand in what sense Jesus was "forsaken by God." It is certain that God APPROVED his work. It is certain that he was innocent. He had done nothing to forfeit the favor of God. As his own Son—holy, harmless, undefiled, and obedient—God still loved him. In either of these senses God could not have forsaken him. But the expression was probably used in reference to the following circumstances, namely:
    - 2) His great bodily sufferings on the cross, greatly aggravated by his previous scourging, and by the want of sympathy, and by the revilings of his enemies on the cross. A person suffering thus might address God as if he was forsaken, or given up to extreme anguish.
    - 3) He himself said that this was "the power of darkness," Luke 22:53. It was the time when his enemies, including the Jews and Satan, were suffered to do their utmost. It was said of the serpent that he should bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, Gen 3:15. By that has been commonly understood to be meant that, though the Messiah would finally crush and destroy the power of Satan, yet he should himself suffer "through the power of the devil." When he was tempted (Luke 4), it was said that the tempter "departed from him for a season." There is no improbability in supposing that he might be permitted to return at the time of his death, and exercise his power in increasing the sufferings of the Lord Jesus ....
    - 4) Yet we have reason to think that there was still something more than all this that produced this exclamation. Had there been no deeper and more awful sufferings, it would be difficult to see why Jesus should have shrunk from these sorrows and used such a remarkable expression.
    - 5) Isaiah tells us (Isa 53:4-5) that "he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; that by his stripes we are healed." He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Gal 3:13); he was made a sin-offering (2 Cor 5:21); he died in our place, on OUR account, that he might bring us near to God. It was this, doubtless, which caused his intense sufferings.
    - 6) It was the manifestation of God's hatred of sin, in some way which he has not explained, that he experienced in that dread hour. It was suffering endured by HIM that was due to US, and suffering by which, and by which alone, we can be saved from eternal death. [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved]
  3. Verses 35-36: "And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down."
    - a. "I am constrained to think, notwithstanding various opinions of commentators (see Lange and Alford), that the persons who made this remark misunderstood Jesus, and took the word Eli for Elias. The mistake arose, not from ignorance of the language, but from the indistinct articulation of Jesus. He had now been on the cross about six hours, and the feverish thirst produced by his intense suffering and some loss of blood, together with the great strain on the muscles of his chest, which resulted from hanging on his outstretched hands, must have rendered articulation difficult and indistinct" (McGarvey, p.246). There is a close similarity between the Eli and the Greek name for Elijah.

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- b. According to John 19:28-29, Jesus also said, "I thirst." In response to this statement, which apparently came in connection with the statement of Matthew 27:46, someone gave him a drink. It was offered to him in a sponge, extended on a reed (a stalk of hyssop, according to John's account). The drink was called vinegar.
    - 1) "This was the common drink of Roman soldiers. It was a light wine, turned sour and mixed with water. John says (19:29) there was a vessel set full of vinegar, probably for the use of the soldiers who watched his crucifixion" (Barnes, p.313).
    - 2) "The drink of vinegar was to remove the painful dryness of the throat which his articulation betrayed" (McGarvey, p.246).
  - c. Others who were present told the one offering this merciful drink to "let be, and let us see whether Elias will come to save him." John reports that the Lord received the drink (19:30). This is a different case from the offer of the other drink soon after arriving at the crucifixion site, which the Lord refused.
  - d. McGarvey says that the comment of the rest "is not intended as an objection to giving him the vinegar; for the man who used these words had already given it to him. He gave Jesus the vinegar to moisten his tongue and lips, and the remark, 'Let alone,' is an indefinite expression addressed to the bystanders, and meaning that they should be quiet and patient to see the result. In the same way must we construe the remark addressed by some of the bystanders to the man who gave the drink, as reported by Matthew. He says, 'The rest said, Let be (*aphes*, in the singular number), let us see whether Elias will come to save him.' They made the remark to him, and he to them; but neither had reference to the drink of vinegar" (p.363).
4. Verse 37: "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."
- a. The expression, "gave up the ghost" is an "obsolete expression for 'gave up the spirit.' It contemplates the body as the man, and the spirit as being released that it may depart. The thought is utterly inconsistent with Materialism" (McGarvey, p.247). Luke reports that he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and having said that, "he gave up the ghost" (23:46). John 19:30 reports: "He said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (19:30).
  - b. The time of his death was about three o'clock in the afternoon, after suffering on the cross for about six hours. Despite the horrible amount of agony he experienced during that period of time, this interval shows his death came much sooner than was usual in death by crucifixion. Sometimes the victim lingered for several days before finally expiring.
  - c. The Jews were in a hurry to get the bodies off the crosses (John 19:31). The Romans customarily left the victim on the cross until the bodies were eaten by birds or disintegrated. The Old Testament forbade leaving the bodies unburied over night (Deut. 21:22-23).
    - 1) They requested that Pilate order the legs of Jesus and the two thieves be broken to hasten death, and thus enabling their bodies to be removed and buried. The reason for this request is that they did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses during the Sabbath.
    - 2) The "Preparation" was on Friday, the day prior to the Sabbath; this Sabbath was the first day of the week of unleavened bread, an important Jewish feast. This Sabbath was a "high day" because of its double significance: the Sabbath plus the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These Jewish religious leaders were not above lying and conniving in order to kill an innocent man, but the rituals and rites must be carefully observed (Matt. 23:23-24).
  - d. They were positive that Jesus was dead before the removal of his body (John 19:32-37). To break a crucifixion victim's legs would hasten death: some say it would make it impossible to breathe since they had to push with their legs and pull themselves up with their arms against the nails in order to inhale and exhale. And the shock of having two major bones harshly broken, especially in addition to the horrible agony the victim had already endured, would certainly hasten death.
  - e. They found Jesus already dead, and did not break his legs; this fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of Psalm 34:20 (cf. John 19:35-36). Jesus fulfilled all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament that pertained to him. He was typified by the Passover Lamb which was not to have any of his bones broken (Ex. 12:46; cf. 1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29).
    - 1) Psalm 34:20: "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."
    - 2) John 19:35-36: "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."
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- 3) Exodus 12:46: "In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof."
  - 4) 1 Corinthians 5:7: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."
  - 5) John 1:29: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."
- f. The soldiers pierced the side of Jesus with a spear. This wound would have killed him had he not already been dead. The fact that blood and water came out shows that he was dead. This piercing of his side also fulfilled prophecy:
- 1) Zechariah 12:10: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."
  - 2) John 19:37: "And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."
5. Verse 38: "And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."
- a. The veil was the heavy and beautiful curtain that separated between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the Temple. "By shutting out from the most holy place all persons except the high priest, who alone was permitted to pass through it, and this only once in the year, it signified that the way into the holiest—that is, into heaven was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing. (Heb. 9:7,8). But the moment that Jesus died, thus making the way manifest, the veil was appropriately rent in twain from top to bottom, disclosing the most holy place to the priests who were at that time offering the evening incense in the holy place" (McGarvey, p.247).
  - b. "The miracle in this instance, other than its timing which is a feature of all these wonders, was that a veil untouched by human hands should have fallen into two equal pieces, in a progressive rending from top to bottom, the force which parted it coming, not from beneath as if violent hands had been laid upon it, but from above as though some unseen hand had passed down the center of it.
    - 1) "The event occurred at three o'clock in the afternoon, at a time when the priests would have been busy with the evening sacrifice, going about their tasks with lighted lamps, with a very large number of them present; and it is from this group of eyewitnesses to that remarkable wonder that we may suppose is the explanation of why such a large 'company of the priests believed' (Acts 6:7), being later converted to Christ.
    - 2) "One may only imagine the fear and awe which attended the rending of that veil, witnessed by so many priests, busy with their lanterns, apprehensive of the enveloping darkness, and eventually associating the event with the final cry of Christ as he perished on the cross" (Coffman, pp.489f).
  - c. Those priests involved in the daily offerings had never had the opportunity of entering the Most Holy Place. It is unlikely that any of them had ever even seen what lay behind the veil. Thus, to them the rending of the veil must have been a truly shocking and astounding event, one that would make an even greater impression on them when they learned how this event coincided precisely with the death of Jesus, and that this same Jesus was raised up from the dead three days later. Josephus says that the Most Holy Place was empty of furniture; the ark of the covenant had disappeared centuries earlier.
  - d. The rending of the veil signified several significant things:
    - 1) The abrogation of the Old Covenant (Matt. 27:50-51; 2 Cor. 3:14-16; Heb. 9:7-10). It also abolished the office of the Old Testament high priest, and lesser priests.
    - 2) The mysteries of God's eternal plan, which were unrevealed until the New Testament was given, were now to be opened to man's understanding (Eph. 1-11; Rom. 16:25-26; Matt. 13:17).
    - 3) It symbolizes the separation between God and men, and the need for a mediator which role the Levitical high priest filled. The rending of the veil proclaims that all men are on equal standing with God and need no human priest as mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Matt. 23:8; Rev. 1:6 (ASV)).
    - 4) Its rending symbolizes the fact that Christ, our High Priest, was about to enter heaven, and offer the atoning sacrifice for us (Heb. 9:6-17).
    - 5) The veil being rent pictures the fact that the way into heaven has now been opened.

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- a) Hebrews 9:8: “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”
  - b) Hebrews 10:19-22: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”
- 6) The veil itself represents for us death by which we leave this world and enter eternity. Its having been rent depicts the great truth that Christ, by his death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven, has won victory for us over death.
- a) Isaiah 25:7-8: “And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.”
  - b) 1 Corinthians 15:20-22: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”
  - c) 1 Corinthians 15:55-57: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
6. Verse 39: “And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.”
- a. Compare: "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54).
  - b. "From the fact that the centurion was of heathen education, and that the words Son and God are without the article in Greek, some have understood him as meaning,
    - 1) ““This was a son of a god....But the expression Son of God, with both words *anarthrous*, occurs frequently in connections which show that it means the same as when the article is used. (Verse 43; Luke 1:35; John 19:7.)
    - 2) “It must be remembered also that these Roman officers, while resident in Judea, made it a part of their business to study the peculiarities of the people with whom they had to deal, and that sometimes, as in the case of Cornelius and the centurion of Capernaum (8:8-10), they became converts to the Jewish religion.
    - 3) “This man lived in Jerusalem in the midst of the excitement about Jesus; he had this very day heard him charged with blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God; and he had heard the same idea expressed concerning him since he was suspended on the cross (verse 43); and therefore he must have been stupid indeed if he did not know what was meant by the expression. It is almost certain that he knew what Jesus claimed to be, and that when he saw the miracles accompanying his death, he was convinced that the claim was just" (McGarvey, pp.247f).
  - c. The very wording of Matthew's report of the centurion's statement and why he made it, is sufficient to show that the man fully believed that Jesus was whom he claimed to be. The reasons for his affirmation are stated as being the earthquake and the other things done in his sight, including the three hours of darkness.
    - 1) The result of having seen these impressive miraculous events caused these stalwart men to fear greatly. Notice that these were not men who were easily stampeded into such a statement. They were used to violence and turmoil; they were pagans by religion and upbringing; they did not have any special attraction to the Jews or Jesus, in fact they had reason to be suspicious of the whole nation since they were subjugated to Rome and had often raised insurrections against their conquerors.
    - 2) Jesus was being crucified on the charge of being king of the Jews. But the supernatural darkness and the earthquake, coupled with the meekness and control of Jesus moved these hardened men to make the good confession.
  - d. Many people who knew about Jesus confessed him to be greater than a mere man.
    - 1) Angels confessed him—Luke 2:10-11.
    - 2) Demons—Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24, 34; 3:11.
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- 3) The Father—Matthew 2:15-17; 17:1-5; John 12:28.
  - 4) Simeon—Luke 2:30.
  - 5) Nicodemus—John 3:1-2.
  - 6) Anna—Luke 2:36.
  - 7) Nathaniel—John 1:49.
  - 8) John the Baptizer—John 1:29.
  - 9) Peter—Matthew 16:16.
  - 10) Pilate—Matthew 27:4.
  - 11) Pilate's wife—Matthew 27:19.
  - 12) Judas—Matthew 27:4.
  - 13) The centurion and his men—Matthew 27:54.
7. Verses 40-41: “There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.”
- a. All the synoptists mention this group of women, Luke without enumeration of their names. Luke has a similar group (or, more strictly, the same) at chap. 8:2,3, with some names enumerated, Here three are mentioned as belonging to the company that followed him, when he was in Galilee.
  - b. “And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance” (Luke 8:3).
  - c. They stood afar off, watching the sad events. Luke includes others who are called the Lord's acquaintances. This latter group were certain friends who were devoted to Jesus. “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:25-27).
  - d. It is a touching fact that the mother of Jesus was beside the cross, and not among those who stood further away. No one could imagine a harsher scene for a loving mother to witness than what Mary here saw!
- E. Mark 15:42-47: Pilate Permits the Lord's Body to Be Interred.
1. Verses 42-43: “And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.”
    - a. Compare: "And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children" (Matt. 27:55-56).
      - 1) A large group of women beheld the crucifixion from a distance. This group was comprised of the women who followed the Lord from Galilee. Among this group were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. These women are said to be standing "afar off."
      - 2) "This accounts for the fact that the mother of Jesus, though present, is not mentioned among them; for she, with the apostle John, was standing nearer, near enough for Jesus to point her out by a look (his only way of doing so) as the one whom John was henceforth to regard as his own mother. (John 19:25-27)" (McGarvey, p.248).
      - 3) These godly women did not desert the Lord in his hour of trouble. They did not have as much to fear from the Lord's enemies as did his apostles. Women were at the cross to the last, and the first to his tomb on the resurrection morning.
    - b. Mary Magdalene is described by McGarvey in his comments on Mark 16:1:
      - 1) "The recorded history of Mary Magdalene is almost entirely confined to her connection with the cross and the sepulcher. Only two other facts in her life are known. She was one of the women who in Galilee followed Jesus and ministered to him out of their substance (Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:41), and out of her, as we see in this verse, the Lord had cast seven demons.

- 2) "Magdalene means a woman of Magdala, and indicates that the town of Magdala, on the western shore of the lake of Galilee, was her native place. There, perhaps, Jesus had first met her, and bound her to himself in bonds of everlasting gratitude by casting out the seven demons. Her possession by these demons was a fearful calamity, but it implies nothing derogatory to her character....neither is there any thing else in the sacred narratives to justify the popular conception that her character had been bad.
  - 3) "The supposition that she is identical with 'the woman that was a sinner,' spoken of in Luke 7:37,38, is without a shadow of foundation. In reality, all of the indications of her character and position which are furnished by the Scriptures point to a woman in easy circumstances, with a benevolent disposition, tender sensibilities, and commanding influence. Her name stands first among the female attendants of Jesus at almost every mention of it, and on her he conferred the peculiar honor of making her the first human witness of his resurrection from the dead.
  - 4) "It is a shame on the Christian world that a woman of virtue so pre-eminent has come to be commonly regarded as a reformed harlot; and that her cognomen which served only to distinguish her from other Marys by indicating her birthplace, has become, in the contracted form of Magdalene, the name of societies and institutions for the reformation of abandoned women.
  - 5) "This is an illustration, however, of the corrupting and degrading tendency of human tradition when it dares to tamper with the sacred narratives. It is Rome that has given Mary the false and low repute in which she is erroneously held" (pp.369f).
- c. Mary the mother of James and Joses. She was the wife of Clopas (*aka* Alphaeus—Matt. 10:3; Mark 15:40-41; John 19:25). In John's account, the husband's name is given as "Cleopas" but the marginal reading has "Clopas." The ASV also has the latter. Woods says that Clopas and Cleopas were different individuals (*Commentary on John*, p.406), and refers to Luke 24:18. Mark identifies the Mary as the mother of James the Less and Joses (Mark 15:40). This James is said to be the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3).
  - d. The mother of Zebedee's children is identified in Mark 15:40 as Salome. The sons of this lady were James and John (Matt. 4:21).
  - e. It appears that a fourth lady is referred to in John 19:25—the sister of the Lord's mother. Some scholars think that this sister is identified in the next clause as Mary the wife of Clopas, but that would have two sisters with the same name. This sister (whose name is not given) is very likely Salome, the mother of James and John. If so, then Jesus and these two apostles were relatives (cousins). John the Baptizer was the son of Mary's cousin, Elizabeth (Luke 1:36), making him a cousin to Jesus.
2. Verses 44-45: "And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph."
    - a. Pilate did not take Joseph's word that Jesus was dead; he was astonished to hear that the Lord was already dead. Pilate asked the centurion whether Jesus was dead, and on learning that he was, Joseph's request was granted (Mark 15:43-45). "It was seldom that persons who were crucified had friends to care for their remains; but Pilate knew too well the popularity of Jesus to be surprised that even a man in Joseph's position should propose to give him a decent burial, and having no malice to gratify, he readily granted the request" (McGarvey, p.248).
    - b. The prophecy of Isaiah 53 was fulfilled in Joseph burying the Lord's body in his own unused tomb. This man followed Jesus, but secretly because of the powerful Jewish leaders. Mark 15:43 speaks of him as an honorable counselor; Luke 23:50-51 describes him as a good and righteous [just] man. He and Barnabas are among the very few who are called "good" in the Scriptures.
    - c. "The importance of what he did here is shown by the fact that all four gospel accounts record his hand in burying the Lord's body. "In times of distress and danger, God has frequently raised up a Joseph. When Israel was threatened with famine, when Herod would have slain the infant Christ, and then again when the helpless body of our Lord was upon the cross, there stepped forth upon the stage JOSEPH. The awful storm was at the full, the enemies glorying in their triumph, supposing Christ was out of the way forever; but in that hour came Joseph!" (Coffman, p.501).
    - d. He was a rich man; a good man; just and honorable; a counselor; he waited for the kingdom; he had not consented to the death of Jesus; he was a secret disciple of the Lord. See Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38. Arimathaea was a city of the Jews (Luke 23:51), but its location is unknown. This man went boldly (Mark 15:44) before Pilate to beg the body of Jesus for burial. The apostles had forsaken the Lord in Gethsemane and fled; Joseph had not openly revealed his faith before, but now his faith shines brilliantly!
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It was evening when he made his request of Pilate (Matt. 27:57). The time would have been before the beginning of the Sabbath, but was very near that time.

3. Verse 46: “And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.”
  - a. Other versions:
    - 1) ASV: “And he bought a linen cloth, and taking him down, wound him in the linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of a rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.”
    - 2) NKJ: “Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.”
  - b. Compare: “And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid” (John 19:38-42).
  - c. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. The two took down the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb. He rolled a great stone into place at the entrance to the seal the sepulcher. Since he was a rich man, he might have had servants along to assist him. Nicodemus had assisted him in this good work.
  - d. Nicodemus had brought a hundred-pound weight of myrrh and aloes to use in the Lord's burial (John 19:39). He had approached the Lord by night (John 3:1 ff), and is mentioned as defending the Lord in John 7:50-52. This great amount of material was used in the embalming process then practiced; it was placed next to the body and wrapped with a linen cloth; possibly a layer of the spices was also put under the body, on the resting place (2 Chronicles 16:14). John says the Lord's body was "wound" in the linen clothes (19:40). The hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes represented a sizeable weight.
  - e. The tomb was hewn out of rock; the opening was low; a great stone was rolled into place at the entrance (John 19:41-42; 20:5). It was conveniently located near the crucifixion site, in a garden (John 19:41). It was a new tomb (John 19:41). No one had been buried in it before the Lord. It was new in the sense that it had never been used (Greek, *kainon*), not necessarily that it had only recently been hewn. Also, lest anyone think that the body of Jesus had come into contact with some great one's body and was raised by its power, as in 2 Kings 13:21: “And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.”
  - f. The great stone with which the tomb was closed is important to the story. The Greek text describes this stone by the words *lithon megan* (Matt. 27:60) which is the source of our English word "megalith" (a huge stone). Several women knew they could not move it, thus no beaten, crucified man who had been severely wounded in the side by a spear could do so. It may very well have been the case that to remove the stone from inside was impossible, even for a strong, healthy man.
    - 1) The stones used to close ancient tombs usually were set in a sloping groove, a runway, with the lowest point being in front of the tomb entrance. It would require far more strength to remove the stone than to roll it into place.
    - 2) The stone was round with the front and back being flat, like a great stone wheel. When it was moved, it was not merely pushed a little to the side so that Jesus could squeeze through, but was moved completely away from the tomb opening (John 20:1). Matthew reports that the tomb had been hewn out of **the** rock—thus it was hewn from solid rock.
4. Verse 47: “And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.”
  - a. Faithful women also attended the burial (Luke 23:53-56). Because of the nearness of the beginning of the Sabbath, these women returned home to prepare additional spices and ointments for the completion of the burial process. These faithful friends still loved the Lord, still believed him to be a great one, but their hope had turned into despair.
  - b. Some of the women were situated nearby while the Lord's body buried. Matthew identifies two of them as "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." Mark identifies the latter Mary as the mother of Joses.

- c. Luke indicates that there may have been more women than just these two who witnessed the burial (23:53-56). They watched the tomb for a while and then went home to prepare spices

## Barabbas

Guy N. Woods

From Mark we learn that Barabbas had been a member of a band who participated in an insurrection against the government and had committed murder in so doing. Matthew refers to him as "a notable prisoner," thus indicating that he had attained to considerable notoriety because of his crimes. Him they chose instead of Jesus; and thus, by a strange irony of fate they caused to be released a man actually guilty of the crime with which they had falsely charged Christ—treason and sedition.

Jews, in general, were sympathetic toward such insurrectionary movements because they bitterly resented the presence of the Romans who occupied their land and Barabbas had done that which Jesus refused to do—oppose by political means the Roman power. The Jews accused Jesus of being a dangerous man to the Romans when he was not and they asked for the release of Barabbas who was!

The bitterness of this angry and vengeful crowd beggars description. Led on by corrupt and malignant priests and civil officers the stupified people joined in the shout, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Gone was any remembrance of his gentle life, his gracious words and his marvelous works of mercy; spewing forth from the volcanic vortex of their corrupt and hardened hearts was the wild passion of hate, malignancy and consuming desire for his death; and they had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear any alternative to the murderous mission they were bent on bringing to completion.

The light which had once radiated through them as keepers of the oracles of God was now darkness and the favored position they once held as the chosen people they had long since forfeited. Never did human beings sink so low as these professedly religious leaders when they deliberately chose to have a murderer released so that the sinless Son of God might die.

It is little wonder that when the blessed Lord was experiencing the shame and ignominy of those last hours and then suffered the horrors of crucifixion, the earth became darkened and the sun refused to shine upon a race whose leaders had fiendishly sought and secured the death of the noblest, purest and most precious person who ever lived upon the earth.

Humanity must collectively bow its head in shame that the cry, "not this man, but Barabbas," should have brought it so low. The chief actors of this tragic drama live only in the somber darkness of their evil deeds; Pilate, the Jewish authorities, the Roman soldiers, the sullen mob; they have long since gone the way of all the earth, and live in the memories of men largely because of the inhuman disposition and conduct they exhibited, while he whose destruction they desired and eventually accomplished came forth from the grave, ascended in triumph into the heavens, from which he will one day return to claim his own and to administer just punishment to his tormentors.

Tragically, many people of the world are still choosing the world rather than Jesus, thus not in word, but in deed, also saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Their myopic eyes are resistant to spiritual light and their dull ears are out of resonance with the clear, sweet voice of truth and thus they see only what is material and hear only the alluring sounds of the world, their hearts being hardened to the appeals of a higher, nobler nature. Sadly, these, too, like the rebellious Jews of old, will discover their error only when it is too late. [*Commentary on John*, Gospel Advocate Company, pp.289f].

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## Mark 16

*On what day was our Lord crucified? If on Friday, as many say, how could he have been in the grave three days and three nights, as the scriptures say?" (Matt. 12:38-40).*

Guy N. Woods provides us with the following scholarly and informative assessment:

This matter poses a problem only when we attempt to interpret it in the light of *present* concepts, rather than those existing when these events occurred. All difficulty involving the "three days and three nights" disappears when we follow *first* century usage.

The phrase, "three days and three nights," means today a period of seventy-two hours. It is clear, from the accounts given that Jesus came forth from the tomb early on the first day of the week—shortly before dawn. "Very early" on that day the women found the tomb empty (Mark 16:12). Mark tells us that the sabbath "was past" when they came. It is true that Matthew says the woman came to the sepulchre "late on the sabbath day," but then the explanation is immediately offered that it was "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," showing us that it was that writer's intention to indicate that the empty tomb was discovered at or very near dawn—the first appearance of light. The Sabbath day officially ended at sunset; dawn was in the early morning hour, with all the dark portion of the night intervening.

Thus, the words, "late on the sabbath day," cannot be construed to mean "while the sabbath was yet on," nor is such necessary in the light of Matthew's clear indication that it was near dawn on "the first day of the week," Sunday, when the women came to the tomb and found it empty. The accounts of Matthew and Mark are thus easily harmonized; and, Luke's report puts the matter in clear perspective: "And it was the day of the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women, who had come with him out of Galilee, followed after, and beheld the tomb, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. And on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." (Luke 23:54-56; 24:1-3.) It is therefore, very clear, from these combined accounts, that Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, shortly before the first light of dawn.

(It is of interest to note that Matthew's phrase, "late on the sabbath, Matt. 28:1 translates the Greek phrase, *opse de sabbatoon*, and *opse* is a preposition with the genitive, which actually signifies, in this construction, *after*, hence, "after the sabbath;"—cf. Arndt Gingrich—and Thayer says that it means "the sabbath having just passed, after the sabbath, i.e., at the early dawn of the first day of the week—an interpretation absolutely demanded..." It is certain, from these considerations that Matthew did not intend to declare that Jesus rose from the dead on the sabbath day.)

In view of the foregoing facts, it is impossible to extend the period our Lord was in the tomb to seventy-two hours—three full days and three full nights. In the late afternoon of the day he was crucified, he was placed in tomb. Luke 23:50-56. This occurred shortly before sunset, when the sabbath began. For him to have been in the tomb three full days and three full nights, he would have emerged from the tomb at the same time *of day*, i.e., in the late afternoon, shortly before sunset, three days later. It is absolutely certain, however, that he rose from the dead shortly before daylight, on the first day of the week. Whatever the day on which he was crucified, whether Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, if he were in the tomb three full days and three full nights, i.e., seventy-two hours, he could not have come forth from the grave in the early morning hour. But he did; therefore, the scriptures do not teach that Jesus was in the tomb three full days and three full nights.

Nor, is such a conclusion necessary, in view of the fact that the phrase, "three days and three nights, in biblical parlance, does not designate a seventy-two hours' period. If this can be shown, (and it can indeed easily be demonstrated the day on which the Lord was crucified becomes obvious. Misapprehension, at this point, is the

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result of the *effort to make* three days and three nights a period of seventy-two hours, leading some to the conclusion that Jesus was crucified on Thursday. Some have sought to make it Wednesday, and I know of at least one attempt to put the crucifixion on *Tuesday!*) All such efforts are vain, because they all fail of the purpose prompting them. Let us suppose, for example, he was crucified on Thursday and buried late on that day, just before sundown. Three full days and three full nights later would be Sunday afternoon, just before sundown, when he must have come forth from the grave, as determined by our concept of three days and nights. However the records show that hours before this period was up, the tomb was empty. Suppose he was buried on Wednesday just before sundown. We know he rose early "on the first day of the week. This period includes more than seventy-two hours, and also involves four nights—not three! Any effort, the design of which is to make the period our Lord spent in the tomb exactly three full days and three full nights is a fruitless and vain exercise, a useless and unnecessary endeavor.

The sacred writers repeatedly affirm that Jesus would rise from the dead on "the third day." (Matthew said it (16:21, Luke affirmed it (9:22), and Peter confirmed it (Acts 10:40). On two different occasions it is said that he would be raised in three days. (Matt.26:61; John 2:19). In Matt.27:63, Mark 8:31 it is said that he would be raised "after three days." It must follow, therefore, that the phrases, *on the third day*, *in three days*, and *after three days*, all signify exactly the same period, inasmuch as they are all applied to the same event. The period designated in these matters is described as "three days and three nights. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. Thus, *on the third day*, *in three days*, and *three days and three nights* all embrace exactly the same period as applied to the interval our Lord was in the tomb.

A simple induction of passages where these phrases or similar ones occur, will show that this was ordinary Jewish usage. *After three days*, and *until the third day* appear on one statement made by the Pharisees in connection with our Lord's burial. With malice in their hearts and with no respect for the dead, they said, "That deceiver said, while he was yet alive, *After three days* I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure *until the third day*." (Matt. 27:63, 64.) They thus used these phrases synonymously. When the lovely Esther appeared before King Ahasuerus to plead for her people she instructed the Jews of Shushan neither to eat nor drink for three days, "night or day:" yet, she went into the king's presence "on the third day." (Esth. 4:16; 5:1.) Joseph caused his brothers to be put "into ward," for three days, yet he is said to have released them "the third day." (Gen. 42:17, 18.) After three days, in three days, on the third day, three days and three nights are phrases used interchangeably to designate the same period in Jewish and Hebrew usage.

Moreover, those people were disposed frequently to speak of a portion of a designated period as the period itself. An excellent example of this is to be seen in the manner in which Luke and Paul refer to the period the apostle preached in Ephesus and its environs. "And he entered into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of *three months*, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of *two years*." (Acts 19:8-10.) His activities in the synagogue and his labors in the school of Tyrannus embraced a period of two years and three months. When Paul came to designate this period, he did so in round numbers, saying that it was "by the space of three years." (Acts 20:31.) It is of no little significance, in the light of these studies, that Paul, in this instance uses a Greek term (*trietia*), occurring only here in the New Testament, and signifying a *space* of time *within* which a thing is done, thus indicating the limits of the period rather than the exact period itself.

Our Lord was crucified on Friday, the day before the sabbath (Mark 16:42), and he rose triumphantly from the tomb early on the Lord's day, the third day following. (Mark 16:9.) [Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers*, Vol. 1, pp.219-221].

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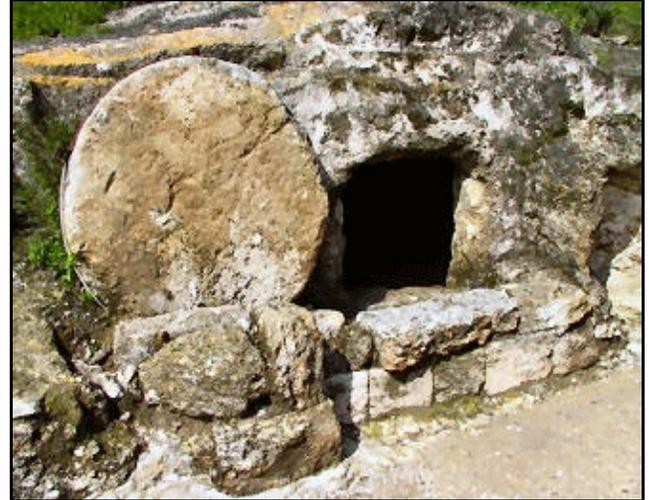
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### A. Mark 16:1-8: Women Come to the Tomb to Anoint the Body of the Lord.

1. Verses 1-2: “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”
    - a. Other Accounts:
      - 1) “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him” (John 20:1-2).
      - 2) “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments” (Luke 24:1-4).
    - b. Mary got to the tomb in the darkness, just before sunrise. The day of the crucifixion had ended [that was on Friday]; the twenty-fours of the Sabbath had passed; the dark part of the first day of the week [Sunday] was about to end, as the sun would soon rise. “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils” (Mark 16:9).
    - c. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early on the first day of the week, while it before daylight. The Jewish method of dividing the days of the week was to begin a day at sunset [6:00 P.M.], and that day would end twenty-fours later. Their days began with darkness, went through the daylight hours, and came to an end at sunset.
    - d. The complete story is told only when all of the accounts have been consulted; no one of these four writers claimed to have reported every detail, and no detail reported by one is contradicted by any of the others. John does not say that Mary Magdalene came alone; Matthew and Mark do not say that only those women they named were present; Luke gives a more complete picture of the identity of the women since he names more than the others, and states twice that there were others present who are not named (24:1,10).
    - e. The purpose of their coming to the sepulchre was to anoint the Lord's body (Mk. 16:1-2). Matthew merely says they came to see the sepulchre, since he had not previously said anything about them preparing spices for that purpose. Luke 23:50-56 reports that the women had watched as Joseph placed the Lord's body in the tomb, and that they returned to the city to wait out the Sabbath, and to prepare spices for the anointing process.
      - 1) Mark states that they had purchased sweet spices. They would have been able to buy and prepare these spices after the sabbath had ended the evening before, and left before daylight to make their way to the tomb as early as possible.
      - 2) It appears that they knew nothing about the Roman guard, or else they would have realized they would not be permitted entrance into the tomb. Also, they discussed among themselves, as they made their journey, how they would be able to move the great stone sealing the sepulchre (Mark 16:3-4).
      - 3) Each gospel writer provided the information needed to accomplish the end in view for his account. John names Mary Magdalene only, probably because he gives a detailed view of her encounter with the risen Lord, being the first person to see him after his resurrection (Mark 16:9).
  2. Verses 3-4: “And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.”
    - a. These good ladies discussed a question about how to gain entrance into the Lord's tomb, since it was sealed by a very large stone. It was clear that they could not roll it away. The second type of stone depicted below would be the kind of stone to be removed. This kind of stone could be “rolled.”
    - b. The great stone that covered the entrance to the tomb was in place throughout the Sabbath. They wondered how this stone could be removed, but that had taken place before their arrival. The guard had also vacated the area: “And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did
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shake, and became as dead men” (Matt. 28:2-4). None of the Roman soldiers were present when Mary and the others arrived. The stone was removed to let the witness in, not to let the Lord out.

### Two Types of Stones Used at Ancient Tombs



3. Verse 5: “And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.”
  - a. The size of the tomb is suggested by the number of people inside it at one time. The two angels were present, plus several women. David’s tomb is said to have been about 100 feet in length, with places for a good many bodies to be entombed. These tombs were hollowed from solid rock, and had niches cut into the sides where the bodies were placed.
  - b. Other accounts:
    - 1) Luke 24:3-6: “And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.”
    - 2) Matthew 28:5-8: “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.”
  - c. There were two angels present, but only one of them spoke to the women. Luke reports definitely that two messengers were there; neither Matthew nor Mark denied that there was more than one. John does not mention the angels. The three statements are in perfect agreement.
  - d. Compare: “And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you” (Matt. 28:6-7),
  - e. McGarvey gives a dramatic depiction: "Both the appearance and the action of this angel were majestic in the extreme. He came down from heaven like a stream of light; he stood at the door of the sepulcher, with raiment white as snow and a countenance gleaming like lightning; with resistless hand he rolled back the great stone, at whose fall the ground trembled with an earthquake; then he calmly took a seat on the stone and turned his gleaming face upon the soldiers, as if to say, See what I have done! No wonder that 'the keepers did shake and become as dead men'" (McGarvey, p.250).
  - f. It was probably still dark when the angel came, thus the light of his clothing and countenance would appear even more brilliant. These were not weak and cowardly men, but men accustomed to violence

and fearful experiences. Their reaction is therefore more impressive. They shook and became as dead men. This was the usual response by men on finding themselves suddenly in the presence of supernatural beings. Compare: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Dan. 5:5-6).

- g. Angels are usually represented as being clothed in white:
- 1) Acts 1:10: "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel."
  - 2) Daniel 7:9: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."
  - 3) Compare with the Transfiguration scene: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:1-5).
- h. Verses 6-7: "And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."
- 1) Manifestations of divine or angelic beings to people on earth had an astonishing and frightful effect on them. The usually courageous Roman soldiers who guarded the Lord's tomb were terribly stricken at the appearance of the angel: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified" (Matt. 28:2-5).
  - 2) These women were also greatly impressed by the fact that the Lord's body was missing and by the sight of the angels. Verse five of our text in Mark speaks of their fright. The stone was already removed from before the tomb when the ladies arrived; they did not witness the removal of the great stone or the ordeal of the soldiers, who had disappeared from the scene by the time the woman came.
- i. The women were told by the angel that he knew why they had come to the tomb—to seek Jesus. They had expected to find his body and were prepared to anoint it with certain spices. Johnson:
- 1) Soon after the Lord's death the chief priests came to Pilate, requesting that the bodies might be taken down before sunset, because the next day was the Sabbath. Obtaining their request, the legs of the two malefactors are broken to hasten their death; but Jesus, being found already dead, is pierced with a spear in the side. At this time Joseph of Arimathea goes to Pilate, and informing him that Jesus was already dead, asks his body for burial; and Pilate, after satisfying himself that he was actually dead, orders the body to be given him. Aided by Nicodemus, Joseph took the body, and winding it in linen cloths with spices, laid it in his own sepulcher, in a garden near the cross and shut up the sepulcher.
  - 2) Some women beheld where he was laid, and, returning home, prepared spices and ointments, that they might embalm him after the Sabbath was past. During the Sabbath the council obtains permission from Pilate to seal up the sepulcher, and to place a watch, lest the disciples should steal the body.—S. J. Andrews.
  - 3) The Sabbath ended at sunset according to Jewish ideas. Much as these women loved the Lord they waited until the Sabbath was over before they come to the sepulcher. *Mary Magadene*. We find that Mark mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome. Luke mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Joanna, "and others with them." John mentions Mary Magdalene only. What shall we conclude from these discrepancies? Do the evangelists speak in general terms, giving the names of certain prominent members only of the party, without designing

to enumerate all; or do they refer to two or more distinct parties, who visited the sepulchre at different times? The former is much the more probable. *Had brought sweet spices*. Consisting of myrrh, aloes and other preventives of putrefaction, and odorous perfumes. These spices had been prepared upon the previous Friday evening.—Abbott. [Or after the end of the Sabbath—bw].

- 4) *Anoint him*. This had not been done as yet. Nicodemus (John 19:40) had only wrapped the body hurriedly in the spices with the linen cloths.—Whedon. It was customary among the Jews, as a mark of honor to the deceased, after washing the corpse, to anoint it with certain perfumes, or to enclose them in the grave-clothes in which the body was wrapped. They were sometimes also burned as an incense. The hurried burial had not permitted this anointing to be completed; it had been commenced by Nicodemus at the time of the interment (John 19:39, 40). Perhaps the women were ignorant of that; perhaps they wished to add their own offerings. The aromatics employed for this purpose appear from John to have been aloes and myrrh.—Abbott.
4. Verse 8: “And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.”
    - a. The descent of the angel probably occurred only a short while before the women arrived at the tomb. The soldiers had already fled from the site and were on their way back into the city (vs. 11). The angel's appearance and actions were designed to produce fear in the Romans, but he did not intend to terrify these godly women. Thus, his first statement to them was a word of encouragement ("fear not"), and hope ("he is not here for he is risen"). The angel knew the purpose of their coming, and invited them to enter the tomb and see the place where his body had been. They could see the tomb from the outside, so the angel was not speaking of it, but rather of the exact place where his body had rested.
    - b. Compare: "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you" (Matt. 28:7).
      - 1) The angel told these women to go quickly and report to the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that he would meet them in Galilee. In Matthew 26:32, the Lord had made an appointment with the disciples to meet them in Galilee following his resurrection. The word "disciples" is in the masculine gender in the Greek text, thus the eleven disciples are the ones meant.
      - 2) This apparently did not make the proper impression on their minds, for they were dismayed and discouraged when he was crucified, not believing he would be raised. Galilee is no tiny place, so the Lord had doubtless specified the place and perhaps even the occasion (time) when he would meet with them there.
  5. Verse 8: "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his
    - a. These women were the first to learn of the resurrection, no doubt because they were the ones to be interested enough to make plans to anoint the Lord's body.
    - b. The women departed from the tomb in great haste, filled with fear and great joy, as they ran back into Jerusalem to bring this happy news to the disciples. The fear on their part was the overwhelming awe they felt at learning this wonderful news, and the great joy was experienced because of the truth the news contained. Jesus is not dead, but had been raised to life again!

#### B. Mark 16:9-13: Jesus Appears to Certain Ones.

1. Verse 9: “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”
  - a. Several faithful women came to the tomb early on the first day of the week. This company included Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of James the Less; Salome, the mother of James and John; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; and others who are not named (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1-4; Luke 23:49,55-56; 24:1-3,10; 8:3; John 20:1).
    - 1) These came to further anoint the body of Jesus; they did not have time to do so following the Lord's death, and could not do so on the Sabbath (Luke 23:55-56).
    - 2) They left home while it was still dark—John 20:1 They arrived at the tomb as the sun arose on Sunday, the first day of the week: “And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun” (Mark 16:2). As they made their way toward the tomb, they wondered how they would be able to move the great stone to gain access to the tomb.

- Clearly, they did not know about the band of soldiers guarding the tomb or the Roman seal with which the tomb had been secured (Mark 16:3).
- 3) On their arrival, they discovered much to their dismay that the stone had been moved already. An angel had been dispatched from heaven to remove the stone; and after doing so, he sat on it, causing great fear among the soldiers (Mt. 27:1-4).
  - 4) The body of the Lord was not in the tomb! The women naturally supposed that the Lord's enemies had removed the body and hidden it elsewhere (John 20:2). Mary ran back into the city to give this report to Peter; the other women entered the tomb in Mary's absence.
  - 5) In the meantime, the other women arrive and meet the angels. Peter and John ran to the garden immediately upon hearing Mary's report, with John reaching it first, but allowing Peter to enter ahead of him (John 20:3-10).
  - 6) On seeing that the tomb was indeed empty, they returned to Jerusalem. Peter left "wondering" (Luke 24:12), while John "saw and believed" (John 20:8). Mary came back to the tomb after Peter and John, and her conversation with the angel takes place (John 20:1-13).
- b. Mary Magdalene may have reached the tomb ahead of these other women, or on quickly perceiving that the tomb was empty, and supposing the body had been stolen, she ran to tell Peter.
  - c. The angels announced to the women the resurrection of Christ.
    - 1) Matthew and Mark mention only one angel; Luke and John speak of two. The former simply describe the spokesman, which does not contradict the fact that two angels were present. These angels are clothed in long white, shining garments (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12).
    - 2) The women are asked: "Why seek ye the living among the dead" (Luke 24:5); and are told, "I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified" (Matt. 28:5); and still further, "He is not here: for he is risen...Come see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:6). The angels also reminded them that Jesus had told them before the crucifixion that he was to be crucified but that he would rise again on the third day (Luke 24:6-8), which the women now remembered.
  - d. The women are told to go quickly and report the Lord's resurrection to his disciples, and that he would meet them in Galilee (Matt. 28:7-8; Mark 16:7-8). These women hastened to obey.
  - e. While these women were gone on this mission, Mary, who had already gone back to tell Peter about the Lord's empty tomb, preceded by Peter and John, returned to the tomb. These two apostles saw the empty grave, and went back to the city. Mary stood outside the sepulchre weeping before looking into the tomb. It seems that she had not paused long enough to look into it when she first came (John 20:1-2). She encounters the two angels; one was standing at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus had lain (John 20:11-13).
  - f. The women brought word to the apostles (Luke 24:9-10). These men did not believe the story at first (Luke 24:11). Luke seems to say that the report to the apostles was given by the whole group of women at the same time, but from the additional information given by John it appears more likely that Mary Magdalene brought the initial report, and the rest of the women gave another report soon afterwards. This view fits the overall facts better.
  - g. The Eyewitnesses of the Resurrected Lord.
    - 1) Mary Magdalene was the first to see the risen Lord (Mark 16:9; John 20:14-18). She was the lady from whom the Lord had cast seven demons.
    - 2) The other women saw the Lord (Matt. 28:9-10). These had been with the Lord for quite some time, assisting in his ministry (Luke 23:49,55f; 24:1ff).
    - 3) Peter saw the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34). Certainly, this apostle would know whether it was Jesus.
    - 4) The two disciples traveling to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32; Mark 16:12).
    - 5) The twelve, including Matthias (1 Cor. 15:5; Acts 1:21-26; Mk. 16:14; Luke 24:36-41; John 20:19-29).
    - 6) More than 500 brethren at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). At the time that Paul wrote the First Corinthian letter, the greater part of these were still alive.
    - 7) He was seen by James, then by all of the apostles (1 Cor. 15:7).
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- 8) Lastly, he was seen by Saul of Tarsus, hardly an impartial witness since he had dedicated his life to opposing the cause of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:1ff; 26:9ff).
2. Verse 10: "And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept."
- a. While she was going to tell the disciples, Jesus appeared to the other women, who had started before on the same errand (Matt. 28:9, 10). Possibly Mary had joined the others by this time. Compare Johnson:
- 1) *As they mourned and wept.* It seemed to them that not only had their Friend gone, but every hope of salvation, and of the promised coming of the kingdom of God, had departed with him. Perhaps the fact that he had not appeared to any of the apostles had something to do with the incredulity of the latter, for it is natural to suppose that he would first manifest himself to them. Accordingly we find that it was the testimony of Peter that convinced them (Luke 24:34).
- 2) In the entire remainder of the chapter, Mark gives three appearances of our Saviour which illustrate the matter of the unbelief which his resurrection had to overcome in the minds of the apostles. First of all, to Mary Magdalene, whose narrative was discredited; "after that" to the two from Emmaus, whose account was also disbelieved; and "afterward" (or rather, finally, v. 14) to the whole eleven, whom he "upbraided with their unbelief."
- b. It could have seemed to the apostles strange that Mary Magdalene should first have reported the resurrection of Jesus. Why did he not come to these selected men before anyone else? From this woman the Lord had cast seven demons [Mark 16:9]. "And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils" (Luke 8:2).
- c. The following is from McGarvey:
- 1) Mag-da-le'-ne means a woman of Magdala, and indicates that the town of Magdala, on the western shore of the lake of Galilee, was her native place. There, perhaps, Jesus had first met her, and bound her to himself in bonds of everlasting gratitude by casting out the seven demons. Her possession by these demons was a fearful calamity, but it implies nothing derogatory to her character (see the note, Matt viii. 10); neither is there any thing else in the sacred narratives to justify the popular conception that her character had been bad.
- 2) The supposition that she is identical with "the woman that was a sinner," spoken of in Luke vii. 37, 38, is without a shadow of foundation. In reality, all of the indications of her character and position which are furnished by the scriptures point to a woman in easy circumstances, with a benevolent disposition, tender sensibilities, and commanding influence. Her name stands first among the female attendants of Jesus at almost every mention of it, and on her he conferred the peculiar honor of making her the first human witness of his resurrection from the dead.
- 3) It is a shame on the Christian world, that a woman of virtue so pre-eminent has come to be commonly regarded as a reformed harlot; and that her cognomen which served only to distinguish her from other Marys by indicating her birthplace, has become, in the contracted form of Magdalen, the name of societies and institutions for the reformation of abandoned women. This is an illustration, however, of the corrupting and degrading tendency of human tradition when it dares to tamper with the sacred narratives. It is Rome that has given Mary the false and low repute in which she is erroneously held. (See Smith's Dictionary.)
3. Verse 11: "And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not."
- a. "The fact that Jesus' disciples did not believe (when the women told them that Jesus had arisen from the grave) shows that they were unwilling to accept such reports without incontrovertible evidence. (Mark 16:10-11; Luke 24:10-11)" (ALC, 1973. p.170).
- b. Coffman: "Does this not refer back to the sevenfold exorcism in Mark 16:9? It was not so much an inherent unbelief in the resurrection of Christ that is meant here, although that was in it, but the further incredibility of the fact that such a person as Mary Magdalene was the first to whom the Son of God appeared." [The spiritual qualities of this Mary were superb!].
4. Verses 12-13: "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them."
- a. Compare: "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them,
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What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive” (Luke 24:13-23).

- b. Johnson: Their skepticism affords just ground for our belief. Their testimony is the testimony of incredulous and scrutinizing witnesses. They seemed to have forgotten that he said he would rise again. It was while they were discussing the story of the two disciples who had seen him at Emmaus that the Lord appeared in their midst and “upbraided their unbelief” (Luke 24:36).
- c. Luke recounted in detail how these two returned to Jerusalem and reported to the eleven as they were gathered together; and, although Luke did not mention the fact of the eleven's unbelief of their report, he did relate how Christ suddenly appeared in the midst of them for the express purpose of causing them to believe. Thus, the sacred records sustain and corroborate each other (Luke 24:33-35). Neither believed they them ... From the Lucan account, it is clear that the "eleven" were the ones who did not at first believe. In the verses following this, one of the most fantastic exhibitions of the use of pronouns to be found anywhere in all literature is in evidence; and the pronouns are the key to the next passage. [Coffman].
- d. While Mark here says that Jesus “appeared in another form” to these two disciples, Luke accounts for their not recognizing him by the fact that “ their eyes were holden that they should not know him.” (Luke xxiv. 16.) The statements are not inconsistent; they only show, when taken in connection, that Jesus appeared in another form by holding in some way, their eyes, so that he would appear to be a different person. Mark’s account implies that they eventually saw through his disguise, without stating how. [McGarvey].

#### B. Mark 16:14-20: The Great Commission Commanded and Executed.

1. Verse 14: “Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.”
  - a. Coffman:
    - 1) This verse establishes, by its repetition of it, the fact that the eleven apostles were the persons meant by the pronoun "them," not only here but completely to the end of this Gospel, there being utterly no grammatical device known to man by which any other antecedent for this pronoun appears anywhere in the whole passage. The last "them" in this verse, of course, is the lone exception and has reference to the "them" in Mark 16:12-13.
    - 2) Upbraided them with their unbelief ... The eleven apostles were unbelievers regarding the fact of the resurrection, at first; and their reluctance to believe the two who came back from Emmaus and Mary Magdalene may have stemmed partially from human pride. After all, they had frequently engaged in discussions of who would be greatest in the kingdom of God; and, on the very first day of the resurrection, the Lord had appeared to ... Mary and to two nameless disciples not even belonging to the sacred company of the apostles. No wonder they could not believe it. It was not that they did not believe that Jesus was alive, Peter and John having already seen the convincing evidence in the tomb early that morning. It was simply that they could not believe that Jesus had appeared to THOSE people! All this is implied in the next clause.
    - 3) And hardness of heart because they believed not them that had seen him ... Ah, there it was! Mark had similarly recorded another instance of the Twelve's hardening of their hearts in Mark 6:52. On that occasion also, the Twelve were not in full harmony with the will of God, just as in the case of the eleven here. [“For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened” (Mark 6:52)].
  - b. These men had been personally selected by Jesus and had seen what he had taught and done during the course of his earthly mission. He had shown them plainly that he was to be arrested at Jerusalem, and condemned to crucifixion, but that the would rise from the dead on the third day. They had

witnessed his arrest and execution, but had chosen to ignore this resurrection. It is no wonder that the Lord found it necessary to rebuke their disbelief!

- c. It was essential that they learn for all the time to follow that he was indeed arisen from the dead! Success in fulfilling their Great Commission depended on this conviction.
2. Verse 15: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”
  - a. This command was given directly to the apostles of Christ. They were told to carry the gospel throughout the world. The message they were to deliver to the people they were to teach was the gospel. Nothing was to be added to that message and nothing was to be removed and nothing was to be changed.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 4:6: “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other.” [ASV].
    - 2) Revelation 22:18-19: “I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.” [ASV].
  - b. The pure gospel was to be preached because it is the power of God to save lost souls.
    - 1) Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
    - 2) James 1:21: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”
    - 3) Colossians 1:5: “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”
  - c. The full gospel was preached.
    - 1) Romans 10:13-18: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”
    - 2) Colossians 1:23: “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.”
  - d. What is the gospel? What is included in the full gospel?
    - 1) **The Gospel of Christ contains Facts which are to be believed:**
      - a) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”
      - b) John 8:24: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”
      - c) Mark 16:15-16: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
    - 2) **The Gospel of Christ contains Commands which are to be obeyed:**
      - a) Even faith is depicted as a command:

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- (1) John 6:29: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."
  - (2) 1 John 3:23: "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."
  - b) Repentance is required:
    - (1) Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
    - (2) Acts 17:30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
  - c) Baptism is a command:
    - (1) Acts 10:47-48: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."
    - (2) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
- 3) The Gospel of Christ contains Blessings which are to be enjoyed:**
- a) Remission of sin:
    - (1) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
    - (2) Luke 24:47: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
  - b) Providential assistance:
    - (1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
    - (2) Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
    - (3) 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
  - c) Promise of Eternal Life:
    - (1) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
    - (2) 1 Peter 1:9: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."
    - (3) 1 John 2:25: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."
- 4) The Gospel of Christ contains Warnings which are to be heeded:**
- a) Do not alter the pure gospel:
    - (1) Galatians 1:8-9: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."
    - (2) Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."
  - b) We must be Faithful unto death:
    - (1) Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
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- (2) Hebrews 4:1-4: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."
- (3) Hebrews 10:35-39: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."
- (4) 2 Peter 1:5-11: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
3. Verse 16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
- a. Sectarians argue that: *He that believeth not is condemned, not he that is not baptized*. The passage alluded to (Mark 16:16) discusses two subjects: salvation and condemnation.
    - 1) To be saved, one must believe and be baptized (this is the plain declaration of the statement).
    - 2) To be condemned, one must only disbelieve.
  - b. God is wiser than men.
    - 1) If the passage had said, "he that believes not and is not baptized shall be condemned," then both conditions would be required before one could be condemned.
    - 2) Therefore, one could be immersed without faith and still not be lost. But that conclusion is at odds with John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins."
    - 3) The fact is, one cannot be baptized without faith. Without faith one cannot be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6); without faith in Christ one cannot be saved.
  - c. Mark 16:16 is parallel to this statement: "He that eateth and digesteth shall live; he that eateth not shall die."
    - 1) We must eat and digest in order to live; both eating and digesting are required in order to live.
    - 2) If we do not eat, we cannot digest—therefore we will die. If we eat but are not able to digest the food, we will still die; both are required in order to live.
  - d. Consider Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
    - 1) Peter told them to repent.
      - a) The obligation to perform this operation was theirs; it is something that only the individual can do. God does not operate on the heart to make it repent; if he did so, then any who are lost could blame God for their failure to repent (but see Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:30). Hebrews 12:17 is not saying God would not give Esau repentance, but that Isaac would not change his mind regarding the blessing he had pronounced upon Jacob. "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17).
      - b) Acts 11:18 is a reference to God having granted to the Gentiles the privilege of obeying the gospel (repentance is used as a synecdoche for the entire plan of salvation). "When they heard
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these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

- c) Repentance is not fear, prayer, or godly sorrow. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10); it is followed by a reformed life (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). Repentance is simply the firm decision to turn from sin to godliness (cf. Matt. 12:41; Jonah 3:8,10; Matt. 21:28-30). The necessity of repentance is seen in the following passages: Luke 13:3,5; Acts 3:19; 17:30; Romans 2:4-11; 2 Peter 3:9.
- 2) Peter commanded them to be baptized.
    - a) The Lord died on the cross, was buried in the earth, and was raised up from the dead on the third day (I Cor. 15:1-4); baptism follows the form of his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:16-18, 1-6). The action of baptism is shown to be an immersion (burial) in water (Col. 2:12; Acts 10:47-48; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5).
    - b) The purpose of baptism is given: "for the remission of sins."
  - 3) For the most part, the verse is very simple and plain: these believers who will repent and be baptized in the name of Christ will receive the remission of sins.
    - a) But many deny that there is any connection between baptism and remission of sins. This conclusion is reached by erroneous interpretations of other verses such as John 3:16, Romans 5:1, and Ephesians 2:8,9. This passage then is twisted and forced to fit the previous conclusion. So instead of "for" being understood in its proper meaning, a forced interpretation is rendered: "for" means (they assert) "because of." They illustrate by saying: "A man is hanged for stealing. He is hanged because he stole; he is not hanged in order to steal."
    - b) In response to this, we need only to notice that whatever baptism is *for*, repentance is *for* the same thing. Why do we repent? Is it because we have already received remission of sins, or in order to obtain remission? Repentance and baptism are connected by the conjunction "and," which means that remission of sin is the result of repentance *and* baptism. Since repentance is essential to remission of sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30), then this passage teaches repentance is in order to obtain remission; and since repentance is in order to obtain remission, then baptism has the same end in view. Another Greek word would have been used if the point the inspired speaker was making was as our religious friends incorrectly allege.
  4. Verses 17-18: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Five signs are named:
    - a. Casting out demons.
      - 1) Casting out an unclean spirit was a miraculous work. "And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him" (Mark 1:23-27).
      - 2) The miracle proved to the audience that Jesus had the authority to do what he had just accomplished. There are many such miracles. By this action, which could not be denied by any who witnessed it, the Lord proved his identity and his message.
        - a) Mark 16:15-20: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
        - b) Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast,

and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

- 3) God promised that the unclean spirits would cease to afflict humankind: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zech. 13:2). In connection with the opening of the fountain (Zech. 12:1), God would cause the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. During the first century, Satan was able to send evil spirits to afflict certain individuals. Although the subject is somewhat shrouded in mystery, some aspects are clear.
  - 4) They were spiritual beings: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16). They were unclean beings, under Satan's control: "But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This  *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils....When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none....Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:25, 43, 45).
  - 5) They were intelligent beings: "Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
  - 6) They had volition and locomotion: "Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matt. 12:44-45).
  - 7) They often brought illness, affliction, or special powers on the individual:
    - a) Dumbness—Matthew 9:32.
    - b) Blindness—Matthew 12:22.
    - c) Convulsions—Mark 9:18.
    - d) Epilepsy—Matthew 17:15.
    - e) Special knowledge—Acts 16:16-18; 19:15.
    - f) Great strength—Mark 5:4; Acts 19:16.
    - g) Demon possession often brought physical ailments, but this was a symptom or side-effect (Matt. 4:24; 8:16).
  - 8) Christ came to strip Satan of his power, including the power to afflict humanity with his demons (Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:20-33; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:25-26). He was successful! "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).
  - 9) With the end of the age of miracles, demon-possession and the power to expel demons ended. There is no proof of demons taking over anyone today. The burden of proof is on one who claims that the problem still exists in the world. Zechariah (13:2) connected the end of unclean spirits with the opening of the fountain (verse 1) and the ending of prophets; since both of these others have occurred, the unclean spirits have been taken away.
- b. Speaking with new languages.
- 1) Acts 2:1-13: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews,

devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."

- a) The pronoun "they" of verse 1 has as its antecedent the noun "apostles" of chapter 1:26. Therefore, only the apostles were included in the miraculous gifts of Acts 2:1-4. This is further shown by the fact that only men of Galilee were speaking with the tongues (verse 7), and all the apostles were Galileans. (cf. Acts 1:11). The ones speaking in the tongues were *men* (Acts 2:13); therefore, none of the women of 1:14 received the baptism of the Holy Spirit! Only men received it; only men of Galilee received it: only the apostles received it; the 120 did not receive it. In Acts 2:14, Peter stood up with the *eleven* (not with the 120; not with the multitude).
  - b) They were speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (vs. 4). The source of the tongues and the intelligent message spoken thereby was the Holy Spirit. The tongues are called "languages" (vs. 6); each group having a different language heard the apostles speak in their own tongue "wherein we were born" (vs. 8). The apostles spoke to these people in the native languages of the people present.
  - c) There were as many as thirteen or fourteen different groups of Jews and proselytes, although the same language may have been shared by one or more groups. It is likely that only twelve separate languages were being spoken, one by each of the twelve apostles.
  - d) The sounds that were being uttered were intelligent and intelligible words which expressed an important and understandable message. Those in the great audience heard the apostles as they spake concerning "the wonderful works of God" (vs. 11). If they had not understood the apostles' speech they could not have known what was being said: they could have thought God's name was being blasphemed! But they understood what the apostles were saying for they spoke in the peoples' languages.
  - e) The effect this tongue-speaking phenomenon had on the multitude was predictable: "They were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" (vs. 12). The two-fold effect of this miraculous tongue-speaking is easily seen: The apostles were able to communicate the information God required, and the use of these foreign languages by those lowly and uneducated men of Galilee proved that they were operating under the supernatural power of God! Furthermore, since the Spirit provided the ability and the words, their message was inspired, infallible, and authoritative—the word of God!
- 2) If one claims to have the ability to speak in tongues today, consistency demands that also either he or others of his tribe, be able to drink deadly poison, take up deadly snakes without any harm to himself, to cast out demons, and heal the sick of any kind and without a failure. But in virtually every instance the only thing they claim is the ability to "speak with tongues!" Mind you, what they have in mind by speaking in tongues is a kind of gibberish and jabber, meaningless sounds which they assert is an "ecstatic utterance" or "language of angels." In some cases they even claim to have those who can "interpret" their sounds. But when they send out "missionaries" to a foreign nationality, those who are sent will have to study to learn that unknown tongue just as everyone else must do!
  - 3) Since the age of miracles has passed, this gift of genuine tongue-speaking [talking in a language the speaker had not learned through ordinary means] has also ceased: "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away" (1 Cor. 13:8, NKJ). [Paul here speaks of the miraculous gifts of the first century].
- c. Taking up serpents.
    - 1) The sole case of this in the New Testament is found in Acts 28:3-4: "And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his

- hand. And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."
- 2) As Paul gathered a bundle of sticks to put on the fire, a poisonous viper came out of the bundle, and bit Paul on the hand. The islanders said among themselves that Paul must be a dangerous criminal (a murderer), so that even though he had escaped from the sea, Justice had seen to it that he was still punished by the snakebite. *Vengeance* (Justice—ASV) is personified. This term (*Dike*) denotes the goddess Justice or Nemesis (Vine, Vol. 2, p.284).
  - 3) "And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god" (Acts 28:5-6). [Shaking this poisonous serpent into the fire would have most likely killed it].
    - a) Paul shook the snake loose from his hand, and went about his activities with no bad effect. This is a case where the Lord's promise (Mark 16:18; Luke 10:19) was fulfilled. The word *beast* in the Greek means *venomous creature* (ASV).
    - b) Paul did not intend to be bitten by the snake. There is no indication that he knew about its presence until he was bitten. Neither this passage nor the others cited above gives any authority for "snake-handling" as a religious activity.
  - 4) Compare: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).
  - 5) The natives watched Paul closely, expecting his hand to swell, and then for him to fall dead suddenly. After a time, when it was obvious he was going to suffer no harm, they changed their assessment of the apostle, and considered him to be a god. This case was the reverse of what happened in Lystra (Acts 14). There the people first said Paul was a god, but later stoned him; here these people thought he was a criminal at first, then a god. This miraculous demonstration proved to the people that Paul was a very special person, one upon whom the living God had conferred certain powers.
  - 6) The apostle did not take up the snake as a "show" to the audience around the fire; it was a natural event that a viper could be hiding in the bundle of sticks and that it would bite the hand that disturbed it. Modern "snake-handlers" are a tiny cult which, as one preacher stated, are losing members [cases have become public of these misguided folks being bitten and dying]. There is no authority in Mark 16:18 for this modern religious folly.
- d. Drinking any deadly thing.
- 1) The promise was that if they should partake of some deadly poison, no harm would result. We have no example of this recorded in the New Testament. We do not know that such an event took place. But the promise was there if the apostles needed it.
  - 2) Compare: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2).
- e. Healing the sick.
- 1) Healing—miraculous healing (Jas. 5:14-15). We read about Philip casting out demons, healing those who were afflicted with palsy and those who were lame (Acts 8:6-7), although no specific case is described. Also, certain supernaturally-endowed elders were given the power to heal (Jas. 5:14-15).
  - 2) Two prominent examples of this:
    - a) Acts 3:1-11: "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking,

and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.”

- b) Acts 9:32-35: “And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.”
- f. It is asserted that these signs may be wrought by any believer today. They think that all believers, regardless of the century, can produce these signs. Brother Coffman had these comments on the passage:
- 1) These signs shall accompany ... The word "accompany" here is significant, meaning to "go along with one on a journey," the journey in view here being the travels of the apostles in the carrying out of the great commission just spoken ....
  - 2) Them that believe ... The antecedent of "them" is "the eleven themselves" (Mark 16:14); and the only way this can be avoided is to change the singular pronouns in Mark 16:15-16 into plural pronouns contrary to the Greek text. There is nothing difficult in this interpretation, since it is simply basic English.
  - 3) They shall cast out demons, etc. ... The antecedent of "they" is likewise "the eleven apostles themselves," determined by the primary allusion to "them" in the same clause. There is no grammatical device by which this word may be understood as reference to any persons whomsoever except the eleven apostles.
  - 4) From these observations it is clear that the utmost importance must be attached to the preservation of the singular pronouns in Mark 16:15-16; because, once these are changed, whether by alteration of the text or by a subjective projection into the passage of "them that shall be saved" through the preaching of the commission, the denotation of Mark 16:17-18 is thereby perverted and contradicted.
- g. The promise included all the apostles and only *some* of the 1st century saints, as time continued. These latter individuals were especially selected by Heaven and had certain miraculous gifts given to them; an apostle had to be present and lay his hands on the individuals before these gifts could be conferred.
- 1) This is in harmony with other passages which indicate that only some of the Christians of that era received miraculous abilities. From the time when the New Testament took effect (at the death of Christ: Heb. 9:15-17), only two cases are recorded of any receiving miraculous powers directly from heaven: the apostles (Acts 2) and Cornelius (Acts 10). These were very special cases: the apostles received the power the Lord had promised to them in the first case; and in the second, God showed to the Jews that the gospel was also intended for the Gentiles. In describing to the Jewish Christians what had happened at Cornelius' house, Peter had to go all the way back to Pentecost Day (Acts 2) in order to find another instance of the Spirit coming directly upon men in endowing them with miraculous powers. In every other case, one or more of the apostles was present to lay hands on the people before they received supernatural gifts (Acts 8:14ff; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11).
  - 2) There is no proof that every saint of the first century received a spiritual gift. There is no proof that God even intended that they all receive the gifts. If every Christian in the first century received a spiritual gift, then each of these individuals would have had to have an apostle of Christ to lay his hands on them personally. That would have been impossible for after the death of James (Acts 12), there were only twelve apostles on earth, while the converts numbered in the multiplied thousands. The man from Ethiopia returned home after his conversion; which apostle laid hands on him? And when?
- h. Just because one had a spiritual gift did not mean his eternal salvation was certain—since even the apostles of Christ were still subject to sin.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

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- 2) Galatians 2:11-14: "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (ASV).
  - i. Mark 16:17-20 does not say that the signs would be worked by all believers. The promise of verse 17 would be adequately fulfilled if only part of the believers had these miraculous gifts. The passage says that the signs would follow the believers (the whole of them); it does not say that the signs would be performed by each of them.
    - 1) If one of the signs continues in operation today, they all continue. If one can speak in tongues, others will be able to drink deadly poison and handle snakes without harm; and others would be able to cast out demons and heal the sick.
    - 2) The greatest, and only, proof of the claims of people today in behalf of miracles for our time is the demonstration of the gifts. "As goes the proposition, so must also go the demonstration." A clear, obvious miracle would put to silence every critic. But they only give us empty assertions.
  - j. Luke 11:13 is said to support contentions of modern miracle workers: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The context of this verse (11:1-13) is the short version of the model prayer.
    - 1) The Holy Spirit came in Acts 2:1-4; his gifts were passed on through the apostles to certain saints when the apostles prayed for, and laid their hands on, those who were to receive the gifts (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6).
    - 2) It is senseless for us to pray for the kingdom to come because it has already come; it is just as senseless to pray for the Holy Spirit to come because he has already done so (John 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:1-4). And since there is no apostle on earth today to lay hands on us, and since the purpose of miracles has already been accomplished, it is senseless for us to pray for miracles today.
    - 3) When the last apostle died, and the last person died on whom an apostle had laid hands died, the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit ceased.
  - k. McGarvey: "These signs shall follow.—The promise is, not that these signs shall follow for any specified time, nor that they should follow each individual believer; but merely that they shall follow, and follow "the believers" taken as a body. They did follow the believers during the apostolic age—not every individual believer, but all, or nearly all, the organized bodies of the believers. This was a complete fulfillment of what was promised. He who claims that the promise included more than this, presses the words of the promise beyond what is necessary to a full realization of their meaning; and he who affirms that the signs do yet follow the believers, should present some ocular demonstration of the fact before he asks the people to believe his assertion. Signs were intended to convince the unbelievers, and they were always wrought openly in the presence of the unbelievers: let us see them, and then we will believe. Paul's expectation was that prophesying, speaking in tongues, and miraculous knowledge, would vanish away (1 Cor. xv. 8); and so they did with the death of the apostles and of those to whom they had imparted miraculous gifts" (p.375).
  5. Verse 19: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."
    - a. The statement that "after the Lord had spoken to them he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God," establishes a close connection in time between the close of the speech and the ascension of Jesus. The same connection is indicated by Luke both in his gospel and in Acts, where, although he quotes none of the words reported by Mark, he reports a conversation quite similar to it which occurred on the same occasion and was immediately followed by the ascension. (McGarvey, *ibid.*).
      - 1) Luke 24:49-51: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."
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- 2) Acts 1:4-11: "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
  - b. The ascension of Christ is of great importance. If the Lord had simply vanished from the earth during the night, or from some place or time when his departure was unobserved, his followers would have been confounded and the world would have thought them to be deceived. But when they saw him rise up from the earth, there was no doubt whatsoever about Christ, and their preaching was the more zealous and their faith the more fervent for it.
    - 1) It was a confirmation of the truthfulness of Christianity. Our faith is on sound footing; we have not followed cunningly devised fables (2 Pet. 1:16). The apostles could state from firsthand knowledge where the ascension took place, describe the scene clearly, and report the words of the angels. They many miracles verified the truths they taught, which included his ascension.
    - 2) Since the King is in heaven, the nature of his kingdom is established. If it were an earthly kingdom, he would be ruling it directly from an earthly throne and palace.
  - c. Luke 24:50-53 reports that the ascension took place near Bethany, and that it was while he was blessing them, that he began to ascend from the earth. Acts 1:12 states that they returned to Jerusalem from the ascension site which was about a Sabbath Day's journey (estimated to be about seven-eighths of a mile). "A 'sabbath day's journey,' according to Jewish tradition, was based on Josh. 3:4. The Israelites were required to march about two thousand cubits (approximately three quarters of a mile) behind the ark, and from this came the belief that the tabernacle was that distance from the camp of Israel; and since the people were allowed to go to the tabernacle on the sabbath (cf. Num. 28:1-10), two thousand cubits became the distance allowed for a sabbath day's journey" (ALC, 1962, pp.78f). Luke 24:52-53 tells that they returned to the city with great joy, and continually in the temple they praised and blessed God.
6. Verse 20: 'And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.'
- a. Coffman: In this appears the reason for the "signs" Jesus promised to "accompany" the apostles on their worldwide mission; they were given for the purpose of confirming the Word of God. Just what, it may be inquired, could be the purpose of any such signs in our own generation? Does the Word of God need confirming? And how is it that the religious sects claiming to work such signs are as contradictory as a barrel of scorpions? Can anyone really believe that God is "working with them," confirming every sort of religious error ever known? Believe it who can!
  - b. Notice that the Lord worked with the apostles as they went forth preaching the gospel; he confirmed the work spoken through them with the signs he had promised.
    - 1) The word which Christ began to reveal during his public ministry, he fully unfolded through the apostles. Twelve of these apostles were with the Lord during his earthly mission; they heard his great messages and saw his wondrous miracles. They themselves were empowered to perform great miraculous feats, during their limited commission. These supernatural works were designed primarily to confirm the messages they preached to be God's eternal truth. The same purpose was served by the miracles Christ worked.
    - 2) Mark 2:5-12: "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins
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- be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But **that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins**, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, **Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house**. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."
- c. The Twelve apostles, Matthias having replaced the dead Judas, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit directly from heaven; each of them received supernatural powers which they used as needed as they conducted their world-wide, Great Commission. When the apostles carried the gospel around the Roman world, they performed miraculous acts which likewise confirmed to their auditors that what they spake was truly God's word. "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and **confirming the word with signs** following. Amen" (Mark 16:20).
- 1) John 20:30-31 "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."
  - 2) Luke 24:47-49: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
  - 3) Acts 1:5,8: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence....But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Cf. Acts 2:1ff.
  - 4) 1 Corinthians 13:8-13: "Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity."
  - 5) Ephesians 4:8-13: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)."
  - 6) Romans 10:13-18: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."
- d. McGarvey: In this sentence Mark overleaps the stay of the apostles in Jerusalem, and reaches forward to the period of their greatest activity, when "they went forth and preached every-where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Thus he brings to a most appropriate termination his narrative of those events that had gradually prepared the apostles for the mission of mercy on which they were sent forth, and which, when recited in their preaching, led men to believe in Jesus, and to accept the offered salvation.
- e. Miracles were given to confirm the word presented by inspired spokesmen.
- 1) Mark 2:1-12. The healing of this man was done to prove to the people that Jesus had power (authority) on earth to forgive sins. The statement made in verse 5 was confirmed to be right by the miracle (verse 10).
  - 2) Mark 16:20: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." The word spoken by these preachers of the gospel was confirmed by the signs which the Lord provided for that purpose.

- 3) Hebrews 2:2-4: "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" The word was confirmed by signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.
  - 4) Acts 8:5-6: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." Philip preached the gospel, and the miracles he wrought confirmed his message was from God.
- f. Once the word was revealed, spoken, recorded and confirmed as the word of God, it was forever and eternally confirmed as his holy word. Hebrews 2:3 (notice the past tense of the verb: "was confirmed").
- 1) When a higher court in the land confirms a ruling of a lower court, it is confirmed for all time. It does not have to be re-confirmed.
  - 2) Since the word of God has been confirmed, there is no need for further confirmation. To try to improve on that which is perfect is to make it imperfect (Jas. 1:25).
- g. There is a common denominator joining each of the above four points: miracles furnished concrete, reliable, and undeniable proof that the spokesman who wrought the miracle was speaking the truth, and his word could safely be accepted. Thus, the central purpose of miracles was to verify divine truth. Miracles were essential in order for the gospel to be revealed and delivered. The apostles could not appeal to the written New Testament for authority; it had not been revealed. They had supernatural guidance in receiving and communicating the new covenant.
- 1) Luke 24:49: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
  - 2) John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
  - 3) Mark 13:11: "But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
  - 4) John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."
- h. We could not preach today without this written revelation; every gospel truth we know came through that record (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:1ff). No change is permitted to the written record:
- 1) 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other" (ASV).
  - 2) 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (ASV).
  - 3) Revelation 22:18-19: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." (ASV).
- i. If miraculous power were still available now, we could not preach one single fact, command, or promise that is not already revealed in the Bible!
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## Accounts Of The Great Commission Compared

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
GO	GO		
TEACH	PREACH GOSPEL	PREACH	
ALL NATIONS	EVERY CREATURE	ALL NATIONS	WHOSE SOEVER
	BELIEVE		
		REPENTANCE	
BAPTIZE	BAPTIZE		
	SAVED	REMISSION OF SINS	SINS REMITTED
WITH YOU ALWAYS	SIGNS ACCOMPANY	ENDUED WITH POWER	RECEIVE SPIRIT

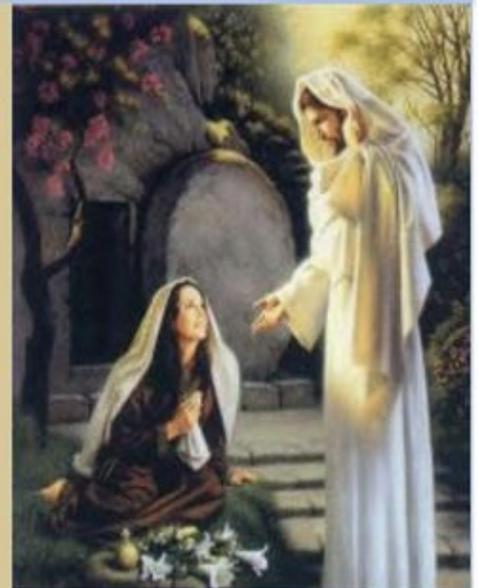
<b>MATTHEW</b>	TEACH			BAPTISM	
<b>MARK</b>	PREACH	FAITH		BAPTISM	SALVATION
<b>LUKE</b>	PREACH		REPENTANCE		REMISSION
<b>JOHN</b>	PREACH				SIN REMITTED
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>PREACH</b>	<b>FAITH</b>	<b>REPENTANCE</b>	<b>BAPTISM</b>	<b>SALVATION</b>

### A Comparison of Acts 2:38-39 and Acts 3:19

ACTS 2:38-39	ACTS 3:19
Repent	Repent
Be Baptized	Be Converted
For the remission of sins	That sins might be blotted out
Receive the gift	Times of refreshing shall come
Of Holy Spirit	From the presence of the Lord
Promise is to you (and all)	All kindreds of earth to be blessed
As many as God shall call	Turning everyone from iniquities

## Post-Resurrection Appearances

➤ TO MARY MAGDALENE	• John 20:11-12
➤ TO CERTAIN WOMEN AS THEY RETURNED TO THE SELPUCHRE	• Matthew 28:1-10
➤ TO PETER	• Luke 24:34
➤ TO TWO DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS	• Luke 24:13-15
➤ TO 10 APOSTLES (THOMAS BEING ABSENT)	• John 20:19-23
➤ TO ALL 11 APOSTLES ONE WEEK LATER (INCLUDING THOMAS)	• John 20:26-28
➤ TO SEVERAL DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF GALILEE	• John 21:1-23
➤ TO THE APOSTLES AND ABOUT 500 BRETHREN AT ONCE ON AN APPOINTED MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE	• Matt. 28:16-20
➤ TO JAMES	• 1 Cor. 15:7
➤ TO THE APOSTLES AT JERUSALEM IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE ASCENSION	• Acts 1:3-9
➤ TO SAUL OF TARSUS	• Acts 22:3-5 • Acts 9:1-2



1 Corinthians 15:5-8



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## The Genuineness of Mark 16:9-20

J. W. McGarvey

A difference of opinion has long existed among the critics as to the genuineness of the last twelve verses of Mark. The recent popularization of the results of Biblical Criticism, by the publication of such works as the Tauchnitz edition of the English Testament and Bagster's Critical English Testament, as well as by the increased circulation of critical commentaries, has brought this and similar questions before the masses of the people, and created a demand for their treatment in a style adapted to the comprehension of comparatively uneducated readers. We propose, therefore, to state with as much brevity and simplicity as we can, the facts which must have the controlling influence in deciding this question.

Let it be first observed, that it is not the authenticity of the passage, by which is meant the historical correctness of its representations, that is called in question, but only its genuineness as a part of Mark's original manuscript. A few remarks on its authenticity, however, will not at this point be out of place.

All the historical statements of the passage are known to be true, independently of their occurrence here, because they are found in the other gospels or in Acts. Thus the statements concerning the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, which occupy verses 9-11, are substantially verified by John and Luke. (See John xx. 1-18; Luke viii. 2, and comp. the notes on Mark xvi. 9-11, above.) The statement concerning his appearance to two disciples as they went into the country, is but a brief account of what is more fully described in Luke xxiv. 13-35, and yet it is so varied in expression as to show that it is not an abbreviation from Luke. (See the note on xvi. 12, 13.) All the items of the appearance of Jesus to the eleven, described in verse 14, are substantiated by the statements in Luke xxiv. 36-43, and John xx. 19-23; and those pertaining to the commission and the ascension (15. 10, 19, 20), are confirmed by Luke's account of the latter (xxiv. 36-51), and by Matthew's report of the former (xxviii. 19, 20); while the promise concerning the signs that were to follow the believers is substantially included in Matt. xxviii. 20, and John xiv. 12, and is fully verified by the events recorded in Acts.

Not only are the statements of the passage thus proved to be authentic, but the manner in which the details are handled, and the forms of expression employed, show unmistakable marks of an original writer. His sources of information were independent of the narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and yet they were correct. He must, then, have lived and written previous to the general circulation of the other gospels, and within the apostolic age. This is conceded even by Alford, who is one of the most confident writers in opposition to the genuineness of the passage. He says: "The inference therefore seems to me to be, that it is an authentic fragment, placed as a completion of the Gospel in very early times: by whom written, must of course remain wholly uncertain; but coming to us with very weighty sanction, and having strong claims on our reception and reverence." (Com. Mark xvi. 20.)

The authenticity of the passage being conceded, and the fact being apparent that it was written by some one possessed of independent and correct sources of information, the question of its genuineness might be waived without detracting from its authority or credibility; for a true piece or history attached to Mark's book is not less valuable or authoritative because some other person than Mark may have been the author of it: but we proceed, for the sake of a thorough understanding of the facts in the case, to examine the evidences pro and con, and first, those which are called external evidences.

First, the manuscripts. The passage is omitted from a few of the manuscripts, and among these are the Vatican and the Sinaitic, the two oldest and best manuscripts extant. [?—BW]. These two manuscripts carry with them a very great weight of authority; and, indeed, it is the comparatively recent discovery of the Sinaitic manuscript that has turned the scales against the passage, in the judgment of some scholars. Jerome, and some writers of the fourth century, are also quoted as affirming that the passage was wanting in most of the Greek copies of their day.

On the other hand, the passage is found in nearly all of the other ancient manuscripts, including the Alexandrian, which stands next to the Vatican in accuracy. It was also cited by Irenaeus and Tatian of the second century, and by Hyppolytus and Dyonisius of Alexandria, of the third century, all of whom lived before the earliest existing

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manuscript was written, and from one hundred to two hundred years earlier than Jerome. The words of Irenaeus show that it was not only a part of the book of Mark in his day, but that Mark was regarded as its author. He says: "But Mark, in the end of his gospel, says: And the Lord Jesus, after that he had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God." From these writers, then, it appears that the passage was a part of some copies of Mark's gospel at least as early as the second century. The preponderance of evidence from this source is in favor of the passage.

Second, the ancient versions. The evidence from this source is altogether in favor of the passage; for all the ancient versions contain it, and thereby testify that it was in the Greek copies from which they were translated. If, at this time, the Greek copies did not generally contain it, it is at least a very remarkable circumstance that all the versions were made from those that did. Among these versions are the Peshito Syriac, the Old Italic, the Sahidic and the Coptic; all of which were in existence earlier than the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts, and before the time of Jerome.

Third, critical conjecture. The relative probability of the passage having been written by Mark or added by a later hand, is next to be considered. Those who adopt the latter hypothesis think that the addition was made on account of the want of completeness apparent in closing the narrative with the eighth verse of this chapter. Any reader will be struck with this want of completeness, if he will read from the first to the eighth verse, and imagine that the narrative there closes. But while this consideration would account for the addition of the passage, it leaves unaccounted for the fact that Mark cut short his narrative so abruptly. The various conjectures advanced to account for this fact, such as the sudden death of Mark, or the sudden death of Peter, Mark's instructor, are so unsatisfactory that they serve only to show the strait in which the writers find themselves who adopt this hypothesis. On the other hand if we suppose that the passage was written by Mark, its absence from some copies is at once accounted for by considering the many accidents by which the last leaf of a manuscript may be lost. Alford himself recognizes the force of this consideration, and says, "The most probable supposition is, that the last leaf of the original gospel was torn away." This remark is intended by him to account for the incompleteness which suggested the addition of the passage in question, but we think it still more satisfactorily accounts for the absence of this passage from those manuscripts which have it not: for one manuscript with the last leaf torn away, or worn away, might be used as a copy, and might thus become the prolific mother of an immense brood of manuscripts lacking the portion lost.

As regards the external evidence, then, we are constrained to adopt the conclusion of Dr. Davidson, who very modestly says: "On the whole, the external arguments in favor of the passage outweigh those on the other side." (Davidson's Introduction.)

We believe that in this conclusion all of the critics concur, and that the ground of doubt which overrules it in the minds of some, is internal evidence furnished by words and phrases found in the passage which are foreign, it is claimed, to Mark's style, and which therefore show the hand of another writer. Dean Alford, after mentioning each of these words and phrases as they occur in the text, sums up the evidence from this source, as follows: "Internal evidence is, I think, very weighty against Mark's being the author. No less than seventeen words and phrases occur in it (and some of them several times) which are never elsewhere used by Mark — whose adherence to his own peculiar phrases is remarkable." Such also is the judgment of several other eminent critics, both English and German.

A question of this kind is not to be decided by balancing the weight of the great names which have been arrayed in the discussion of it, but by a careful and patient examination of the alleged peculiarities of style, in order to determine the actual force of the evidence which they contain. To Prof. John A. Broadus, of Greenville, South Carolina, belongs the credit of having first applied to this argument the test which it demands. He did so in an article published in the Baptist Quarterly for 1869, which is remarkable alike for its conclusiveness, for the modesty with which its argument is set forth, and for the painstaking research which it exhibits. He names, as an offset to Alford's seventeen words and phrases in the last twelve verses not elsewhere used by Mark, precisely the *same number* in the twelve verses next *preceding* these. These are: [15:44; 15:45; 15:46; 16:1; 16:2; 16:3; 16:4; 16:5; 16:8.] The Professor used the Greek text of Tregelles.

Such a coincidence, occurring in the immediate context, is at once a surprising fact and a startling exposure of the fragile foundation on which this famous critical structure has been erected. It shows that the same use of the

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Greek Concordance which led to the origin of this criticism, if pushed a little farther, would have smothered it in its birth, and would have saved some distinguished critics from being detected in a flimsy though pretentious fallacy.

Applying to another passage the method adopted by Prof. Broadus, I have myself examined the last twelve verses of Luke's narrative and found there nine words which are not elsewhere used in his narrative, and among them are four which are not elsewhere found in the New Testament: yet none of our critics have thought it worth while to mention this fact, if they have noticed it, much less have they raised a doubt in regard to the genuineness of this passage. Doubtless many other examples of the kind could be found in the New Testament; but these are amply sufficient to show that the argument which we are considering is but a shallow sophism.

But the argument appears, if possible, still more fallacious, when we come to consider it in connection with the words and phrases in question taken separately. We make a few specifications, taken from among those on which Alford and others most confidently rely for the support of their criticism ....

Our final conclusion is, that the passage in question is authentic in all its details, and that there is no reason to doubt that it was written by the same hand which indited the preceding parts of this narrative. The objections which have been raised against it are better calculated to shake our confidence in Biblical Criticism than in the genuineness of this inestimable portion of the word of God.

[After the above note was completed and sent to the printers, I was kindly furnished by Prof. Broadus with a copy of a book of over 300 pages devoted exclusively to the question discussed above, and written by John W. Burgon, D. D., Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. While the writer appears to me extravagant in many of his expressions, and often extreme in his conclusions, I recommend the work to the careful study of those who are interested in this question. It was published at Oxford, Eng., in 1871.] [Our quote is from J.W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, pp.377-382].

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**Mark 16:9-20**

Burton Coffman

Mark 16:9: "Now when he was risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons."

Mary Magdalene ... The radical critics love to assert concerning this verse that "Mark here introduced Mary Magdalene, just as if she had not been mentioned twice already in a few verses," concluding from this that Mark could not have written these words. This is not even reasonable. True, Mark had mentioned her twice already; but here, in his account of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, he was compelled to speak of her a third time; and the incredible thing from the human standpoint, that this woman should have enjoyed the top priority in such a list is pinpointed and emphasized by this reference to the fact of the sevenfold exorcism. Thus, Mark mentioned this, not for purposes of identification, but for the wonderment of it in connection with her being the first to see Jesus after his resurrection.

For critical discussion leading to the conclusion that this whole chapter is a valid part of the Gospel of Mark and of the Word of God, see the introduction to this commentary. The Christian student has no need whatever to be concerned with allegations to the contrary, none of which are founded on anything except subjective conclusions of scholars, many of whom are obviously influenced more by bias against the content of the chapter than by any objective evidence favoring its exclusion.

Even J. R. Dummelow, while admitting that the external evidence against the last twelve verses "is certainly not enough to justify their rejection,"[1] nevertheless decided to reject them on grounds of form, vocabulary and style. However, of all the evidences bearing on questions of this kind, nothing could be of less weight than arguments from style and vocabulary. Mark is said to have used words in this chapter which he used nowhere else in the gospel; but that is incapable of proving that the words were not in his vocabulary. The conceit that Mark used every word that he knew in the first fifteen chapters is untenable! Furthermore, the sudden change to singular pronouns in Mark 16:15-16 was a part of the essential design to make clear who would be empowered to do the "signs" of Mark 16:17-20; and the alleged awkwardness of the re-introduction of Mary Magdalene in Mark 16:9 disappears completely when Mark's purpose of mentioning the sevenfold exorcism is discerned. That purpose was not to identify Mary Magdalene, already mentioned twice, but to explain the "hardness of heart" on the part of the eleven (Mark 16:14). It is such a failure to read what the gospel is saying that results in mis-judgments based upon style.

Mark 16:2: "And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was risen."

Mary Magdalene had already made one visit to the tomb quite a bit earlier "while it was yet dark" (John 20:1); and, being aware that the tomb was empty, she had told Peter and John. Nevertheless, after sunrise she returned to the tomb with the group who had brought spices. There are some elements of the sacred narratives of these events that cannot be fully catalogued as to time and personnel due to the brevity of the accounts regarding what must have been a day of exceedingly many episodes and involving at least hundreds of people ....

Mark 16:3: "And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?"

Mary Magdalene already knew that the stone was rolled away; but as this verse relates what some of them were saying among themselves, there was no cause for her to speak, the same fearful reticence being already upon her which came upon them all a little later (Mark 16:8).

Who shall roll us away the stone ...? Who indeed solves every human problem too great for men to solve themselves? It was God who sent an angel and removed the stone, and it was God who sent the Christ to pay the price of human salvation and restore the broken fellowship between man and his Creator.

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Much has been written concerning the last verses of the gospel (chap. 16:9-20), the reason being that they are missing in some of the old Greek manuscripts of the New Testament (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus). Other manuscripts, again, contain a shorter version. The editors of the scientific edition of the Greek NT (Nestle-Aland) do list verses 9 to 20 but they list the verses in double brackets, which means that they are very old but not considered to be original by the editors. As these verses are contained in most of the Greek manuscripts and old translations there is little doubt that the paragraph predates the manuscripts which omit or question it. The various scientists who do not consider the paragraph as original try to defend this opinion by advancing arguments to do with the style and contents of this passage. In my view, however, these have been contradicted sufficiently in the 19th century, amongst others, by H. Olshausen, J.P. Lange, J.W. Burgon, C.F. Keil and W. Kelly and in more recent times by W.R. Farmer and J. van Bruggen.

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