



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of The Gospel of Mark

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

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These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 1:1-45

God sent John the Baptist (hereafter designated, "J.B.") ahead of Jesus, baptizing people (immersing in water) unto repentance for remission of sins because the Jewish people (and the world) had to be prepared to repent of all other systems of repentance and remission of sins. J.B.'s ministry and "theology" was iconoclastic and absolutely innovative! The Jews, especially, had to repent (i.e., change their minds, values and actions) about the theology given them in the OT as to reconciliation before God. They had to understand that a new system was near to being ushered in with the coming of the Messiah that would fulfill (i.e., complete) the Law of Moses. No more animal sacrifices, no more priesthood, no more Judaism! The Christian "system" would cause the Jew to have a "violent" transformation in his theology and religious practice (see Luke 16:16) in order to please God and become a follower of Jesus Christ (see the book of Hebrews). J.B.'s ministry was so provocative, the religious leaders of Judaism thought he might be the Messiah! It provoked these leaders to remind him they were sons of Abraham and J.B. said, "So, what?" "God can from these stones raise up children to Abraham—but only Jesus Christ can give you a new spiritual birth. J.B.'s ministry signaled the end of the law and the prophets as an acceptable approach to God (see Matt. 5:17; Lk. 16:16 and the book of Hebrews). After J.B. it was the gospel of the kingdom of God. Before J.B. sins were atoned for yearly by animal sacrifices and sprinkling of blood. J.B. initiated remission of sins by faith in a new ordinance commanded by God—submission to immersion in water (baptism) for remission of sins. No one had ever practiced that by the command of Almighty God before! This does not mean that J.B. started the Christian Church! Both J.B. and Jesus preached, "the kingdom of God (the church) is at hand!" The church, as any serious student of the NT knows, began on the Day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2. The OT law was not, in fact, fulfilled until the death of Christ (Col. 2:14). J.B. ministry had to be obeyed, in addition to the law, by all who believed, in order to repent—until the earthly redemptive work of Christ had been finished at the cross and the resurrection.

J.B. exaltation of Jesus Christ indicates what a godly man J.B. was! He had multitudes of people following him, hanging on his every word, obeying his every command. The religious leaders were thinking of him as the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet "like unto Moses" (Deut. 18:18; Jn. 6:21). J.B. was even having some effect on Herod the king of the Jews. All the people were in great expectation (Luke 3:15). Yet, J.B. is eager to renounce any fame and picture himself as unworthy to be the lowliest of servants to the One who comes after him—Jesus Christ. J.B. wants it clearly known that his only function in life is to be a "voice" heralding Someone higher, mightier, and much more important than he. Jesus will say later of J.B. that among those born of women (human beings) there is not one greater than J.B. John the Baptist was more than a prophet. He was the singular individual

predicted in Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3-4. Now J.B. must have known his unique place in the cosmic scheme of divine redemption—but he never “tooted his own horn.” He gave up his home as a youngster to live in the wilderness, he gave up the amenities and comforts of society, and eventually gave up his life in its prime. He gave up any and all basking in the limelight, just to introduce The Someone appointed to make him fade away! What humility, what faith, what obedience, what a godly man!!!

The Greek word translated “drove” (Mark 1:12) is *ekballei*, and means literally, “to cast out.” Certainly Jesus did not have to be taken into the wilderness forcibly, against his will. Therefore, *ekballei* means in this context simply that Jesus went into the wilderness willingly to be tempted by the direct impulse of the Holy Spirit’s command. In other words, the Holy Spirit chose the time and the place, and gave Jesus this terrible command. No doubt, there was a struggle in Jesus’ soul about the command, just as there is indicated in Luke 12:50; Jn. 12:27; Matt. 26:36-39; Heb. 5:8-9, etc. So Mark indicates the “driving” struggle involved in Jesus’ obedience. The Holy Spirit was no more an accomplice in the temptations of Jesus than he is in yours or mine. God’s Holy Spirit “drives” all human beings to struggle with faith, obedience and testing. But God’s Holy Spirit has nothing to do with any one’s failure. His Holy Spirit has everything to do with anyone’s victory. God always provides a way of escape from sin and never allows any person to be tempted beyond what he is able to resist (1 Cor. 10:13).

When Jesus said, “the kingdom of God is at hand” he meant that all the OT predicted concerning the coming Messianic kingdom on earth which the OT prophets had so profusely and metaphorically predicted was imminent! It is clear from the Gospels and the epistles that Jesus and God expected the Jews, especially, to be aware that history was coming to this climactic point. How could a Jew know precisely when the “kingdom” and the “King” was to arrive on the scene? From Daniel 9:24-27, Micah 5:2, and many other prophecies. 490 years after the “going forth of the word to rebuild Jerusalem” by the edict of Artaxerxes, the “Anointed” (i.e., Messiah) was to appear (Dan. 9:24-27). THAT WAS PRECISELY WHEN JESUS APPEARED AND BEGAN DOING MIRACLES AND FULFILLING PROPHECIES! The Jews had absolutely no excuse whatever for being ignorant of the time for the kingdom, nor of the characteristics which would be displayed by the Messiah and the nature of the Messiah’s kingdom! The “kingdom” of God, means, of course, the rule of God—the absolute rule of God, sovereignly in the minds and actions of believers (2 Cor. 5:14-21; 10:3-5). When the infant Jesus was taken to the temple for his “redemption” ceremony as the firstborn male, the aged Simeon “blessed God” and said, “Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Luke chose to translate Simeon’s word for Lord by the Greek word *despotes* from which we get the English word, “despot.” This “despotic” (i.e., arbitrary) rule of God is what Jesus preached when he said, “The kingdom of God is at hand—so repent and believe the good news.” Jesus was speaking as God’s sovereign emissary to mankind—most people anticipated something else when they thought of the “kingdom of God.” People today have many perverted ideas of what the “kingdom of God” is. Most simply tolerate it as some kind of religious system which includes all the world’s “great” religions (Judaism, Islam, Buddhism,

Hinduism, etc.) Other see it as a worldwide movement of social activism totally unrelated to the Bible. Others see it as restricted to their little bigoted, provincial, denominational sects.

The fishermen just up and left their jobs when they met Jesus in Mark 1:16-20, because they had traveled with Jesus about one full year before this meeting! During that year they heard him teach, saw him baptized, saw miracles he did, and saw the reactions of people to his preaching. Furthermore, their former “teacher,” John the Baptist, had told them to follow Jesus. Jesus does not expect anyone to be foolhardy in following him. There is no premium placed on carelessness in Christian discipleship. Jesus wants people to count the cost. Therefore, he wants no ignorant disciples. Jesus is after people’s minds. He wants total commitment. Jesus wants the “seed” (the word of God) planted in good and honest hearts (i.e. minds), not in shallow, rocky or weedy “soil” (i.e., minds). Impulsiveness is not a mark of stability, steadfastness or self-control. Stability is what stood these apostles in good stead in the hours of despair and depression that would accrue to their discipleship. Jesus intended to make these fishermen to become “fishers of men.” Fishers of men are made, not born. It would involve training, both by precept, example, and practice. Yes, men and women can still do what these fishermen did. They can let their jobs, their homes, their families be secondary to become fishers of men. It is no more difficult to do so today than then—in fact, it may be easier today. Yes, men and women ARE doing it today! And still our world of 5 billion people are “like sheep without a shepherd.” Are you ready to become a “fisher of men”? Are you giving support in prayer and money to train more fishermen? **COUNT THE COST TO YOURSELF FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP!**

An unclean spirit (demon) is an unholy spirit. They are “unclean” in the sense that they are wicked, rebellious, disobedient, condemned, and unforgiven. They confess (Gr. homologeo, i.e. “say the same as God has said”) that Jesus is the “Anointed” (Christ) of God because that is a fact that cannot be erased from history. They know the facts and try to use the facts in a hurtful way. In other words, if demons had been allowed to go around confessing Christ, some people would have gotten the idea that Christ and demons are in consort! That is why Jesus often forbade demons to confess his name. Demons knew who Christ was, believed who he was, and even went around telling who he was. But they did not obey what they believed. They were so “dead set” on opposing God, they “confessed” Jesus’ identity to do harm to the truth if they could. But Jesus showed by supernatural deeds (miracles) that he had no “truck” with demons and unclean spirits. He cast them out and sent them back to their chains in the abyss. They also knew he had the power to do that. The devil does not need demons to “possess” people today because he has deceived most of the world into thinking Jesus has no power over demons. And the Lord knows that if people will not be persuaded of his power over the spirit-world by the Gospel records, they will not be persuaded with another era of exorcizing demons by demonstrated miraculous power (see Luke 16:27-31; John 20:30-31). Jesus gave good evidence by casting out demons. He did not exorcize every demon possessed person in Palestine of his day just as he did not heal every lame, blind, or deaf person, or raise every dead person from the grave. His primary ministry was not healing—it was preaching repentance and belief in the gospel.

Jesus' objective in healing "many" (not necessarily all) in Capernaum, Mark 1:29-39, was to provoke everyone to search for him! That is clear from verses 35-39. And then he left and went to other towns! That is the point! He wanted them to seek him, but his objective was not healing—it was preaching! He said, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there—for that is why I came out!" Jesus did not come to merely heal—he came to preach. Healing simply confirmed the authority of what he preached! Once that was recognized, he healed no more! His primary mission was to bring about repentance and belief in the Gospel. Jesus left these "seekers" of healing just as he refused to give more bread and fish to the thousands who followed him to the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6) after feeding 5000. They wanted another miracle—Jesus intended to preach more sermons to them. And preach he did! He boiled it all down to: "The flesh profits you nothing, the words that I have spoken unto you, they are Spirit and life" (John 6:63). And when a city like Capernaum has heard the Gospel preached over and over, he moves on and gives those who have not heard an opportunity to hear and respond. Let us do the same!

Answered above.

Of course Jesus wanted lepers cleansed. Jesus wants every human being cleansed, redeemed, resurrected to immortality and incorruption so there will be no more sickness, pain and death. But, so long as this world stands, it is under the curse of God and it must be made to understand this. This creation has been subjected to futility by the God who created it (Rom. 8:17ff) because men are in rebellion against him. And he wants them to submit to his rule—his kingdom. Drastic measures have to be taken to turn (repent) man's mind and desires from this corrupted world. That involves sickness (leprosy), pain and death. Leprosy was not modern "Hansen's Disease" (commonly called "leprosy" today). Leprosy of the OT was more like psoriasis—it was a skin disease—some sort of fungus because it could be found on the walls of houses and on garments. Hansen's Disease (today's so-called "leprosy") is a disease of the nervous system which causes the flesh to fall from the bones and only in rare cases is it contagious. Leprosy was more symbolic than debilitating. God commanded in the OT that lepers be cut off from Israel—they could not associate with society, could not worship in the temple, and were not to be touched. It symbolized human sinfulness (uncleanness). To cleanse a leper indicated (symbolically) that Jesus had power to make people "clean" and restore them to fellowship with God and with their fellow man. Jesus didn't heal all lepers in Palestine just as he did not heal all lame people. He did enough to demonstrate that he could supercede the condemnation of the Law of Moses and take away that which kept men from God and society.

Jesus forbade this leper from telling about his cure for two reasons: (a) as a test of the leper's loyalty to Jesus—and what a test to have such wonderful personal news and not be able to tell anyone; (b) because his primary mission was not to cleanse lepers, but to persuade people to submit to his teaching and repent and believe the Gospel and cleanse their souls (1 Pet. 2:22-23). His primary mission was to bring people to faith and obedience to his commandments. The leper was healed but he failed the test of obedience. To obey is better than to be healed! If healing had been Jesus' primary mission, he would not have told

the leper to keep quiet! He would have done everything in his power to bring seekers of healing to seek him out! He would not have stayed “out in the country.” Jesus is not interested in healed people going out and telling of their healing. He wants fishers of men who will go out and tell people to obey his commandments.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 2:1-28

The “word” Jesus preached to the crowd-packed house was the “gospel of the kingdom.” It was, of course, already veiled in the symbols and types and prophecies of the OT. Jesus often took the OT and preached the gospel from it (Lk. 24:25-27; 24:44-49, etc.) Jesus expected the Jews of his home town to understand the gospel from the OT when he stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth and read from Isaiah 61 and preached about the Messianic age (Lk. 4:16-30). So he probably made reference to the OT in this preaching. Every word that came from the mouth of Jesus was, also, of course, the “word” of God. So whatever he said was the “word.” What Jesus said and what the OT said would never be in disagreement. He would naturally show this crowd-packed house how he and the “kingdom” he preached was fulfilling the OT. In preaching to this crowd, gathered no doubt to get some physical blessing, Jesus was giving them what they desperately needed—rather than what they thought they needed. That is what a friend is for! If you had a friend who had the words of eternal life, and you didn’t have them, would you expect him to “preach” these words to you? YES!

Jesus “saw” the faith of the four friends of the paralyzed man when they dug the hole in the roof and let the man down into the room on his pallet. In the final analysis, one’s faith in anything (even it is “faith” in evolution) will be acted out, thus it will be seen. They had brought the paralyzed man to Jesus for healing. Their faith was short of what Jesus would want, but he honored it anyway, and immediately set out to cultivate this “spark” of faith into something more mature and spiritual. He said, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” He wanted the paralytic and the four friends to have the kind of faith described in Hebrews 11:1, illustrated in Hebrews 11:2-40. Jesus never rejected the weakest faith—he always, however, insisted faith must grow and become strong. Jesus was never satisfied with a person’s spiritual status—he always challenged everyone to growth, to mature and become stable.

Jesus first forgave the paralytic’s sins because the paralytic needed that more than he needed healing. All human bodies must die or be shed. Every person who inherits heaven must be changed into immortality (see 1 Cor. 15:42-57). But no one can go to heaven without forgiveness of sins. Jesus also intended to use this man’s condition to prove to the crowds that he was the Son of God and had authority on earth to forgive sins. The Jews did not find it hard to believe that God in heaven could forgive sins, but for some man on earth to say he could forgive sins would be blasphemy if he were not God! Jesus had already given evidence (casting out demons, healing multitudes, cleansing lepers, ch. 1) that he was God was about to give even more evidence! If Jesus had forgiven the man’s sins and had never healed him, the man would have been blessed beyond measure! Don’t forget that the great apostle Paul spent all his Christian life with a “thorn in the flesh.” Many

Christians have endured pain, illness, and infirmity all their lives, but that does not mean they are less fortunate than the healthy sinners, or healthy Christians for that matter! If the grace of God was sufficient for Paul, it is sufficient for you and for me! We simply must get the Christian—the Biblical—mind on this matter! We must acknowledge that Christ's vicarious atonement for our sins is a million times more important than healing our bodies.

Jesus deemed his healing of the paralytic sufficient evidence to prove his authority to forgive sins (or to prove that he was God). There was, at that point in time, nothing more sufficient he could do to prove it. For some of the crowd it was sufficient—they had never seen anything like it! Jesus' resurrection from the dead is his ultimate "sign" that he is God (Mt. 12:38-41). In this healing there was no application of medicine, no hands laid on, no screening for probability of being healed, no examination necessary to attest a healing, no waiting period for the miracle to take effect, no partial recovery. Jesus healed with only a word from his mouth! And this man was totally paralyzed! He could not walk—he could not get up off his pallet! If Jesus can do this, he can claim to forgive sins without being guilty of blasphemy, because it proves his deity. He is indeed God! Those today who claim authority to "absolve" sins are guilty of blasphemy! Think about it! Catholicism is linked to blasphemy! God has never given any man authority to forgive men's sins. There is only one mediator between man and God, himself man, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5)—no pope, no priest, no Virgin Mary, and no saints can forgive our sins! And to say they can is blasphemy.

Jesus could eat with publicans and sinners because God does not make one guilty by association. Think of all the OT saints who had to associate with the most despicable heathen kings, workers, neighbors, and still maintained their righteousness before God (Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Esther, the Prophets, etc., etc.). It was not that Jesus' deity gave him a protection which we do not have. We cannot use that as a cop-out for our failure to get out and take the gospel where the sinners are! He was as human as we are human! Of course, we are not to take part in the unfruitful works or darkness (Eph. 5:11). But that does not mean we cannot associate with sinners, in places where sinners go, if we are there on business for the Lord! Paul, surrounded by polytheistic philosophers on Mars Hill, preached repentance (Acts 17); Paul, eating dinner with an unbeliever and eating meat sacrificed to an idol, could teach the gospel (1 Cor. 8-9-10). Jesus could go to a banquet in a publican's home, be surrounded by sinners (including his own disciples), and win a publican to the kingdom! We will never win sinners until we become their friends. It can't be done by remote-control. We dare to associate with sinners when we need something (groceries, gasoline, medical attention, entertainment) but shun going to their house for supper, or visit their places of business or employment, and associating with them for the length of time necessary to cultivate friendship. Few converts ever come through invitations to church or "cold turkey" calling!

Of course, Jesus wants righteous people in his kingdom. But the really righteous are those who acknowledge they are sinners saved by grace and faith. Their righteousness has been vicariously accredited to them by the perfect redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Those self-righteous people who refuse to acknowledge they have sinned have no need for

the kingdom of Christ, do not want the kingdom, cannot be in it! Jesus seeks sinners. Those who bring God's message of forgiveness go where the unforgiven are! Teachers of God's word must have audiences who need to be taught. No one learns who sees no need for it! The very meaning of discipleship is "learner-ship." Christians are both righteous and sinners! They are sinners in covenant with Christ through which they have the gift of forgiveness promised them according to their repentance. Saved from sin by the grace of Christ, through obedient faith in his word, is the status of Christians. That is their relationship. Those are the kind of people Jesus came to call to the kingdom. They are teachable, loyal, trusting, believing, and obedient. If they aren't Jesus can't do anything for them.

Jesus's point in all three of these short parables is to inform the Jews that when the Messiah arrived (and he arrived in Jesus), Judaism was obsolete because the Messiah was to fulfill it. Judaism, the OT law, was inadequate—the ultimate covenant relationship God desired with man could not possibly be administered, dispensed, made operative in the OT law. First, man cannot be redeemed, saved or regenerated by law. God's law, because it is absolute, can only judge, sentence, doom man in guilt and punishment. Second, the law, as revealed in the OT revelation was incomplete (only in types and symbols)—man needs a revelation of God Incarnated. Third, the law was provincial—that is it was intended only for one race of people—salvation to the whole world could never be dispensed in the OT law. To attempt to produce what God ultimately desired by restricting the Messianic kingdom to the OT system would destroy both the old and the new! The application of that lesson for today is that the Gospel cannot be restricted to human systems or legalisms! It is beyond any manipulations or reductions to human, physical, material and provincial levels. It needs no "improvements" by human minds. It needs only to be known, believed, and proclaimed! Divine power is of itself resident in the Word.

Jesus did believe in keeping the commandments of God (Jn. 8:29; 15:19). He did not have to justify the breaking of Sabbath law by the disciples because they were not breaking any law. They had evidently violated a tradition (interpretation) of the Pharisees. The OT law says, "When you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain" (Deut. 23:25). There is no restriction in this commandment as to any day of the week. The laws concerning the Sabbath (see notes on question 10 below) do not specifically forbid what Deut. 23:25 allows. God would not contradict himself. The trouble was the Pharisees thought they knew better than God, what God meant! They added their interpretation as law. We must be careful not to do as the Pharisees did! God did not consider plucking a handful of grain to be working or harvesting, thus it could be done on the Sabbath. After all, people put meals on the table and ate on the Sabbath—even the Pharisees!

David's taking of the "Bread of the Presence" (the "Shew-Bread") was a clear violation of the law which says only priests were to eat this bread and no one else was to touch it lest they die, Num. 4:7,15. Yet the priest Ahimelech gave the bread to David and his men, and Ahimelech was not put to death nor was David and his men for eating it. Jesus used this incident with David to justify the actions of his own disciples in plucking grain.

Surely, if David's action was not condemned by God, Jesus' disciples were not violating God's laws. Jesus teaches clearly that human life takes priority over laws about prohibitions for certain days and certain foods. We are obligated, as disciples of Jesus, to be ready to make such decisions. There may be times when something we think to be clearly commanded in the way of ordinance or ritual will have to be (in a specific instance) set aside for a higher principle of mercy toward the weak. Paul mentions some of these in 2 Corinthians 8-9-10 and in Romans 14. And do not say we shouldn't—we all do it practically every day of our lives. We all establish priorities in the area of what we know to be good, because we cannot do everything that is good.

Jesus teaches some very important principles in his statement, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." You see, Jesus not only justified human need taking precedence over the "Bread of the Presence"—he also indicated human need takes precedence over the Sabbath: (a) human need takes priority over any ritual, custom, or law; (b) work in God's service is permitted at any time (even on the Sabbath); (c) God's interpretation (by Jesus here) is more lenient than man's; (d) man (through the Son of Man) is Lord of the Sabbath. Men in rebellion against God insist on reasoning from the spiritual to the physical, from the principle to the legalistic-specific. God wants men to reason the other direction! That is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about. Men want to reduce God's spiritual principles to specific laws in order to relieve themselves of the responsibilities of being spiritual. They want to find some way to get by with the least goodness possible—so they cling to legalisms.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 3:1-35

Yes. Jesus deliberately healed the man with the withered hand. He certainly didn't do this miracle by accident! He knew there were Pharisees present in the synagogue. Therefore, he deliberately precipitated this controversy. Jesus also knew what the Pharisees thought about healing on the Sabbath. How does one reconcile Jesus's involvement in so much controversy with the instructions of Paul to Timothy, "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome..." (2 Tim. 2:24)? One must remember the whole context of 2 Tim. 2! Paul told Timothy to have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies which breed fights (the Greek word translated "quarrelsome" is *machestha*, meaning literally, "one to use a sword"). But if a "fight" is necessary to delineate falsehood from the truth of God—so be it! Anyone who compromises the truth with a lie in order to avoid a "fight" is a "coward" and we know where such people are after the judgment (Rev. 21:8; 22:15). Paul also said that Timothy was to "correct his opponents" with gentleness. But anytime you set out to correct someone, controversy is almost always apt to occur—until the "opponent" of the truth repents. We can argue without being violent—Jesus did! Christians need to start arguments (using the word "argument" in its fundamental sense—"to give reasons for, to make clear, to persuade, to debate"). Remember 1 Peter 3:15—be ready always to make a defense (Greek, *apologia*, "apologetics") to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you! There is no way to "expose the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11) without precipitating debate, or making things clear, or arousing controversy. It is impossible for evangelists (i.e., preachers) to fulfill their apostolic mandates in 1 & 2 Thess., 1 & 2 Tim. and Titus without arousing controversy.

The Pharisees were silent after Jesus asked them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" because they knew what the right answer was, but didn't want to give it! Jesus had confuted the "gainsayers" like any true "shepherd of the sheep" would (see Titus 1:9-14). Elders are to "hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that they may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it." Titus 1:9. Elders must know how to get involved in controversy (not run from it) and stop the mouths (Greek *epistomizein*, "silence, bridle, muzzle, stop the mouth") of those who have no right to teach falsehood, Titus 1:10-11. Jesus stopped and muzzled the Pharisees with his logic. His logic and his truth, from the scriptures silenced them! Christ could not let the Pharisees carry the day and then tell Paul to tell Titus to "confute those who contradict" the truth. Wherever there is falsehood and opposition to God, men of faith and courage must put it to silence by entering into controversy! We have Moses and the prophets as some of the greatest examples! The prophets were all men of "controversy" (just read Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Micah, et. al). Paul was always embroiled in controversy—even with churches and Christian brethren (Gal. 4:16)!

The hardness of the Pharisee's heart is what aroused Jesus's anger! There was anger in Jesus's heart and there was anger in his expression ("He looked upon them with anger"), greatly grieved! Mark used the Greek word *orges* to describe Jesus's anger—we get the English word "orgasm" from Greek *orges*. Anger and grief together is strong exasperation. Jesus expresses strong exasperation against the Pharisees vividly in Matthew 23. If your heart will not abide a Jesus who has anger against sin, it cannot abide a Jesus who has pleasure at righteousness for you can't have both (Heb. 1:9). If you want to know whether God is ever angry or not, read the OT or the book of Revelation! Without hate there is no love! Without hell there is no heaven! Without penalty there is no law! And the Christian must be of the same character and mentality as God. Christians must become angry at the hardness of unbelief. The prophet Amos pronounced "woe...upon those who are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph" (i.e., Israel). Amos also said that those who desired the Lord to be with them must "hate evil, and love good" (Amos 5:15). Micah said the Lord would hide his face from those who "hate the good and love the evil." Jesus could not have it both ways—and you can't either! You've got to be exasperated at those like the Pharisees who would try to kill the truth!

When people are implacably set against truth and goodness—and they can't defeat truth and goodness with logic and argumentation—they take what they think is the "final solution" and kill the Truth-incarnated, Jesus of Nazareth. That is what the Jewish rulers did with Jesus! Christians are to be "truth and goodness incarnated." That is, we are to glorify God in our mortal bodies (1 Cor. 6:20). Christians, then, may expect to suffer persecution, even death, when they stand in the face of controversy and defend the truth as Jesus and Amos did! Is it possible that there are people who would kill someone who does good for others? Will people "bite the hand that feeds them"? Why? It would seem that if all the world wants is that which is material and physical, it would not harm those who are good enough to provide such! But do not forget, we are not wrestling against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:10ff), but against spiritual wickedness (invisible wickedness). Our opposition is in the area of ideas, ideologies, philosophies, for these are the things by which power is gained in order to subvert others. The Pharisees did not plot to kill Jesus just because he healed a man but because he did it on the Sabbath and was about to destroy their ideological, philosophical strangle hold on the Jewish people. Dictatorial governments do not kill people because they are against "the good life," but because their ideological power is threatened.

Paul says in Romans 10:9-10, "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved." Then why couldn't the demons who believed and confessed Jesus be saved? Because they merely stated who he was. They did not put their trust in him to obey him willingly. They obeyed him unwillingly. So there is a difference in how we obey Jesus! Remember, there will be many at the judgment day say, "Lord, lord, did we not do many mighty works in your name, prophesy, cast out demons. Etc." But Jesus will say, "depart from me, you that work iniquity....I never knew you" (Matt. 7:21-23). So people can do for wicked purposes what appears to be good and God's work! Whatever demons did, even in confessing Jesus's

identity, was for some wicked purpose of their own (perhaps to slander his reputation). Many, today, confess or profess Christ or Christianity for wicked purposes. Faithful believers have the awesome obligation to discern who such wicked pedagogues are and argue them into silence, or at least “confute” them in order to try to save their souls from hell (Jude 22-23)! Note, Jesus ordered the demons not to make him known! Jesus is not pleased with testimony from those who really are in opposition to him!

To become one of the Twelve one had to have the following qualifications:

Be called personally, by Jesus.

Be appointed by Jesus to be “with him.” (i.e., while he was in the body on earth).

Be sent out to preach by Jesus.

Have authority to cast out demons and raise the dead and heal all manner of sickness..

Have lived on earth in the first century A.D.

Some churches today (Catholicism, Mormonism) claim to have “apostolic succession.” The Roman Pope considers himself “to be sitting on the throne of St. Peter” and therefore to have the same authority as an apostle of Christ. But he meets none of the above qualifications, to say nothing of other qualifications (such as being an eyewitness to the resurrected Lord, able to speak in foreign tongues miraculously which one has not learned, be baptized [immersed] in the Holy Spirit, and to have been an earthly companion with Christ from John the Baptist until Christ’s ascension, etc. etc.). If the claims of these apostates to be apostles were not so serious they would be ludicrous. But millions of people believe and follow them and that makes it controversial. Faithful followers of Jesus today must get involved in this controversy in order to snatch some from hell! The great obstacle in converting Roman Catholics to the truth is that they accept the false doctrine that the “Church” existed before the written New Testament scriptures, therefore the “Church” (i.e., Roman Catholic Church) supercedes the authority of the Scriptures.

The Pharisees, forced to acknowledge that Jesus was doing something beyond human power in casting out demons, and refusing to attribute his power to God because he threatened their traditions about the Sabbath, chose blasphemy. They called “evil” what was clearly and unequivocally good. That is a hardness of heart that cannot be forgiven even by God! That is a manifestation of rebellion so thoroughly entrenched that it is eternal! It takes a perversion beyond reach to prostitute truth and goodness to the point that it is classified as evil! Because that means that evil is thereby accepted as good! The Israelites had become that perverse in Isaiah’s day (Isa. 5:20). You see, you cannot remain neutral. That is what Jesus teaches about this same incident as Matthew recorded it (Matt. 12). There Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me, he that gathers not scatters.” You either call good,

“good,” or you call good, “evil.” There is no in between with Jesus! The Pharisees used the fallacious method of argumentation known as argumentum ad hominem, Latin, for slandering the person’s character rather than giving a logical, factual rebuttal of their argument or action. It is also called “poisoning the well.” If you can’t refute the evidence or the logic of the opposition, you slander the person you are opposing.

Jesus was not possessed by demons. He proved it scientifically and logically. Demons (or the devil) would not deliberately destroy themselves by going around destroying the devil’s “house.” Jesus cast out demons and ordered them back to the abyss, he delivered people from demonic possession. Satan’s aim was to hurt people by possessing them—he would not order his own demon comrades back to the abyss. Furthermore Jesus logically points out, “No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man...” In order for Jesus to cast out demons he had to overpower the devil and that proves he has more power than the devil, therefore he does not do things by the power of the devil, but by a power higher, holier, and greater than that!

Jesus brought up the question about the eternal sin in connection with this controversy about demon possession, because, as we discussed in question #7, calling good “evil” is the unpardonable sin. It can’t be pardoned because one with that mind-set does not want pardon! That mind-set has values which are completely at odds with those of God. It refuses to recognize holiness when it stares it in the face! Such people deliberately oppose what they definitely know to be the facts, and know to be good. These Pharisees knew Jesus had power beyond mortal power—they knew his power to “cast out of demons” was evidence of deity and something which they only pretended to do, yet they lied against their own consciences, and against their own convictions. Perversity of that magnitude refuses to be forgiven because it is convinced it is not sinning. It isn’t that God wouldn’t or couldn’t forgive them if they were honest enough to admit what they knew to be the truth—it is that they deliberately refuse to admit it and instead call the truth, falsehood! None are so blind as those who WILL NOT see! (See John 9:39-41). The late Bertrand Russell, famous mathematician and philosopher, says in his book, *Why I am Not a Christian*, “My own view on religion (and he means Christianity) is that I regard it as a disease born of fear and as a source of untold misery to the human race...religion (Christianity) prevents our children from having a rational education; religion prevents us from removing the fundamental causes of war; religion prevents us from teaching the ethic of scientific co-operation in place of the old fierce doctrines of sin and punishment. It is possible that mankind is on the threshold of a golden age; but, if so, it will be necessary first to slay the dragon that guards the door, and this dragon is religion (Christianity)!” Bertrand Russell has gone to meet his Maker—I wonder what he thinks about the “golden age” of 2008? Hugh Hefner, and Larry Flint, and other pornographers are of the same blasphemous ilk. They classify as “evil” what the Bible says is good about sexual intercourse only within marriage, and classify as “good” what the Bible says is evil about sex perversions (i.e., homosexuality, adultery, fornication, paedophilia). They attribute all the wicked, violent, depression in society to Biblical views of sex because they say Bible-believers attempt to repress promiscuous, “free,” uncommitted, irresponsible, sexual intercourse which they advocate as “good.” They think their view of sex

is liberating and healthful, both physically and mentally. They call the Bible's condemnations of homosexuality, "evil." They are committing the eternal sin! It is not their lewd pictures, nor even their violence, which is blasphemous. It is their obtuse, perverted mentality which calls what is very evidently good, "evil." If they published a magazine without any pictures at all, and no dirty stories at all, but put in it only their "philosophy" of sexuality, it would still be blasphemous! All this blasphemy of what is good (i.e., the Bible) is a consequence of the theory of evolution and it is as old as the Greek philosopher Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) and his Roman disciple, Lucretius (94-55 B.C.). Actually materialism is as old as Satan and the Garden of Eden. Charles Darwin plagiarized both of these ancient philosophers with his theory of evolution. Epicurus and Lucretius taught that everything material came about by chance. They also declared that only that which brings physical and psychological pleasure is good. These two were not atheists they were polytheists. They believed their multitude of gods had nothing to do with creating the material existence nor in sustaining it. Their gods cavorted in an unknown realm of their own and cared nothing about man or matter. On "Mars Hill" in Athens, the apostle Paul appealed to the "Epicureans" along with "Stoics" to apply human logic to the evidence from creation and conclude One True God made man and the cosmos (Acts 17:16-33).

Jesus made an abrupt, argumentative, reply to the information that his mother and brothers were calling for him because he would have the whole world know that no human being, not even his immediate earthly family, will dictate to him his mission or his ministry. Some people thought that because they had eaten in the presence of Jesus, and that he had bodily taught in the streets of their villages, they could manipulate him and dictate to him about their salvation (Lk. 13:22-30). NOT SO! Jesus is no respecter of person! Jesus acknowledges only those who surrender to the will of God and do it as worthy to be called his "relatives." Jesus is absolute Lord, absolute Monarch. His church is a kingdom, not a democracy. He alone dictates! How long does it take Mary, his mother to learn this? How long does it take for US TO LEARN IT?

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 4:1-14

Teaching adults by parables is not talking down to them! Actually, Jesus told his disciples “to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God.” Matthew adds the announcement of Jesus that his use of parables for the disciples was also to teach them to be teachers (Matt. 13:51-52). Isaiah (28:9-13) told the “sophisticates” of his day that they were so smart they didn’t know what was right and so they needed “talking down to” in “line upon line, precept upon precept.” Most of us are so dulled in our brains that parables are the only way we can sharpen our understanding. Parabolic methods of teaching have been used ever since creation! The wise teacher uses lots of figures of speech, metaphors, parables, similes, allegories—just plain stories and illustrations. Try assembling a children’s swing set, a power-tool, an outdoor broiler, or any other shipped item without a picture! Try directing someone to the George Washington Carver National Monument without drawing a map! All men, especially the truly erudite, learn and teach by using just such simple illustrations from life, creation, and experience. There is no other way to learn! Parables intensify the listening-hearing-applying processes. And that is the purpose of all communication that is worth anything! Teaching-learning experiences are dependent upon the medium of parabolic expression. There are no more sophisticated instructional methods available! Anytime! Our public educational system scorned the McGuffey Reader, but those who were educated with it a couple of generations ago were better educated than modern “involvement-learners” of “progressive education.”

Those “outside” are those who have no desire to know about the “kingdom of God.” They have their own kingdom. They do not want to be ruled over by “that man” Jesus Christ (see Luke 19:14). They have no love for God, no word of God abiding in them, and they do not seek the glory (rank) of God but the glory (rank) of one another. Those “outside” cannot understand because they do not want to understand. Parables of Jesus were given to friend and foe alike and even some of the enemies of Jesus “understood” what the parables were teaching (Matt. 21:45). So when Jesus said parables were given to “hide” the truth from some, he meant it was hidden only in so far as people refused to hear and kept it hidden from themselves. The parable of the “soils” tells us 3 categories of people “outside” the kingdom. They are “outside” because they refuse to hear. And they do not hear because they are hard, shallow and care too much about the world. These kind of people will never understand the deep spiritual implications of the kingdom taught in the parables of Jesus because they do not want to think about spiritual matters. Their consciousness is occupied with material things. The parables are directed toward those who put spiritual (unseen) values, objects and ambitions on the “front burners” of the mind. You can’t put Christ, the church and heaven on the “back burners” of the mind and understand parables. Those who are “outside” have never entered into any experiential knowledge of spirituality. They have

never set their minds on the things of the Spirit—on things above. They keep pushing those things out of consciousness. They don't know because they don't want to do the parables.

The main villains and heroes of the first parable are the “soils.” “Soils” are every man and woman capable of listening, understanding and doing what Jesus teaches. The important characters in the first parable are not the sower or the seed—the main characters are the soils—the listeners. Jesus emphasized this by saying, “...he who has ears to hear, let him hear” and, “if any man has ears to hear, let him hear,” and “take heed what you hear; the measure you give (in hearing) will be the measure you get (in understanding) and still more (blessedness) will be given you...” There are three applications for personal evangelism in this parable: (a) most seed will fall on unresponsive soil; (b) producing fruit is the ultimate responsibility of the “soil” (human heart); (c) lamps are for lighting, and seed is for sowing. We must not desist from sowing because of what seems to be failure. Whenever the word of God is sown, it never fails (Isa. 55:11). Sowers may fail to sow, and soils may fail to receive, but the seed never fails. It will inevitably produce fruit, one way or another, either in repentance or judgment to the glory of God (Phil. 2:9-11). Actually, sowers who sow never fail. They may think they do, but they are responsible only for sowing, never for producing. They succeed when they sow! One of the main objectives of the gospel of Christ is to “judge the world.” (Jn. 9:39-41). God has given his final and ultimate criterion of judgment. He will, henceforth, separate all of mankind on the basis of response to redemption by grace through the work of Jesus Christ. “Hearing” as the word is used in the Bible, (especially in the Hebrew word, shema, which is the word Jesus would have used) means not simply to hear the noise of words being spoken, but it means to obey (1 Sam. 15:22-23 translates shema, “obey”). It means to put into practice the truth which you hear. If you want to “get an experience” with Jesus then DO THE PARABLES HE TAUGHT! GO SOW SEED!

“Accepting the word” is the same as “Holding it fast” (Lk. 8:15). It requires “an honest and good heart” (Lk. 8:15). It is the same as “he who hears the word and understands it” (Matt. 13:23). Accepting the word is to obey it (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:7,10,14). To accept the word is to “continue in his word” (Jn. 8:31). It is to let his “word find a place in you” (Jn. 8:37). To accept the word is the same as letting what you hear abide in you (1 Jn. 2:24) which is the same as “keeping his commandments” (1 Jn. 3:24). It is more than admitting the existence of “the word.” It is more than pronouncing platitudes upon “the word.” It is more than resigning oneself to “the word.” It is like “accepting a woman to be your lawfully wedded wife”...it is like “accepting” the command of a ship or a division of soldiers! It is a covenant relationship. It is a commitment. It is a stewardship—a responsibility. It is like “accepting” citizenship in a country. It is like “accepting” a check from The Millionaire (the old TV series)—there are conditions! It means you will be loyal, fight for it, and keep all its stipulations.

In direct connection with the lesson on “hearing the word” Jesus says, “there is nothing hid except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light...if any man has ears to hear, let him hear—take heed how you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For to him who has will more be

given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” Thus—according to the intensity of your listening and obeying the word of God, you will be given the blessed spirituality promised in the word. According to the humble, faithful “hearing” and accepting the word, you will receive “the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:3-4). According to your time, effort, sacrifice, interest and obedience in doing (“hearing”) the word of God, you will behold the glory of the Lord and be changed into Christ’s likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18). According to your “holding fast” or “understanding” or “hearing” of the word, you will be sanctified, for we are sanctified “in the truth” (Jn. 17:17). According to your hearing of the word, Jesus’s Holy Spirit will abide in you. According to your hearing of the word you will receive the inheritance of the saints (Acts 20:32) because through the word you are built up and given this inheritance. “Accepting” the word of God is an awesome responsibility.

The main point of the parable in 4:26-29 is the automatic growth and slow growth of the seed (the word of God). In fact, the Greek word used by Mark and translated, “produces of itself” is *automate*, and is the very word from which the English word “automatic” comes. The seed (word of God) has the germ of life in itself. No amount of human ingenuity can produce the life of the Spirit in man’s mind (human ingenuity cannot even produce physical life). The word of God produces life all by itself. Sowers are responsible only to sow—not to produce. It is the word alone that is the instrument of the Holy Spirit in producing spiritual life and in sustaining it! The seed (word) grows slowly, in its own proper order, as God has ordained it, without manipulation by human beings. Time is necessary. Sowers must have patience, humility and self-discipline to wait upon the Lord for growth.

There are all kinds of applications of this parable to evangelism. That is exactly why Jesus told it! He told it because the apostles were going to have attitude problems (as well as literal problems) with the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. First, all artificial attempts at manipulation of spiritual growth must give way to humility and patience. And the sower is to attribute praise to the power of the seed (the word of God) to produce growth—no praise goes to the sower except for his faithfulness in sowing! Second, Jesus’s disciples must have total confidence in the word of God to perform the work of conversion and sanctification, and quit trying to regiment, entertain, coerce, scare, or “buy” people into the kingdom! Third, evangelists must wait for the seed to grow in its own time! Evangelists may plant and water, but God gives the increase on his own time schedule. Spirituality comes into our lives in stages—not all at once. And those stages have a proper order. Everyone is in a hurry but God. Abraham was in a hurry and took Hagar; Saul was in a hurry and disobeyed Samuel; Peter often rushed in and put his foot in his mouth; Paul was in a hurry and got a thorn in the flesh. We must learn to do our job, sowing faithfully and competently, and then we must learn to let God’s word do its job! God’s word is slowly, in an orderly manner, building his kingdom. That is not our job. Our job is to simply sow and wait! WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO GET CHRISTIANS TO ACCEPT THAT?! Let us not impatiently run ahead of God. Of course, there has to be sowing—urgent sowing. Seed will not be germinated without being sown. The seed does not accidentally, or supernaturally, fall on the “soil.” It is put there by sowers (planters). Let’s do it! But let’s make sure it is God’s seed! And let’s allow the “seed” to do the work of conversion!

The kingdom is like a grain of mustard seed because the kingdom starts infinitely small, and grows, gradually, into a great “plant.” The kingdom of God had an unpretentious beginning in a cattle-barn with a peasant baby. This baby grew to manhood and communicated the kingdom in parables. It was carried on by fishermen and slaves, but encompassed the whole (Roman) world by Paul’s day—only 30 years after its beginning (Col. 1:23). This parable is needed today. Men may think they are producing the kingdom of God by their “corporation” mentality and methods, but God’s kingdom grows only in the slow, unpretentious method of sowing seed, waiting for it to germinate, to grow of itself, beginning small, and slowly growing large. “Madison Avenue and Wall Street” mentality does not produce the kingdom of God! God’s kingdom does not grow by such methods. People become like that with which they have been won (Hosea 9:10). The very moment the church began to copy the world, to organize under human sovereignty, to regiment people with a “corporate” system and method, it was cursed with Roman Catholicism, Protestant denominationalism, and a plethora of cults and “isms,” and world councils of churches—all dedicated to the manipulation and exploitation of men and women, rather than leading them to grace and freedom in simply “sowing the seed of the Gospel” and letting the seed do its own work, in its own way, in its own time. God forbid that we should fall prey to subverting the work of the word of God by our own pride or impatience with the way God has declared he will do it! If we do, we shall get what we give! Remember, we are warned “take heed how you hear!”

Men who had seen Jesus work other miracles were afraid of the storm because their faith was questionable! Jesus questioned their faith! Luke records Jesus saying, “Where is your faith?” Mark records it: “have you no faith?” Matthew reports: “O men of little faith?” Even when we believe God and Jesus exist—even when we have a document which says he cares, our tendency when the crisis is personal (and not happening to someone else) is to say, “Why doesn’t God wake up and do something for me—take away this crisis.” Yes, we think we believe. Yes, we would say we have faith. Yes, we have even exhibited faith in many ways. But what about a life-threatening crisis? What about a spiritual depression that appears to be “sinking” us, “drowning” us in sorrow, anxiety, fear, discouragement, or hopelessness? Does he care? Do you still believe he cares, even when he seems to be asleep, away at lunch, gone for the day, not hearing you? Does he care when trials, thorns-in-the-flesh will not go away? “Where is your faith?” “Have you no faith?” Did these same apostles who were saved from this drowning, always get deliverance from trouble and death afterward? No! Did they have a different faith later than they had on the Sea of Galilee? Yes! Can we have that “different” faith? Yes! But it is had only in spite of “storms.” It is not a faith dependent on continual physical deliverance! These apostles had not learned yet to set their minds on the things of the Spirit—to sent their minds on things above. They were still minding the things of men (see Matt. 16:23)! They believed Jesus’s “kingdom” was to be of the earth! But after Jesus’s resurrection, their faith became spiritually strong and unailing!

Jesus questioned the faith of these men who had left all and followed him because it needed questioning! Faith is trust in that which cannot be seen (Heb. 11:1). Trusting in

what is unseen (2 Cor. 4:16-18) means “distrust” in what is seen! That is, we must “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” Rom. 13:14). We must renounce all we have (Lk. 14:33) and follow him, and expect no rewards or treasure or glory on this earth as lasting more than a very short lifetime! There is no safety here, no abiding life here, no lasting honor here, no lasting accomplishment here. This pilgrimage (on earth) is a “vale of tears,” a “valley of the shadow of death.” Our outer man is wasting away. This life is a slight, momentary affliction (2 Cor. 4:16—5:10). Evidently these disciples were too attached to life here to have the faith Jesus expected! He said, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” Jesus questions our faith because he has a right to by both creation and redemption. His faith was tested as a human being (Heb. 5:7-9)—subjected to the same temptations and failure as ours—but was infinitely victorious!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 5:1-43

Alleged modern demon possession does not resemble Biblical demon possession in many ways. Alleged modern demon possession talks about “green pea soup” oozing from people’s mouths; alleged possessed people’s facial (and other body parts) changing form; alleged modern demon possessed people seldom speak intelligibly—they mainly groan, scream, or blabber incoherently; and when we come to modern alleged exorcisms, the disparity is even wider! Alleged modern exorcists range in relationship all the way from Roman Catholic priests, to pagan witch-doctors—and the formulae for exorcizing an alleged demon ranges from Roman Catholic prayers and anointings to pagan superstitions and incantations. Remember this: all that can be trusted to be divine revelation about demons is found in the Bible—AND NO WHERE ELSE! Everything else said about them or practiced about them is fallible, speculative, and open to deception by the very prince of demons himself—Satan. And do not think he would not try to deceive people about himself (either deceiving that he has more power than he has, or deceiving that he is not real and is powerless—see 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:3; 11:12-15). Satan is given permission by God to work pseudo-signs, not real signs. He works only false signs so that those who refuse to love the truth and take pleasure in unrighteousness may be deceived (2 Thess. 2:9-12). The devil wants people’s minds more than their bodies. Demons evidently were able to possess bodies in Jesus’ day, not minds. Minds can be possessed only by human consent—even the Holy Spirit must get a person’s consent to possess his mind! But we can only know the difference between Satan’s false signs and God’s true signs by testing every alleged sign by the Bible!

Jesus exorcized the demon by merely saying, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” There were no incantations, no potions, no crucifixes, no laying on of hands, no “green pea soup,” no wrenching, twitching, squirming of the man’s body, not even a prayer—just a command! Then Jesus gave permission to the demons to cohabit the swine! He had such control! No so with modern exorcists. Nothing like what was done here has ever been documented by numerous eye-witnesses in alleged modern demon possession or exorcism! All the people saw in the actions of the man from whom this “legion” of demons had been exorcized was him, “sitting there, at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind”. There was nothing gradual about this exorcism—IT WAS INSTANTANEOUS! This is not the case with any modern alleged exorcism we have ever seen allegedly performed on television or in “faith-healing” meetings! Why Jesus did not pray before the exorcism we do not know! He certainly did not need to do so. Again, this is not the way alleged exorcisms are performed today—THERE IS MUCH PRAYER AND INCANTATION (and asking for money)!

See parallel accounts in Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39. Matthew’s account

says there were TWO such demon possessed men living in the tombs. There is no contradiction unless Mark and Luke say THERE WAS ONLY ONE! A “legion” of demons is thousands if we are to take the word “legion” as comparable to a Roman army “legion.” Roman army legions consisted of approximately 6000 soldiers. There were approximately 2000 swine into which the legion went after being cast out of the man by Jesus. That would be an average of 3 demons per hog! The man in whom this “legion” of demons dwelt manifested the following characteristics: (a) continual nakedness; (b) lived in the cemetery tombs among cadavers; (c) was seized with fits of violence many times so “fierce that no one could pass that way; (d) there were attempts to keep him under guard, and bind him with chains and leg irons; (e) they (the demons) were able to break these chains and irons; (f) he was driven by the demons into the uninhabited wildernesses; (g) they knew Jesus, acknowledged Jesus’ divinity and power, and begged Jesus not to torment them and send them into the abyss. I have read numerous stories of alleged modern demon possession but never anything like this! Furthermore, no proof has ever been documented of anything like this. Perhaps the movie industry can make such things appear on the “silver screen” but the movies and actual documentation are two different things! For further study on this matter: see “Is There Demon Possession Today As There Was During the Time of Christ’s Incarnate Ministry?” in *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, 1981, pub. College Press, pp. 153-156; and “Questions About Whether The Devil Can Actually Perform Supernatural Deeds or Not,” in *Twenty-Six Lessons on Revelation, Part 2*, ch. 12-22, by Paul T. Butler, 1982, pub. College Press, pp. 241-245.

Yes! It was ethical for Jesus to let the demons cohabit innocent swine! Jesus may do whatever he wishes with his creation, at anytime and anywhere. It belongs to him and no one can stop him (see Daniel 4:34-35). These swine were being raised to slaughter later. The only ethical question here is one of stewardship. Did Jesus destroy something which could have been better used? There were strict prohibitions in the Law of Moses about Jews eating the flesh of swine! They were not even to keep swine or raise them. They were not even to touch one! The Jews who lived east of the Jordan River often accommodated themselves to the culture of the Gentile majority and paid little attention to the Law, especially if it involved economics. That is how it is today with New Testament prohibitions against illicit sex, lying in business, etc. Anything to “make a buck” no matter what God’s word says. Jesus used the loss of these swine to shock the sensibilities of the materialistically-minded people of this country out of their indifference toward God’s Law and toward this pitiful demon possessed man! The loss of 2000 swine brought relief to these two demon possessed men (Matthew says two, Matt. 8:28) and the salvation of hundreds of others from that area. All earthly goods and things, not human, are to be used by humans to glorify God and save souls! Many people of this area later became followers of Christ and some of the earliest Christian churches were formed in this area. This miracle had a profound effect! The “people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him (Jesus) to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear” and they told what they had seen far and wide!

The people begged Jesus to depart from their area because they were afraid of him

and his power! They should have been! They were found disobeying God's law and here was One who was evidently God's emissary in the flesh with all the power of God at his disposal. He had done things no human being could do. It is my opinion that if those who claim to be doing things miraculously in the name of Jesus today, really did miracles, people would be afraid more than they are! They would be awed, astounded, flabbergasted, scared, confounded, speechless! They would be more reverent, more amazed than they are. Most people would not want a real miracle worker around long because of the power he would have and the authority he would demand. They would be afraid he could read their minds, dispose of their ill-gotten gain, and call them to account for not keeping God's commandments. That is why the world (including many in religion) killed the prophets, crucified Jesus, killed the apostles—because the prophets, Jesus and the apostles really had the power they claimed! And the world was afraid of them. Very little persecution and execution is practiced against alleged modern miracle workers. Certainly, their claims are questioned and refuted, but that is not what real miracle workers suffered in the New Testament!

Evidently there was no danger that the people of this area would be able to influence the authorities against Jesus like those in Galilee or Judea would. Jesus was concerned that the area east of the Jordan should hear from an eyewitness of his claims and the miraculous power by which he substantiated his claims. That would provide for some "pre-evangelism" being done so that later workers there might find a prepared field in which to labor. Jesus sent the apostles out working miracles in his name in Galilee, risking irritating and agitating the authorities because some "pre-evangelism" must be done for later work among the Jews. But for the most part, when Jesus himself did a great miracle, he cautioned people not to spread the word around about him. If Jesus deemed it necessary to see that "pre-evangelism" be done among those in his own time—and especially among the Jews—it would be a good idea for the church today to make sure it approaches "evangelism" with preparation before! Jesus was always in control of things. He always chose the bounds and limits of his ministry according to his own purposes. No one would be moved to take action until he was ready. Actually, Jesus refused the man's first request: to go with him and his apostles. One would think Jesus would have taken him along—or have sent him into the foreign mission field. But Jesus sent him home to tell his own people! There is a great need for that today! You have a mission field right next door to you!

No power ever goes forth from God or Christ without their conscious permission! God is never "slipped-up-on." Jesus knew power had gone out from him and he was willing for it to go out from him. He even knew who had touched his garment (Luke says, "...the woman was not hidden" Lk. 8:47). Jesus asked as if he did not know in order to: (a) prove publicly the woman's cure so that the public would receive her back into fellowship (those with a flow of blood were disfellowshipped as "unclean"); (b) to make sure she (and the public) knew that the power to heal an extraordinarily incurable disease came from him...not his cloak; (c) give the woman an opportunity to express her gratitude and become a witness to those in the crowd of Jesus' identity. The power was resident in the Lord, not in his cloak (remember the movie, "The Robe"?). In the book of Acts, some were healed with

handkerchiefs or aprons “carried away from the body of the apostle Paul” to the sick (Acts 19:11-12)—but the power was that of the Holy Spirit in Paul, not of the cloths. That power was never promised to any but Jesus and the apostles.

Jairus’ daughter was dead! Those from the house of Jairus said she was. Jesus said “she is not dead but sleeping” because from Christ’s viewpoint that is not death which we call death. When the spirit has left the body, that is not death—death is a much deeper thing than that! Physical death is merely the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. Jairus’ daughter still lived, somewhere, in another existence, absent from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1ff). For Jesus, death is separation from God either in this life or the next life. There are some who are dead “while they live” (1 Tim. 5:6; John 5:24-25). Jesus wants everyone to know that the child is very much alive somewhere else, and that he has the power to bring her back from there to her fleshly existence if he wishes. “Sleep” is a euphemism or a figure (the nearest one to the human experience and understanding) of what transpires when someone’s spirit and soul leaves its body. Have you never felt almost as if your soul and spirit had left your body when you were asleep? And in such a state you are not unconscious or inactive, are you? Since we assume Jairus’ daughter had died and gone to be with the Lord (Phil. 1:21-23) and at “rest” in a far better circumstance than earth, we understand why Jesus said she was “asleep” (“resting”).

Jesus sent the crowd out because there was pandemonium. The crowds at Jairus’ house were—playing musical instruments, wailing, causing tumult, ridiculing Jesus, etc. It certainly was not conducive to what Jesus was trying to accomplish in the lives of Jairus and his wife and the three apostles inside the house. There must be some order, some quiet, some time for reflection in this situation. There must be no question as to the source of the power when the miracle occurs. This would not be the case in the midst of a tumult. There must be the least amount of emotional tumult as possible. Quite different from modern alleged healing sessions! Jesus took the 3, Peter, James and John, into the child’s room with him because he did not want the other nine! It’s as simple as that! Too many people would simply create confusion all over again. Besides, these 3 disciples were to be “pillars” or “leaders” and they needed to be eyewitnesses to as much of Jesus’s deity as possible. Jairus, his wife, and the 3 apostles would make a sufficient number of eyewitnesses to convince the crowds outside. Jesus did not need to take the crowd into the house and have them all witness it. You believe on the basis of less personal evidence than they did (1 Pet. 1:8-9). Jesus was keeping no truth from the crowds. He was not hindering their opportunity to believe in him. If they could not believe on the testimony of those who did see the miracle, they would not believe had they seen it with their own eyes (Luke 16:31; John 20:30-31). Do you believe that last sentence? YOU SHOULD!

Jesus took the child by the hand, spoke to her, and told them to feed her after he miracle, to make sure they understood the reality of what they were witnessing! This was no fake. It was no hypnotic mesmerizing he had performed on the witnesses. It was no “vision” or hallucination. It was an actual, physical, material, bodily resurrection from the dead. Jesus had spoken to someone off in the next life, in the other, invisible, spiritual existence,

and brought her back to this life, this visible, earthly existence. He has the power to order people around from one existence to another. He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18ff). When Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today you shall be with me in Paradise”—that is where the thief was when he left this life! If Paul says, “I am in a strait (pressure) between the two, my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better...” then it is far better for those who have departed to be with Christ! The blessed Lord Jesus is eager to give us back those loved ones who have left us to be with him. And he will give us back to them and them back to us in a far better existence which will never cease. No more parting, no more sorrow, no more death (separation), no more pain, no more tears of mourning. And we will be amazed at his grace and we will declare his praise and glory in all we do in that next existence.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK6:1-56

The people of Nazareth (where Jesus grew up until he was 30) took offense at Jesus because he was wiser than they wanted him to be! He spoke with divine, supernatural wisdom. Human beings are humiliated in the presence of wisdom they cannot equal or downgrade! Human beings feel a moral obligation to surrender to divine wisdom all the while not doing so! Jesus's teaching challenged their cherished self-righteousness which they thought they had gained by keeping the traditions of the elders or even by the keeping the Law of Moses. Besides, they knew Jesus too well to expect him to be any different than any other human being growing up in Nazareth. They already decided that God could not become flesh—the incarnation of deity was out of the question, so Jesus displaying signs of deity scandalized them. Many human beings are offended at the claim of Jesus to be incarnated deity—atheists, ne-orthodox theologians, Mormons, Moslems, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science practitioners, and millions of others. They know too much to accept the claim that deity can become flesh. They know too much about Jesus to accept his claims to deity. They just presuppose they know too much! And what they know "ain't so!" At the point where we let our presuppositions overrule the facts of the printed word of God (the Bible), there is where we, too, will be offended at God, Christ, or the Bible. We must always approach the word of God stripped of our presuppositions and read it for what the authors intended to say—not what we want it to say! That is the first, fundamental rule of honest, correct, hermeneutics. That is the basis on which the "Restoration Movement" was founded.

Jesus could do no mighty work in Nazareth because they would not let him (although he did lay hands on a few sick people and heal them). Jesus cannot help, and will not help, those who do not want him to help! God will not overrule man's true wants and wishes. He did not force the rich man to help the beggar (Luke 16); he did not force the rich young ruler to sell all his goods and follow him (Luke 18); he did not force Judas to shun the offer of the Jewish priests to betray him; he did not force Pilate to declare him innocent and release him; he did not force the thief on the cross to ask him about his kingdom; he did not force the people of Nazareth to bring their sick to him for healing or to seek some mighty work demonstrating his deity. And he will not force anyone today to believe in him. Jesus has done all he can do (demonstrating his deity, demonstrating his love) to draw people to him. If they do not take his help on his terms, there is nothing more he can do for them, now and forever! Jesus's plea is for sinners to accept his help in the earthly life. After life on this earth is over, all opportunity for help ceases. All desire for God's grace and righteousness is sealed in this life. The rich man in Hades (Luke 16) gave no indication he desired the righteous life—only that he desired to be rid of punishment for unrighteousness! There is a difference. That is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about. The person who truly wants

heaven, “hungers and thirsts” for righteousness and will cultivate that kind of desire in his life, will get it—but on Jesus’s terms. Those who get the Lord’s help are humble, contrite, and deeply grateful for the grace of God. They despise sin and self-righteousness and cling desperately to the grace of Christ by faith and obedience.

Jesus ordered the 12 to “shake off the dust on their feet” against those who would not receive them as they went preaching in order to show that the gospel of repentance brooks no compromise. God’s message is absolute! It is imperative! It gives in to no one! Because it is truth. It is all that will save mankind. When mankind rejects it, there has to be a “testimony against” those who reject it lest others get the idea that they may reject it because it makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you are sincere. Paul said he “refused to tamper with (adulterate, water-down) God’s word” (2 Cor. 4:2). Paul openly stated the truth! And when people rejected Paul’s preaching, he left them alone and went to others who would listen (Acts 13:46 is the first instance). God “shook off the dust of Jerusalem” and God destroyed it as a testimony to the whole world when they rejected his Son (Matt. 23:37-39; 24:1-35; 1 Thess. 2:15-16)! God made the city of Rome (Rev. 16-17-18) a testimony to the whole world as to what would happen to those who refused to receive his church. Some of that same kind of “shaking-off” still needs to be done today! The principle is still valid that we are “stewards of the manifold grace of God,” the gospel (1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Cor. 4:1, etc.). And as stewards we are not to waste our “pearls and bread” by giving it to human “swine and dogs.” Please remember, there were some people Jesus would not even visit or talk with when he had an opportunity (e.g., Herod and the high priests)! We have spent millions of dollars and hours giving the precious pearl of great price to those who mock it. At the same time we have neglected millions of people in other lands who cry out for the gospel! That is not good stewardship!

Jesus was getting the reputation of a prophet and a great following. Many who had followed John the Immerser were now following Jesus. So, Herod, apparently knowing nothing about this Jesus of Nazareth (although Nazareth and Capernaum both were in Herod’s domain of Galilee), assumed it was John the Immerser risen from the dead. Did Herod believe in resurrection? Apparently he had some superstition about it. Jews and Arabs were (and still are) very superstitious and vague about life after death. They have their own very sensual, earthy view of it. Herod had enough experience with death and dying, and combined with his smattering of knowledge about the Jewish scriptures, he probably had nightmares about having executed John the Immerser while he was under the influence of his sexual impulses and too much wine to drink. Couple Herod’s superstitious nature and his guilt with all the rumors going around, and you have Herod saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.” This is nearing the end of Jesus’ second year of public exposure. He was completely unknown until he was 30. His first year of ministry was rather obscure as far as the general public was aware of it. So, Herod’s lack of knowledge is understandable. Besides, Herod had other things on his mind and occupying his time than investigating another itinerant rabbi running around Galilee preaching righteousness. Herod was a vain, fawning, vacillating, sensual, hedonist. He cared nothing for spiritual matters. He cared only for his throne, his stomach, and his sexual appetites. His interest centered on indulgence.

He was an example of “swine and dogs.” His only interest in Jesus was because he appeared to be John the Immerser risen from the dead and threatening his royal status and his royal playboy-life-style again!

John the Immerser’s criticism of Herod’s marriage was the cause of Herod’s execution of John because such criticism posed a threat to Herod’s throne—not because Herod cared about the stigma of adultery. His late father (Herod the Great) had 8 wives and had murdered many hundreds of people—even one of his wives, some of his in-laws, and sons, and brothers, who had threatened his throne. Herod Antipas grew up in a home where nothing mattered except “the throne.” Actually, it was Herodias (Herod’s wife, who was also his niece and sister-in-law) who was the power that brought about John’s death. Herod was simply a tool in Herodias’s hand. She manipulated him. She coveted the “throne” more than Herod himself! Had John’s preaching about Herod and Herodias being unlawfully married stirred up the Jewish people (especially the rulers) they might have influenced Caesar to dethrone Herod. Such “dethroning” of subordinate rulers by Caesars in the past was swift, and permanent (often by execution). This is a case where personal foibles got mixed in with politics and the messenger of God lost his life. Human ambition has sent as many people to Hell as human sexual lust. And when the two are combined correction is almost impossible! We have had demonstrations of how truth and those who want to stand for the truth have been marched to the scaffold (both physically and psychologically) when sex and politics and human ambition get mixed in our own government! That is still the way people think today. Only Christians are really concerned about the destruction of marriage, family, home—the rest care only about their public image and their ambitions. Whatever serves ambition and human power is good! Few care whether they are serving God or not. They are too busy serving themselves. That was Herodias’s obsession—SELF! She exploited her husband, her daughter, God’s prophet, even the guests of Herod, for her own ambition.

Jesus told his disciples to feed the 5000 when he knew they did not have the resources to do so—in order to test them (see John 6:6). First, Jesus wanted his apostles to understand exactly who he (Jesus) was! He wanted them to understand that he was more than their Jewish concept of “Messiah.” They must be convinced that he is God in the flesh—that he has the power to give life or take it. They must understand and believe that he is the living “Bread” (staff of life) come down out of heaven! They must realize that this multitude of people need more than bread and fish—they need Jesus! The apostles must realize that only Jesus can supply what everyone needs. They must be separated from the worldly-mindedness of the rest of this multitude. And they were! At the end of this session (see John 6:66-71) Jesus gave them the challenge, “Would you also go away?” And they said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...” Second, Jesus wanted the apostles to learn once and for all that they could not feed this crowd without relying upon him. They had seen miracles of Jesus before, but they evidently had some question in their minds about Jesus’ ability or desire to do something about 5000 (probably 10,000) hungry people. So Jesus showed them! The twelve really did not pass the test here! This was more of a review than the final exam. Finals came later! Here they are simply learning what will be on the final exam. There is only one question on the final exam

for every person—“Who is Christ?” “What think ye of Christ, whose Son is he?” But the answer to that involves more than mouthing words—it involves partaking of Christ’s word (see John 6:63).

This is the end of his second year of public ministry and the beginning of the last year he will spend on earth. Most of those who participated in this great miracle “drew back and no longer went about with” Jesus (John 6:66). Thousands of people no longer listened to Jesus’ teaching nor considered themselves his disciples. His demand for commitment offended them. After he had fed them miraculously (free of charge), they ran probably 15 miles from east of the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum to find him, anticipating they could get him to do it again (see John 6:26-27). But Jesus told them abruptly they were wrong in their ideas about the kingdom of God and what the work of God was. They were thinking of it in terms of this earth, and it is spiritual. God’s kingdom is of the mind, having to do with knowing, believing and doing the word of Jesus as a priority over having to do with the flesh or material things (even food). This offended them! They knew what he was talking about! There was no misunderstanding Jesus’ great Sermon on the Bread of Life (in John ch. 6). Their own prophets had talked like this about God’s word and God’s kingdom (e.g., Isa. 55:1-3). But their forefathers had refused to believe the prophets! The twelve apostles decided they would commit themselves totally to Jesus. They said, “We have believed, and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69). Twelve out of probably 10 or 15 thousand! That is not a “success ratio” according to man’s standards, but God is the judge of success in his kingdom! That was another thing about which the twelve needed testing—that sometimes one has to go against the majority in order to be faithful to Christ. Where would we have stood on that fateful day, over 2000 years ago, had we been there? Where do we stand today?

The apostles were “terrified” when they saw Jesus walking on the water because they did not recognize him at first, and believed they were seeing someone out of the “spirit world”—a ghost. Grown fishermen who believed in God also believed in ghosts? Probably! Jewish people were (and still are) very superstitious people. But so are a lot of Gentiles! Their circumstances (a storm raging) also tended to unnerve them. What things frighten you? Is it a sin to be afraid? In this same incident, when Peter started to walk on the water and began to sink and cried out in fear, Jesus upbraided him for his fear! Yet Jesus himself tells us to fear God! What is the difference between courage and foolhardiness? Should Christians “risk” their lives? The greatest lesson of this incident, however, is the marvelous grace of Jesus. The apostles had just witnessed the stupendous miracle of the loaves and the fish (feeding 5000). They should have believed wholeheartedly in his power to do anything with nature he wished. But when Jesus got into the boat and calmed the wind and the sea, “they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were still calloused.” But the Lord did not throw them out of the boat, saying, “That’s it—I’m through with you stupid, hard-headed, dummies—you had your chance, you should be spiritually mature by now.” Jesus continued teaching them because they were willing to continue learning. The marvelous grace of Jesus is for the spiritually immature who are willing to continue learning! It’s not a sin to be “afraid” but it is to continue to be spiritually

immature and thus continually afraid! TRUST JESUS EVEN UNTO DEATH!

We do not know what happened to the sick who wanted to touch his garment but were unable to do so. Mark merely records, "...as many as touched it were made well." We may speculate that those who did not touch it were not made well. But touching the garment of Jesus was not necessary for his divine power to be given. Jesus often healed with simply a word! Sometimes there is no indication of any direct statement about healing being done. Sometimes he simply sent people back to their homes and they found their sick already healed. Sometimes Jesus healed only one or two, or a few sick people in the midst of multitudes of sick leaving the other sick as they were (see John ch. 5). Healing sick people was not the primary mission of Jesus, or his apostles, or the first century miracle working Christians! Paul could not get healing for his "thorn in the flesh." Paul "left Trophimus ill at Miletus" and did not heal him. Paul's companion, Timothy, had a recurring "infirmity" of the stomach which Paul did not heal. None of these people lacked faith! If the intent of healing was compassion, the healers were prejudiced, discriminatory, and uncompassionate for they missed many worthy opportunities to miraculously heal those who needed it and those who had faith! "Man does not live by healing alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" to paraphrase Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4. Flesh and blood, no matter how long it remains well, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, so it must sooner or later become sick and die (1 Cor. 15:42-57).

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 7:1-37

Some 10-15 thousand followers of Jesus had eaten bread and fish in Galilee and they most certainly did not observe the tradition of the elders about washing their hands! This had nothing to do with hygiene. It was all religious and ceremonial. Rabbinical tradition said one must wash the hands before eating because the hands had undoubtedly become defiled by touching something or someone “unclean” (ceremonially unkosher). Some even went so far as to say that to eat with “unwashed” hands (i.e., ritually “uncleansed”) was to make it possible to be demon-possessed. The twelve probably ate often without ritually washing hands because Jesus probably did so! There is no indication that Jesus observed the traditions of the rabbis (he did observe the law of Moses). Jesus defended the breaking of human traditions because it was a fundamental issue in his ministry! Human traditions and opinions have no authority to cleanse any one from sin. They have no power to convert the mind (Col. 2:20—3:4). They, in fact, work against freedom in the grace of God which Christ came to win for us. The ultimate crisis of the cross arises out of this fundamental clash between Jesus and the Pharisees. It is a clash of authority. Do the rabbis have authority over the Messiah (the Son of God)? Do the rabbis have authority to set aside the word of God in favor of their opinions? Or do the people have the right to know the word of God and do it for themselves without someone else forcing them to do it their way? That is the issue and Jesus had to face it and declare the truth!

The tradition of the elders concerning “washing” of hands has already been discussed. Rabbinical tradition then (and now) sets aside the word of God by claiming tradition is “divine” interpretation. The rabbinical proposition was set forth in what is called “Bath Kol” (which in Hebrew language means, “The Divine Voice.”). Bath Kol alleges that God “whispered” all the interpretations of the Law into the ear of Moses on Mt. Sinai when he was given the Law. Then Moses passed these interpretations on by “word of mouth” to rabbis, who passed them on from generation to generation until around A.D. 132-200, more than a century after Christ, they were written down in the Mishnah, Haggadah, Halakah and the Talmud. Thus the rabbis considered their interpretation equal to the Law of Moses, and, as Jesus points out, most often they considered them as higher than the Law. In this way they exercised all kinds of political and economic power over those who allowed them to do so. The same kind of religious clout is exercised today by religious bodies who have “traditions” and “divine interpretations” or “divine revelations” by which they tell others what to believe and what not to believe. Catholicism, modern Judaism, Mormonism, Islam and Charismaticism all have “traditions” and “divine revelations” which exercise power over their followers—all make void the word of God. There is no reason on earth that people cannot simply be given a Bible and, by reading it themselves, understand it sufficiently to please God. God would not give a revelation that intends to save all men, and make it impossible to

be understood by all men! The trouble is men and women do not read it as they would any other communication in human language! The Bible was intended to be understood by all men in the same way. There are no divine interpretations of the Bible!

The Pharisees could not dishonor their parents by giving an offering to God. No one ever does! What dishonors parents is to deprive them when they are in need by declaring one's means are being totally used for God (then keeping it for oneself) and unavailable to help needy parents (or any other needy individual). In Jesus' day Pharisees (and perhaps others) avoided the responsibility of looking after the material needs of their parents by declaring that their money was dedicated to God (they called it "Corban" which means "to consecrate, to devote") and it would be wrong to divert it from this sacred devotion. This could be done by simply pronouncing the word "Corban." Ideally, the money thereafter belonged to God, but actually the one who made the vow might keep it in his possession. By such sophistry the Pharisees avoided (and made void) the plain commandment of God for children to support their needy parents. There is a commandment in Leviticus 27:28-33 that says whatever God or an Israelite has "devoted" to the Lord cannot be redeemed—but it doesn't say that an Israelite must "devote" everything he has to the Lord. The Pharisees claimed they had "devoted" all they possessed to the Lord and could not give their needy parents or any other needy person any of their wealth. That was the main purpose of "Bath Kol" and is the purpose of all modern "divine interpretations," "divine traditions," and "divine revelations"—TO AVOID THE PLAIN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD'S WORD! God's word is sufficient to give us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-11). It is able to equip the man of God completely for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We do not need further "revelations" or the "traditions" of men to make it more complete. President Reagan was right when he said, "I believe that in the Bible we have the answers to all our problems, and we should be using it for solutions more than we are."

Tradition makes void the word of God when it ignores it and breaks its commandments in order to keep the tradition. We usually think of "watering down" God's word as an exclusive practice of liberal-minded theologians who deny the supernatural element of the Scriptures, or deny the moral absolutes of the Bible. Legalists (or "traditionalists") always think of themselves as protecting the word of God from being adulterated by building up "hedges" around it by their traditions, revelations or interpretations. This is precisely what the Pharisees claimed they were doing with Bath Kol. But the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor. 3 & 4 legalism actually adulterates the word of God. The necessary consequence of adopting legalism as a way of justification is the "watering down" of the Gospel. By suggesting that Christians voluntarily come under the Law or Pharisaic traditions, legalists would have to dilute the spiritual obligation of the Christian who must go beyond the law in devotion and obedience to God (as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, or as Paul taught in 1 Cor., chs. 8-9-10). This is always the way of legalistic thinking. Those who preach legalism think they are making godliness more certain, when, as a matter of fact, they are diluting the power for godliness. Legalism always creates self-righteousness and that is a drastic dilution of the righteousness that is totally imputed to believers through the grace of God by faith in Christ. Man does need divinely revealed commandments and principles to

help him determine what the will of the Lord is for a life of holiness under grace. But these guidelines must not be perverted by human traditions and interpretations into legalism (“law keeping”) as a means of justification.

That which goes into a man does not defile him because food and drink are amoral, per se. Food and drink do not enter the “heart” (mind, mentality) and do not therefore affect the moral life of man. Therefore they cannot defile him. God created all that exists as “good” morally speaking (Gen. 1:31). Pork is good, rabbit is good, squirrel is good, rattle-snake meat is good (to some people, ha.), turtle-soup is good, catfish is good—it’s all good used properly and within the revealed will of God. Opium is good, alcohol, dynamite, atomic energy, even nicotine is good, used within the divine purpose and stated will of God. But when the mind of man takes it upon itself to use any of God’s creation for evil, wicked, hurtful, destructive, wasteful purposes, then anything and everything becomes bad. Sexual intercourse, marriage, medicine, food, drink, automobiles, money, the human body—all are good, but bad when used for evil purposes. The important question is: “Are there sufficient guidelines and commands in the New Testament to tell us the will of God and Jesus about all these amoral things? YES! It is that which goes into the mind which defiles a person! The great issue for mankind’s relationship to God is: “What is getting into a man’s mind?” Because nothing comes out except what goes in there! Jesus made the profoundest statement ever made in connection with human behavior: “But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man.” Instruction, learning, teaching, propaganda—in all its forms, both good and bad, is a life-changing, life-directing activity.

There are two Greek words used to describe the Syro-Phoenician woman’s daughter. The first word is thugatrion and it is the diminutive of “daughter,” meaning, “little daughter.” The second word is paidion (verse 30) which is the diminutive of child, meaning “infant, baby, little child.” The child definitely was small, and of tender age—perhaps even an infant—certainly too young to be morally responsible. The idea that demons possessed only those who gave consent would have to be questioned in light of this incident. In Mark 9:21 the father with the boy possessed of an unclean spirit when asked, said, the boy had been possessed from childhood (Greek, paidiothen, a diminutive adverb). It is doubtful that these children, themselves, were wicked profligates who had been delving into the worship of demons and the occult. Evidently, demons could, by permission of God, enter any person whether that person wanted any fellowship with demons or not—or whether they were wicked or not—or whether they had been practicing the occult or not. Thus it seems to me that the demon possession of human bodies in Jesus’s day was a phenomenon especially permitted by God to show the supernatural power of Jesus and his chosen apostles. It was to validate the message of the apostles as being from Almighty God and as the once-for-all, exclusive, gospel for the salvation of mankind. No other persons seem to have had the power to cast out demons besides Jesus and the apostles (check all the book of Acts and the Epistles and this “gift” was never passed on by the apostles or by Christ to others). The apostolic message was the only one God was interested in authenticating as his final and complete revelation for man’s redemption.

Jesus in effect called the Syro-Phoenician woman “a dog” (actually, “a little puppy” for the Greek *kunariois* is the diminutive of “dog”). He did so in order to test her humility, self-control and faith. Figuratively speaking, only those willing to become “dogs,” and take their turn, and do things in God’s time and in God’s way, are fit to receive crumbs from the table of God! We have a dog—she’s a registered miniature dachshund with a four-generation pedigree, her name is “Heidi.” She’s spoiled! But she sits patiently at our feet, looking up at us with those sad, sad eyes, without barking, during meal times, just to receive a “crumb” of bread (or a bite of watermelon, or a bite of almost anything else we want to give her). She graphically acknowledges the “pecking order” in our house—Mom is first, Dad is second, Heidi is third to go in and out of the house. With Jesus and the woman it was a doctrinal confrontation, not a psychological one. Jesus is testing her understanding and acceptance of God’s plan of redemption (to the Jew first, then to the Gentile), not her love for her child. She must acquiesce to the schedule and program of God as God decrees it. She has no more right to change God’s plan than Jesus or the Jews or you do! She persisted and acquiesced to his program. She did not want what God intended to give (the Bread) to the Jews first. She would be pleased with what was left (the crumbs). What great humility, what great faith (said Jesus, Matt. 15:28), what great surrender to God’s will. Jesus did not contradict himself by helping this Gentile woman just after his declaration that his mission was to the Jews first because she did not ask him to forsake the Jews for Gentiles, and because her faith qualified her as a true child of Abraham (see Romans 9:6-9). This, after all, was the real target of Jesus’ mission. The “gospel first to the Jews” does not mean Jews by physical descent, but Jews by faith (this is exactly what Paul explains in Romans, chapters 1 through 11, esp. 2:28-29; 9:6-8). Justification by faith is unconnected to any merit of national or physical relationship. Even Abraham was justified by faith when he was a Gentile and not a circumcised Jew (see Gen. 15:6).

Jesus took the deaf and “dumb” (mute) man aside from the crowd to heal him in order, first, to make sure the deaf-mute knew HE (Jesus), personally, literally, was the source of his healing. There must be no confusion on that point. Healing in the midst of a large crowd could produce such confusion. Second, Jesus wanted to keep down the hysteria which would result from such a healing. He wanted to keep a “low profile” because every healing he did simply agitated the Jewish rulers more. And people just seemed totally unable to keep such miraculous healing quiet! They had to tell someone. Even when Jesus forbade it. Third, Jesus did not heal for fame. He was not interested in being famous for healing. He did his healing simply to confirm his own deity and that his teaching was from God. Healing was not his primary mission. Nor is it the primary mission of the church to feed and clothe the hungry and naked. **THE PRIMARY MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN PRECISELY THE WORDS AND WAYS GOD CHOSE TO REVEAL IT!** That, of course, means as the church is verbalizing the gospel, it should also be living the gospel—but verbalizing comes first. That is proved when one considers that people have been converted to Christ by merely having a Bible put into their hands, or finding one, whether anyone ever fed or clothed them in the name of Christ or not. The lead pilot of the Japanese carrier planes that attacked Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941, became a Christian a few years after the war, not from observing the good works of Christians, but by hearing Gen. MacArthur talk about Christianity, obtaining for himself a New Testament, and reading himself into seeking a

church that preached it.

Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears to insure that the man knew the source of his healing. Words would not help the man's understanding of Jesus's power (although Jesus could have healed simply with words), so Jesus used actual, sensate communication. Notice, Jesus also spat and touched the man's tongue with his spittle, and then looked up toward the heavens, to indicate his power came from God, and not some other source, either human or supernatural. Then Jesus "groaned" or "sighed" manifesting his sympathy for the human predicament that brings suffering and disease and death upon mankind (the curse of God from Eden).

No! They were not right in telling about the healing when Jesus "charged" them not to do so! The Greek word translated "charged" is *diesteilato*, meaning literally, "to tell through," i.e., "giving reasons for the command." When Jesus commands, whether he gives reasons or not, to do otherwise is disobedience. Disobedience cannot be rationalized away by feelings, no matter how "good" or "holy" or "righteous" it may feel or seem to feel to us. That is the problem with the world of Christendom today! It is what has brought on all the division among Christians—doing as they feel in spite of what God has commanded. It felt right for Peter to resist Jesus' announcement that he (Jesus) must be crucified, but Jesus linked Peter's "feeling" to Satan (Matt. 16). It felt right for Uzzah to reach up and steady the ark of the covenant! It felt right for Barnabas to dissimulate with the Judaizers at Antioch (Gal. 2:13). It felt right to Annaias and Sapphira to lie about how much "land money" they were giving to the church (Acts 5:1ff). It felt right for the Corinthians to do many things that were not right. When Jesus gives a clear command, believers have no right to think for themselves (2 Cor. 5:14-21). Christians must understand that their only perspective is that which is forever channeled through the divine revelation called the Bible. The Christian practices deductive logic, not inductive.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 8:1-38

Jesus fed 4000 hungry followers very soon after feeding more than 5000 followers for a number of reasons: (a) because of his compassion for the human weakness and inadequacy of mankind in general and these people in particular; (b) to reinforce the disciples belief in his supernatural power and to wean them from fearing or following the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians in their hell-bent carnal-mindedness; (c) to give any Gentile present (and there would be many of them) proof of the power of the God of Israel and the message that “salvation is from the Jews”; (d) to prove that God is “no respecter of person; (e) to give the crowds evidence of his deity. Jesus primarily fed this 4000 simply to repeat the power he demonstrated in feeding over 5000. Notice how quickly even the twelve had forgotten the power and willingness of Jesus to care for any and all needs. Do we forget the power of Jesus that quickly and that often? YES! (Matt. 6:25-34). We constantly forget that man does not live by bread alone, but by the gracious power of the word of Jesus. All Jesus has to do is say the word and anything we need to live is supplied, anywhere, anytime, in any circumstance—according to his purposes and will. In him all things consist (hold together) Col. 1:17; he upholds all things by the word of his power, Heb. 1:3; in him is life, John 1:4; in he we live and move and have our being, Acts 17:28. It wasn’t his will to continually feed the hungry, not even his own disciples, by miraculously producing bread and fish. His purpose in this miracle, as in all others, was to confirm his deity and motivate people to total faith in him.

Jesus did not give the Pharisees a sign when they asked for it because they wanted the “sign” was to use it against him to accuse him of blasphemy. Matthew says, they asked for this “sign” to “test him” (just as Mark records it). But Matthew adds these words of Jesus: “You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” In the first place, they had enough signs “of the times” to know and believe that Jesus Christ was the long awaited and prophesied Messiah. They did not need any more signs. They had their own idea of what kind of signs would authenticate their Messiah—they wanted highly politicized, materialistically-prosperous signs. Jesus refused to subvert the spiritual kingdom of God to their materialism. They were smart enough to read the signs of Jesus’ ministry and compare them with their Old Testament prophets, but they refused to do so. Second, Jesus would give them a sign—the sign of Jonah! The sign of Jonah had to do with a humiliated, “dead, buried, and resurrected prophet” (Jonah’s own words in his book)! And it had to do with a prophet who took God’s message to a Gentile city which repented! All this would come to their mind when Jesus mentioned Jonah. Jonah’s experience had to do with the power of God at man’s extremity. But these Pharisees would not accept the idea that man could come to such extremity and need the power of God to save him out of death. But that was the sign Jesus would give! Incidentally, when Jesus

said (and Matthew recorded), "...the signs of the times..." JESUS WAS NOT TALKING ABOUT HIS SECOND COMING OR THE END OF THE WORLD! He was talking about the "signs" which authenticated HIS FIRST COMING as the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament! THE PHRASE, "...SIGNS OF THE TIMES..." IS USED ONLY ONCE IN THE BIBLE, IN MATT. 16:3 AND IT REFERS TO JESUS' FIRST COMING (a similar statement of Jesus in Lk. 12:56, at a different time refers to his FIRST COMING, not his 2nd coming, but it does not use the word for "signs").

The "leaven of the Pharisees and Herod" (and Matthew adds, "of the Sadducees") is just plain old worldliness. It is obsession with material things. It is preoccupation with the flesh. It is indifference toward spiritual matters and the next life. It works like "leaven" (yeast)—it is infectious. It permeates, gradually, inexorably every facet of the human existence—home, job, family, time, energies, hopes, ideals, morals, world-view. It takes over and becomes a god (Mammon—the Aramaic word for "riches"). Now a person does not have to be a millionaire, or even a property owner to be infected with "the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees and Herod." In fact, this "leaven" may refer to their teaching and theology of legalism—fleshly salvation (salvation by works of the law by which man glories in himself). Worldliness is not necessarily restricted to the love of money. It can be love of self! And we are most certainly in danger of it every day of our lives. The only defense against it is a daily reminder (by Bible study) of the need for the grace of God to sustain us both physically and spiritually. We ought to wake up every morning with the grace of God as the first thing on our minds! The Greek text of Mark 8:15 shows that Jesus emphatically-emphasized this point. It says, *diestelleto*, "he charged them..." *lego*, "saying," *horate*, "beware"—and the word *horate* is an imperative verb, indicating that he was giving a command. This is not merely a suggestion—it is an order! Do not let the "yeast" of the Pharisees and Sadducees get into your life, into your home, your viewpoint, for it will work secretly and pervasively and infectiously!

This blind man's healing does not indicate any limitations on the healing powers of Jesus Christ. So far as we know, this is the only healing out of many thousands (plus other types of miracles) which may have been gradual. All other miracles of Jesus were instantaneous! complete! and lasting! This miraculous healing was complete and lasting. And who is to say this miracle was not instantaneous? If a person has never had sight, if that sight is restored immediately, what would register on his brain if he saw men walking? They would metaphorically look like "trees walking" wouldn't they? But even if it was a gradual healing it is even more unique in showing that Jesus had supernatural control of all phases or stages of the miraculous. He certainly could control all things—disease, death, nature, demons—instantaneously and completely. He had already proved that. Now he proves he has complete control if he wants to exercise his powers gradually. And, just perhaps, Jesus performed this gradual miracle of restoring sight to the blind to communicate with his apostles that their "spiritual sight" (understanding) of who he was would gradually come if they would allow it! They were "hardened of heart" and had the cataracts of

materialism covering the “eyes” of their minds—they did not understand. But they would! When the “sign of Jonah” was done, then they would see clearly everything about who Jesus was!

The Jewish people had so many ideas about the identity of Jesus because their presuppositions about the Messiah (learned from the scribes and Pharisees and their apocryphal nonsense) kept them from admitting that Jesus was who he claimed to be—their Messiah, Lord of all mankind, predicted by their Old Testament prophets. They would admit that he was a “great prophet” along the order of John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, et al. He did the signs of a prophet! He had gathered a great audience to hear him. He had “disciples” learning from him. Everywhere he went there was a crisis. He spoke with authority as if his message was from God and not from the rabbis. He lived the holy life of a prophet of God and his teachings were much the same as the old prophets in content. But he made claims for himself that no prophet before ever made. He claimed to be the Anointed One of God (i.e., “Messiah”). He claimed to be equal with God. And that flew in the face of every Jewish Messianic concept there was (except, of course, the Biblical text). This wrong concept of the Messiah included good people like Peter, James, John, Mary—mother of Jesus, John the Baptist, Nicodemus, the rich, young, ruler, and two disciples from Emmaus, et al. As we know from John 7:25-31 and 7:40-44, some Jews were hesitantly questioning their presuppositions and beginning to say, “This is the Christ.” And Peter’s confession, “...You are the Christ,” shows the apostles accepted his Messiahship. But none of them saw his Messiahship as much more than the great prophet God would raise up like unto Moses. Certainly, they did not see him as God-in-the-flesh (God-incarnate), John 14:8ff, until after his resurrection.

Jesus asked the apostles about the popular opinion of his identity in order to see if his apostles had sorted out all the vague and generalized confusion from their own minds. Jesus wants this one fact to become crystalized in the minds of the apostles. He wants them to be separated from the muddled, adulterated, indifferent, ignorant, emotional, unthinking mentality of the masses. The followers of Jesus must be incisive, decisive, precise, committed thinkers. The trouble with the “general public” is, I repeat, presuppositions. The “general public” is always wanting to get its collective heads together, pool all its presuppositions, opinions, irrelevant data, and come up with an inductive conclusion. The public wants to vote on whether Jesus is the Messiah or not and abide by the majority vote. But God’s word has evidence by which the honest human mind can, and must, make the following deductive conclusions: (a) that Jesus is God’s Anointed One—the Messiah predicted by the O.T. prophets; (b) conceived and born by the virgin Mary in Bethlehem; (c) immersed in the Jordan River by John the Immerser who declared him to be God’s Messiah; (d) had a 3 ½ year ministry after the age of 30; (e) died on a cross just outside of Jerusalem (f) and arose from the dead; (g) seen by more than 500 eyewitnesses after his resurrection; (h) ate fish and bread with numerous disciples, etc., etc., etc. History has also proved the majority often wrong, especially concerning spiritual, supernatural, eternal matters of fact. Because the majority is on the “broad and easy way that leads to death...” It always votes wrong about the “narrow and difficult way that leads to life.” The Christ-hood of Jesus was

revealed, not discovered and voted on by human beings. Man has to be told who God is and what God wants. Man cannot think it up by himself. Jesus is drawing a clear contrast for the apostles, and all the world forever between the conclusions of ignorant human opinion and divinely revealed information about Jesus Christ. Men must not listen to men—they must listen to God! (see Jer. 17:5-10).

Peter's being able to identify the person of Jesus was the most important thing Peter ever did in his life! What any human being concludes as to the identity of Jesus determines his eternal destiny. Man's relationship to Jesus is not primarily one begun on emotional attachment. Our attachment to Jesus is one of learner-to-teacher, slave to master, steward to Lord, lost to Savior, child to Father, wife to husband, subject to king. Jesus is our "boss," not our grandfather. Jesus does not ask: "How do I make you feel?" He does not ask, "Find out who you are!" JESUS TELLS US, "FIND OUT WHO I AM!" It is in the crystallization of our conclusions (based on the evidences) as to who Jesus is that we find out who we are! Hebrews 2:5-18 speaks precisely to this proposition. Man is plagued by this very issue—"What is man that thou (God) art mindful of him (man)?" The only way we discover the answer to that question is to find out that Jesus is God-Incarnate (the One who has "visited" mankind, as very Man and very God). The tragedy of the world is that most of mankind does not even know the right question—let alone the right answer! Most of mankind is not even asking, "Who is Jesus?" It is asking, "Where can I find someone or something to make me feel good in the here and now—some one to give me pleasure—some thing or some one by which I can withdraw from reality?" The New Testament, because it focuses on the eternal deity of Jesus Christ (the invisible, spiritual essence), is the most realistic view of life on earth. This truth, the identity of Jesus Christ as God's Anointed Messiah—exclusive Savior and Lord of all humanity—cannot be stressed too much! It is fundamental, basic and imperative! It is the answer to everything! It must be the focus, constant content, and never ceasing subject of all preaching, teaching, worship, evangelism, music, writing, for the church.

NO ONE CAN ANSWER THIS QUESTION FOR YOU—YOU MUST FORM YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE EVIDENCE OF HISTORY AND FULFILLED PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE!

Jesus immediately brought up the subject of his crucifixion because this is the very essence of the identity of Jesus! Jesus is Lord, Savior and Messiah. But he is at the same time, the Suffering Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 53, et al.). His mission, his identity was that of God's humble Lamb. God's Christ (Anointed One) was anointed to be humiliated. His mission was to accomplish the 6 vicarious events listed in Daniel 9:24 at the time of his "cutting off" Dan. 9:25-27 (i.e., his death). He was anointed to be the humble king of a kingdom of humiliated disciples. If Jesus, God's Messiah to the world, was not humiliated, and did not suffer, and did not become sin in our place, and does not demand total subjection and total selflessness and humiliation from those who follow him, he is not the Savior of the world. And while the world readily recognizes that is what the Bible says—most of the world is unwilling to accept it (1 Cor. 1:18-25)! Peter could not accept it—even when

he “confessed” it here. He accepted it later, after Jesus’s resurrection.

One loses one’s life for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel by denying self! Denying self is giving up all claim to any authority or control over one’s purposes, aims, thinking, deciding, choosing, feeling, desiring, and turning all these over to Jesus through his revealed word (mind) in the New Testament. Denying self is to do what Peter did to Christ in Matt. 16:22, and later in Matt. 26;72-74. Peter “disowned, disavowed, denied” Jesus. Those who propose to lose their life for Jesus’ sake must disown themselves. A disciple of Jesus cannot own himself. He is not his own, he is bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19), and he belongs to the “buyer” Jesus. How is this done? It is done by faith. There is no other way to do it. It can’t be done by works (Gal. 2:20-21). By faith and obedience we accept his death for ours and we accept his life as ours (2 Cor. 5:21). We no longer please ourselves, we seek only to please him! A man may choose not to deny himself and he may gain the whole world—BUT WHAT HAS HE GAINED? He has gained a planet that is destined to be dissolved into nothing (2 Pet. 3:10). What has he lost? LIFE! He receives eternal death, eternal destruction, eternal torment, and separation from all that is good and right and lovely and pleasant. Jesus in this statement tests every man’s view of reality—whose world is real, Jesus’ or his own? Luke 9:25 furnishes a revealing key to understanding this paradox of Jesus. Luke says, “...gain the world and lose himself...” The person who does not deny self for Jesus’ sake loses his identity—he loses himself and never has an identity ever afterward—never knows who he really is!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 9:1-50

A transfiguration is a metamorphosis. That is the actual Greek verb used in this text—metemorphothe. It is an aorist, indicative, passive verb indicating the action was “happening to Jesus.” Everyone knows what a metamorphosis is—it is a change in form. The Greek word morphe means “form” and the prepositional prefix, meta means “go beyond.” Jesus underwent a change from his human form to a divine form! His face shone like the sun, his garments became glistening, intensely, dazzling white along with his countenance. To get an idea of what the apostles saw read Acts 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-14; 2 Pet. 1:16-21; Rev. 1:12-16; 5:6-14; 19:11-16). The question, however, is: “What was the point of such an incident?” The point was, first, to clearly, unmistakably, authenticate to these apostles the deity of Jesus Christ. They must have every opportunity to know and understand that Jesus is God in the flesh—God-incarnate! They have strong Jewish prejudice against this idea. It has been ingrained into their minds that any mortal who claims to be God is a blasphemer. It was, second, to establish the fact that humans beings could be, and would be, changed from this mortality to immortality. The Corinthian Christians had difficulty (and so have countless numbers of Christians and non-Christians since) with believing that the mortal can become immortal. But it was demonstrated by eyewitnesses in Jesus Christ here (and later at his resurrection appearances and ascension into heaven). It was, third, to establish the authority of Jesus Christ over all the Old Testament revelation of God (both the Law and the Prophets). It was, fourth, to confirm Jesus’ prediction that he must die in order to fulfill his Messianic mission. This is what Peter and the others had such a difficult time accepting. Now they hear it from Moses and Elijah, confirmed by divine vision and voice from heaven—“HEAR YE HIM (JESUS CHRIST)!”

Moses and Elijah were “transfigured” with Jesus because they represented the Law and the Prophets—all of the Old Testament. They confirm that the Old Testament teaches: (a) Jesus is God-incarnate; (b) Jesus fulfills the O.T.; (c) Jesus, as the Messiah, must die, and that is an O.T. doctrine (Isa. 53; Dan. 9:24-27); (d) Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth; (e) there is a life after death (Moses and Elijah were alive) and there is a change from mortality to immortality. How did the apostles know Moses and Elijah? How did they recognize them? Did they have photos? No! They undoubtedly knew them by divine revelation. Either God or Jesus told them who these two people were, or God simply put it into their minds miraculously to recognize them. Moses had been dead for nearly 1500 years and Elijah dead for nearly 1000 years when Jesus was transfigured with them. Their bodies had long since gone back to dust. But here they were alive in a state of glory, talking, seen, and heard,! And they were recognizable. They were not in some form that had no relationship to the human experiences of the apostles. Whatever “glory” they were in, they looked like what the apostles had seen in human beings on earth! What a great consolation

this is! Even in the book of Revelation, although it is highly symbolic, John sees the elders and the saints and they are seen as beings much like those humans he saw on earth. YES! WE WILL KNOW ONE ANOTHER IN HEAVEN!

Moses and Elijah and Jesus were discussing Jesus's exodus from earth. That is literally what the Greek word is in the parallel text in Luke 9:31—exodon. The RSV translates it "departure" and the ASV and KJV translate it "decease." The three were speaking of the "departure" of Jesus from this world which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. The atoning death of Jesus and all the events on earth that surrounded it, were matters being constantly monitored in heaven! The Old Testament saints would be especially interested in discussing the "decease" (departure) of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. They had all "searched and inquired what person or time was indicated by the spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory" (2 Pet. 1:10-12). Now the moment has almost arrived! Now Moses and Elijah have an opportunity to talk personally to the One who is presently involved in the greatest event of the ages! Perhaps God the Father scheduled this event not only for Moses and Elijah, not only for the apostles, BUT FOR JESUS TOO! Perhaps Jesus needed to talk with these two who had walked before him in this world of sin. Later, Jesus would express his desire for the companionship and support of the apostles. It is certainly appropriate for him now to have the support of two who had walked the road of rejection and testing as they participated in God's great redemptive program on earth. They could offer much encouragement! Remember, Jesus was human—as human as human could be. He needed the help of heaven often and prayed for it! MAY WE DO LESS?

Yes! This event has direct connection to the preceding teachings of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi. First, as we said before, it confirms empirically that Jesus is God-incarnate. It confirms that he is God's Anointed One and has authority over the Law and the Prophets. It confirms that he must die as a fulfillment of his Messianic mission. Second, it confirms his statement to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees and Herod." It confirms that worldliness is not to be the focus of human life. The focus of human life is heaven! It is immortality, life everlasting, for which the human being is destined. Here were men dead (to this world) for a millennium or more, but alive in the next world, talking with Jesus. And the apostles saw them. They heard them—heard what they were saying. Life does not end with the grave. There is certainly more to come after this existence. It is an existence of reality—not phantasy, or science-fiction. It confirms the teaching of the Bible that those who believe God and trust his word, and follow his commandments, are not lost! They are very much found! They are with God, able to talk with God's Son. It confirms that believers are saved by God's grace through the "decease" or exodus of Jesus. Moses and Elijah certainly were not perfectly sinless. Their self-righteousness could not have met God's perfect standard. So, they were saved by grace through faith in Christ's atonement (see Heb. 11). Now this great event (the transfiguration) seen by eyewitnesses, testified to by those who saw it, cannot be denied by honest-minded searchers for truth. It proves the Pharisees, the Sadducees and Herod, and all who follow in their path, were wrong

The father of the epileptic child said, “I believe, help thou my unbelief!” In saying this he admitted that his faith was not perfect. He admitted that he needed to grow in trust and obedience to the Lord. Actually, the man’s statement was a cry for help. He cried out! It was in response to Jesus’ statement, “All things are possible to him who believes!” ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE?! EVERYTHING? YES! What “thing” would you like most? Money? Fame? Friends? But what will these mean when you are dead? How about eternal life? YES! THAT IS WHAT I WANT! But just eternal life? What about the quality of that life which is forever? I want peace, possessions, fame, friends, fulfillment, satisfaction, something to do, and growth! Are all these things possible to those who believe? YES! We have the word of One whose word never failed to come to pass (1 Cor. 3:21-23)! But those who believe must continually cry out, with this man, “I believe, help thou my unbelief.” So long as these “things” are not all ours, we will have trouble with believing. We will need God’s help. If we never need help, these things can never be ours, because they are ours by faith in God’s grace! This slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison! (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! That is hard to believe! Notice, Jesus did not say when all these things would be possible. Right now it is the slight momentary affliction—later the glory beyond all comparison. In the meantime, we must grow in the belief that it is possible!

Jesus repeated the prediction he had made of his crucifixion because of the hardness of the apostle’s hearts. Luke records about this incident, “But while they were are marveling at everything he did Jesus said, Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men” (Luke 9:43-44). That the Messiah was going to die a criminal’s death—a death of humiliation and ignominy—had not “sunk” into their brains. They were deliberately refusing to acknowledge it (Mark 8:32; Matt. 16:22). They were “ashamed” of these words from the lips of Jesus! (See Mark 8:38). They did not understand the saying because they did not want to understand it! It was in opposition to all they had been taught and all they wanted to believe about their Messiah. They had their minds already made up about what the Messiah would be and do—and where they would be in his kingdom! And crucifixion didn’t fit their presuppositions! Perhaps the Messiah would be killed in battle, gloriously, defeating their enemies, that would be alright—but not crucified like a traitor, a defeated Messiah—NO! Jesus was not only trying to change their thinking, he was also mercifully trying to prepare them for the shock of reality. His crucifixion was going to happen whether they liked it or not, believed it or not. Jesus really wants them to survive their own fantasy-world. He does everything he can—even bringing up disagreeable subjects—“harping” on them over and over—getting slightly curt with them. After all, when a person’s eternal soul is at stake, you pull out all the stops! Why walk on eggs if a person is in danger of Hell? Jesus didn’t! We are NOT dealing with frivolous matters!

This entire discussion—the transfiguration (mortality being changed into immortality)—all things possible through faith—helping one’s unbelief—his imminent crucifixion and their opposition to it—all of this led Jesus to take a child up into his arms and say, “Whoever receives one such child...receives me...” The “straw that broke the camel’s back” of course, was the arguing of the disciples about who was going to be greatest in the kingdom while

Jesus had been talking about his own humiliating servant-hood in going to the cross! They were too adult and too strong and too knowledgeable to even think about a crucified Messiah. They could not receive such childish talk—not even from Jesus. Any adult (sophisticated or unsophisticated) will have to think like a child in order to be a follower and believer in Jesus Christ! I do not mean think childishly (like the apostles here)—but I mean to think without presuppositions and without arrogance. One has to have the mind and heart of a child to accept things by revelation. “Revelation” is God or Christ telling us things which we accept and do when reasons may not be given or explanations forthcoming. The child believes and does on the basis of higher authority! The child knows he doesn’t know enough to call all the shots himself. The child knows his wisdom is limited. He knows he is ignorant and needs help. He is a baby and knows it. The child is like the man who said, “Help my unbelief!” The child always “wants to grow up.” We must always want “to grow up” in the kingdom of God, or we will never get into the kingdom (Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2Pet. 3:18)! Above all, a child is dependent! We cannot even enter the kingdom unless we throw ourselves in complete dependence upon Jesus Christ the Son and God the Father.

The grown adult “turns” and becomes like a child by faith (and “faith” cannot be separated from “obedience”). Becoming childlike is not something of which we are capable on our own. We must believe Jesus that faith is necessary, and that it is possible. Then we must practice the process of “turning back to child-thinking” as it is outlined in Jesus’ word! He doesn’t just make it a necessity, he makes the power available through which we may do it, and then he gives us the directions on how to accomplish it. The power to precipitate it in our lives is his redemptive love (2 Cor. 5:14). That is what motivates us to turn to him as a child. The process to do it is to submit to his disciplining word (Heb. 12). It is a process of faith (trust) and obedience. Those believing and trying to obey Jesus are those turning and becoming children. Childlikeness is such an extremely important quality, Jesus warned that to oppose it in any person (whether young or old) is as wicked as anything. To oppose a child-like faith or to cause anyone not to be able to turn and become child-like is an abomination with God. It would be better to be thrown into the deepest sea with a great millstone around your neck than to oppose childlikeness in anyone. Better that you cut off your hand or pluck out your eye than to use either to oppose childlikeness. And opposing childlikeness is what the apostles were doing in arguing over who would be greatest in the kingdom! Better rip out your tongue than to even say it—better to siphon out your brains than even think it!

When Jesus replied about the “non-apostle-follower” casting out demons in Jesus’ name, he was not condoning denominationalism! Mark and Luke record this event—Matthew and John do not. First, this non-follower was a believer in Jesus. He was just not traveling with the apostles as they went around Palestine. He did things “in the name of Jesus.” That always means within the expressed will and by the authority of Jesus’ word. He was not doing anything contrary to Jesus’s word. Much of denominationalism is! Second, the “follower” was not causing division by arguing who would be first! This “non-apostle” follower was not against Jesus while pretending to be for him. Theologically liberal denominationalism is against Jesus! This statement of Jesus should never be considered as

sanction for any denominationalism—today—or ever! The unity for which Christ prayed and which the NT teaches cannot be accomplished by “interdenominational ecumenism!” We cannot all “get together and feel alright” with doctrines that oppose the Bible and call it Christian unity! Can all Christians see the Bible alike? YES! Jesus believed they could (John 17:17,20). Jesus desires that all believers be “sanctified” in the word of God (not in denominational creeds and structures). Jesus directed that all who believe in him should do so through the word of the apostles (John 17:20), not in human doctrines. Now of course, the word has to be interpreted. It is in human language! Things must be understood from what the authors intended to write, in its context, according to grammatical constructions and word usage, etc. But it is capable of being understood and interpreted ALIKE, by all believers. The presuppositions and, in some cases, deliberate misinterpretations are what have caused denominationalism. While it was not so in the first century, the beginnings of it can be seen in First Corinthians.

Salted with fire. What does that mean? Jesus had just talked about the discipline it took to maintain childlikeness. “Salted” means to preserve, to season so as to make palatable, to purify. “Fire” means tribulation, trial, which is also purifying. Every human being is going to be “salted with fire,” that is, put to the test and purified through tribulation and trial. No one can ever become childlike or receive childlikeness without trial! It cannot be done through ease and comfort and self-indulgence. Life must be put to the fire! There has to be some sting to purify! In fact, there can be no real peace within any individual unless he has this “salt” of tribulation and trial and its sting in his life at some time or another. While the world searches for peace in self-indulgence and creature comforts, Jesus says it comes only when you have “salt” in yourself. What child, in the literal, physical sense, ever receives the benefits of the home or parents without some “salting” or some “fire” in their lives? There is no peace within a child’s life, no development, no protection without some “sting,” some discipline, some sacrifice. And the same is true of the spiritual child of God! No one can stand an over-indulged child—the same is true of the spiritual child of God. So, HAVE SALT IN YOU!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 10:1-52

The “worldly” view of marriage is: (a) it is a human institution, invented by man that evolved along with everything else through much sociological adaptation; (b) it is to be practiced pragmatically, and relatively—that is, marriage is solely for man’s choices and manipulations so that humans decide whether, when, how long, and why they marry—most people today don’t even take into consideration the social or civil needs in marriage—JUST THEMSELVES; (c) this view of marriage says, “I want you to be my mate for what I can get out of the arrangement in the way of personal pleasure. (d) and, of course, with worldly views of marriage, worldly-minded people enter marriage with their minds already made up that, “If it doesn’t work, I can always get a divorce.” They never have any standards of what is “not working” except their own personal standards of happiness or failure—but then, that is the way a lot of people look at all of life—marriage, job, property, government, circumstances in life. Their standard is: if it doesn’t suit me, I’ll just quit and do something else! Christians are not allowed the luxury of having a worldly-view of marriage (or of any aspect of life, for that matter)! (See 2 Cor. 5:16). A Christian can never regard his/her mate from a human point of view. THE CHRISTIAN (BIBLICAL) VIEW OF MARRIAGE IS: “I want to marry you in order to make you happy and fulfilled!” Marriage belongs to God, for his purposes. God decides who, when, how long and why in marriage! It was that way from the beginning! Man has rebelled but Christ came to redeem marriage for God and human beings. Christians have an obligation to bring marriage as close as possible to that redeemed ideal. Christians cannot produce the redeemed ideal in marriage by force, any more than they can produce the redeemed ideal in any other area of life by force. Christians can only teach, exemplify grace, be merciful and forgiving and loving, and appeal to civil laws when it cannot convert people to the ideal otherwise! The Christian view of marriage has to be the responsibility of Christian homes. There has to be teaching both by role-modeling and by instruction. The Christian ideal of marriage is being assaulted by the powerful forces of wickedness in almost every articulate and trusted institution on the face of the earth—including great segments of education, communications media, and Christendom! This assault on marriage is pandemic! The pervasiveness and viciousness of it boggles the Christian mind-set. It is basically an attitude problem! I do not know a family that has not been affected by marital problems one way or another. It is the greatest sociological problem on earth—it produces ripples into every facet of human existence. It is perplexing, confounding, frustrating, depressing and almost inexplicable! The devil cannot destroy the kingdom of God through false doctrine, persecution or poverty—but he is surely making a vicious attack upon it through the home! I really believe one of the most fundamental problems in the home is that children are being too much indulged, pampered, and propagandized by worldly T.V. Millions of children are never told and made to do what they do not like and do not want to do anymore! The hucksters on television are convincing children to be selfish. In a lasting marriage, both

mates will often have to do things they do not like, for the sake of the mate's well being and happiness.

God permitted Moses to write a law of divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts! In other words, God was willing to condescend to "second best" in man's world because man was unwilling to abide by God's "first best." But that was not God's original intention. When man was unwilling to trust God's highest ideal for marriage, the best alternative was divorce. This was to furnish protection to individuals and to society. What kind of hurt could come to an individual (especially women in the society of Moses' day—and in modern heathen religions like Islam, Hinduism, etc.) by wickedness and evil in marriage without a "law" of divorce? What kind of harm could come to society in such a situation? Look around in the world of heathen religions and it is easy to see why laws concerning divorce were necessary for God's covenant people, the Jews. Such laws are still necessary today for "heathen" in all societies! The extreme wickedness of man's heart has to be controlled one way or another. If it cannot be redeemed by the love of Christ through the Gospel, then civil law has to step in and force behavior that will protect the structures of the social fabric—else there will be chaos and unbearable tribulation (1 Tim. 1:8-9; Rom. 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:13-17, etc.). God does not permit divorce, ideally! He never wanted it and never sanctioned it! He permits it, actually, just as he permits all other sin to be perpetrated. He seeks to control sin and wickedness and produce the ideal, first through the Gospel, but if that cannot be done, then God seeks to control it by force through civil authorities and civil laws! One thing is certain, sexual-celibacy cannot be controlled by force—neither by the church nor by the state. So both the church and the state is going to have to come to grips with the problem of divorce better than in the past.

That brings us to our next question. What are we (the church) to do with those within the church against God's ideal of marriage? But then, what are we to do with those within the church who sin against God's ideal in the sanctity of human life—of personal property—in the sanctity of the truth—what shall we do with those who sin against their own bodies in gluttony—what about those who sin against Christian unity? I would hope that we would all agree that the Christian approach to one who has sinned in any area is to attempt to restore or regain them as a "brother" (Mt. 18:15)! We should approach a sinner planning to do what is the very best (using the Bible as our guide) in claiming that sinner for Christ and for himself/herself, and for society in general. Many have not themselves sinned against God's ideal for marriage, but have been the victims of those who have! There is more to God's ideal for marriage than in merely staying together! God wants human marriage to typify and testify to the union between believers and Christ! It must therefore have the qualities of love, faithfulness, stewardship, servant-hood, joy, peace, protection, honor and glory to God. Christian love, compassion, patience, service and reclamation must be extended to all sinners and victims of sin—not just in the matter of divorce, but in every other matter of sin as well. God does not desire divorce—but people do divorce! God stands for marriage. It is better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Cor. 7:1-40). Only a few have the "gift" for celibacy—most do not. Those who sin against marriage and become divorced should be counseled, exhorted, loved, taught the Bible, and remarried if they wish to be so. I

believe it is wrong to try to enforce celibacy—either by the church or the state! And I think I can make a case for that conclusion from 1 Corinthians chapter 7, as well as from Jesus' statement here in Mark 10:1-12 and the parallel in Matthew 19:1-12—and from practicality (common-sense).

Jesus expected the rich young ruler to sell all he had, give it to the poor, and follow him. But does Jesus expect every believer to liquidate all his possessions and give them to the poor? Would giving the possessions of all the rich to all the poor solve the ultimate problems of mankind? Would it make the rich holier—would it make the poor holier or better off? NO! That was not the problem with which Jesus was dealing here. The problem is not possessions nor poverty, per se! People are not automatically wicked because they are rich, nor holy because they are poor. Please be reminded—"It is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles a man..." Riches themselves are amoral. Riches are a great temptation! Riches are dangerous! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom—but all things are possible with God! What a man thinks about and does with his possessions is what counts with God! If a person depends on his/her possessions...if we use them for evil or waste them rather than using them for God and for good, then we need to get rid of them! It would be better to be poverty stricken than to go into hell having used our money only for ourselves! The person who has much should learn to enjoy what he has by giving as much as he can to others. There is no greater joy on earth than giving! Jesus really meant it when he said, "it is more blessed (happiness) to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). First we must give ourselves! (2 Cor. 8:5). The worldly view of riches is to keep all one has, including oneself, for self-indulgence.

Christians are to look primarily toward the next life for their rewards. This world and all that is in it is destined to pass away. There are no lasting rewards here! There may be some transient rewards for Christians on earth, but they are all transient. What did Jesus mean when he said in Mark 10:29-31 some would receive an hundredfold in this life? Will missionaries who give up owning property on their own homeland in order to go to a foreign land as temporary residents and serve the Lord eventually become possessors of big estates in the foreign country (or in their own homeland)? Can a man give up a business to serve Christ and expect Christ to reward him with lots of money for retirement? What about the apostles? Well, then, what does Christ mean? One thing he certainly did not mean was that becoming a disciple would be literally rewarded with 100-fold more material possessions! If he did the book of Hebrews (10:32-39; 11:13-16; 11:39-40) has gotten it all wrong! Jesus means that when people give up family (brothers, sisters, parents, children, lands, homes etc.) to follow Jesus, they will have spiritual family members in this life. When people give up possessions (land, homes, things) and security to follow Jesus, they will have spiritual possessions and spiritual security in this life that is 100 times more blessed than what they have "given up." What those who "give up" receive in return is incomprehensible to the worldly-minded. August Busch (of the brewery) has his "Grant's Farm" estate and mansion on 281 acres of prime land on Gravois Blvd., in St. Louis, MO, and he owns unimaginable amounts of other properties (including Colonial Bakeries, the St. Louis Cardinals Baseball team, etc., etc.). But when he died, they put his body in a hole in the ground just like the St.

Louis skid-row bum, and “Augie’s” property has passed on to someone else who also loses it at death. The only family and the only securities or possessions one really has are spiritual. But they are the real and eternal possessions (2 Cor. 4:16-18). They never disappear (1 Pet. 1:3-5). No one, not even death, can ever take them away! And their glory is incomparable! Unimaginable! Unsearchable! Indescribable! (2 Cor. 9:15). The Christian may expect with certainty, along with his rewards in this life, persecution! That’s what Jesus said! Do you believe it? The giving up of family and “lands” will enrich the soul, while the body is being persecuted. JESUS SAID IT, (Mark 10:30) I DIDN’T SAY IT! So did the apostles say it (e.g., 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-19; 5:6). The apostles had looked at the rich young ruler who turned away from Jesus. They felt pretty good about themselves for giving up all they had to follow Jesus. So they said, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you, what then shall we have?” Jesus promised them an enriched soul and persecution! And then he warned them not to be so proud of what they had given up! For “many that are first will be last, and the last first.” Remember the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20)! The secret is to be content with what you have! Trust God to reward according to his love, his truth, his justice, and his omniscience. The apostle Paul said, “We brought nothing into this world and we cannot take anything out of the world” (1 Tim. 6:7).

Jesus teaches in Matt. 20:1-16 that a man’s reward will be not according to length of service, or notoriety of service, but according to faithfulness toward the opportunity which is given him! Everyone who labors will be rewarded, but the rewards will not be according to the world’s standards! The rewards will not be based on outward success or merit, but according to the “Householder’s (God’s) divine insight into the motives and purposes and intentions. The rewards will be according to what a person’s opportunities were. Rewards will be distributed according to what a person did with his opportunities (see also Luke 16:10-12). No matter how insignificant or small the job and the harvest, God knows and blesses commensurate with the honesty, loyalty and faithfulness exerted. WE SHOULD BE EVERLASTINGLY GRATEFUL THAT IT WILL BE THE ALMIGHTY, ALL-KNOWING, ALL-LOVING GOD WHO HANDS OUT THE FINAL, ETERNAL REWARDS! Down here, often it seems those deserving rewards never get any, and those who don’t deserve any get all the rewards. T’WON’T BE THAT WAY UP THERE!

The apostles, like so many other human beings, were spiritually dumb, insensitive, and unregenerated. They were greedy for power and authority. They clamored for recognition. They were obsessed with self glorification. They wanted to be known, admired, to be famous and wield power! They fell for the lie of the devil. That lie, which the devil has been telling ever since the Garden of Eden is: “You can be as (your own) gods!” Gen. 3:5. Jesus kept talking about his kingdom. They had sacrificed already a great deal and suffered much (they thought) to be charter members of his “kingdom.” Little did they know what they were yet to suffer! They were the first to leave all and follow him. They were “founders”—now they wanted to be “directors.” According to their way of thinking they deserved places of prominence (and eventually material rewards). That was all they could think of—climbing up the “corporate ladder of success.” Like Dagwood in the “funny-papers” they were always “bucking for promotion.” So, they put in their request for advancement to places of executive

authority. They did not say, “Master, grant us to sit at your feet—or grant us to be one of your hired servants...” They wanted positions of rule where they could be served. Their ideal of a “kingdom” was a place where the privileged ruled. To them, it was no privilege to serve! People still try to take the church of Jesus Christ today and institutionalize it and make it a place where they are to be served. Instead of rejoicing that the church is an institution in which members may have the joy of serving Jesus and others. In some churches members seem obsessed with clamoring for recognition, self-glorification, and power! Charter members, those who “built-this-church” with much sacrifice and suffering still think they deserve pre-eminence and power in how “things are run.” BUT REMEMBER, FIRST LAST —LAST FIRST! THAT’S JESUS’ WAY OF REWARDING!

YES! Jesus really meant that among Christians none are to exercise authority over the others! The Greek words *katakurieousin* (“Lord it over”) and *katexousiazousin* (“exercise authority over”) are repeated for emphasis on the word “over.” In other words, the Gentiles (unregenerate ones) use their positions of authority for the sheer sake of the power and self-glorification it seems to them to bring. No human being should presume he has any ultimate or omnipotent power over any other human being. Not even kings, presidents, prime-ministers, or judges, etc. should assume God’s powers. Certainly not elders, preachers, teachers, deacons, etc. Jesus did not mean to say there are no places of supervision, direction or “authority” within the kingdom of God on earth. There are! (See Eph. 4:11ff; 1 Tim. 3:1-16; Heb. 13:7; Titus 1:5-16; 3:1ff, etc.). And God has ordained places of “authority” in secular governance to maintain law and order in the world (Ro. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). But places of supervision and direction and leadership are places of service, not places in which to “Lord it over” people. There is only ONE LORD—JESUS CHRIST! Not even the apostles preached themselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord (2 Cor. 4:5) and themselves as servants of the bickering, stupid, carnal-minded, immature, sinning Christians at Corinth and other places. Paul sought every way possible to be of service to the (undeserving) Corinthian congregation. While he had the “authority” and the “power” to go and give orders, Lord it over them, whip them into shape, cut them down, he chose to give them an example of self-sacrifice, to exhort them, to pray for them, and to teach them (see 2 Cor. 11). He literally laid his life on the line for them! Service is not giving immature and sinning Christians what they indulgently want—it is giving them what is needed as God has revealed what is needed!

We are not told, specifically, why the crowd rebuked the blind beggars (Matthew says there were two—and there is no contradiction unless Mark says there was only one!) We may surmise with some certainty from the word rebuke that the multitudes were offended these beggars would even dare to seek some mercy from this highly popular “prophet” from Galilee. This great “prophet” was on his way to Jerusalem with a very important mission. He was going to set up his kingdom! The crowd assumed he had no time for blind beggars! Not now anyway! The beggars could come later and get a handout! We may also surmise from Luke 19:11 the attitudes of the crowds following Jesus up to Jerusalem: “As they heard these things, he (Jesus) proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear (immediately)!” Furthermore, we get an

idea of the mentality of the crowds from what the apostles themselves were thinking as they followed Jesus toward Jerusalem. There was going to be a confrontation—they knew that! There was going to be a “showdown” between Jesus and the rulers. Jesus himself had said so! He had important things on his mind. He was not to be bothered by beggars. When Jesus might have deserved and demanded to be ministered unto, he ministers to others. WHAT A “ONE AND ONLY” SAVIOR! WHEN JESUS DESERVED TO BE THE CENTER OF ATTENTION, HE GAVE THE SPOTLIGHT TO BEGGARS! Jesus completely subordinated his own feelings and needs, thrusting aside his own breaking heart (his hurt at being misunderstood and disregarded by his own apostles as well as the multitudes) to help these two helpless men! JESUS IS DEMONSTRATING WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO TEACH THE APOSTLES—IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU!

The reactions concerning healing of the blind beggars shows the contrast between a mind set on spiritual things and a mind set on worldliness. The multitude was thinking according to the way the world thinks about “kingdom,” (i.e., “power” and “glory”)—to be served means power, glory and honor. To be waited upon, to be first, to indulge one’s own feelings—this means power and glory to those who think in terms of this world only. Luke tells us that “those who were in front” of the walking crowd rebuked the beggars. The Greek word *epetimon* (translated, “rebuked”) literally means, “they threw their weight around.” These “frontrunners” may have included the apostles and more intimate followers of Jesus. They spoke contemptuously and told the beggars to “shut up.” But Jesus showed how God thinks in situations like these. Almighty power, almighty holiness, wisdom and glory, takes time for lowly despised, helpless people. True greatness puts aside self (Phil. 2:1-8), giving no thought to one’s own hurt and humility when someone else is in need. The One with all authority does not Lord it over the lowliest, but serves them! And goes out of his way to do it! Here was Jesus surrounded by fawning, clamoring, applauding fans. They shouted his praises! They were talking about and anticipating his victories! They were reveling in his fame and glory. And what did Jesus do? He stopped and shrugged all this off in order to do what he could for two blind beggars. Even though Jesus deserved all the praise and support men could give, he preferred to serve! THAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORLDLINESS AND SPIRITUALITY!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 11:1-33

Jesus borrowed the man's donkey because it was not the man's donkey! **THE DONKEY BELONGED TO JESUS BY RIGHT OF CREATION!** Let us not forget for one moment that everything we think we possess, we do not possess! We have it only as stewards! Jesus Christ, the Son, owns everything! All things were created by him and for him. Furthermore, he owns everything and everyone by right of redemption! We are not our own, we have been bought with a price. If the Master wants anything we have as stewards, he will take it, and we dare not object. He takes anything he wants without asking anyone! We should stand in fear and awe every day of our lives over the fact that we are accountable to Almighty God as stewards of all that has been given into our hands to use for his glory. All things were created for his pleasure and purposes—not ours (see Rev. 4:11). Now he is the Householder gone away on a long journey. But he is coming back. He has left us instructions on how we are to use his property. Part of using his property is to use it provide for our own—if we do not, we have denied the faith, and are worse than the heathen (1 Tim. 5:8). We are to use God's property to provide for others who need provision (2 Cor. 9:10-15). We are to use it to spread truth into the utter most parts of the earth. We are to use it to bring fame to his name. Jesus used this donkey to carry out the work of redemption—to make known to all who would acknowledge it that he was the Messiah. The man who "owned" the donkey could not have put it to any better use if he had been mining gold with it! Part of our conversion is acknowledging that we own nothing! We are not converted unless we are ready to admit that completely!

Jesus was signaling in an apocalyptic, cryptic way that he was their Messiah. No Jew should have missed the signal! Every Jew had learned early in life from the reading of the prophet Zechariah about the triumphal appearing of the Messiah (see Zech. 9:1-17). There is much evidence that the Jewish rabbis had studied this passage hour upon hour. In the Jewish apocryphal writings there are many, many interpretations of Zechariah. The tragedy of the whole thing was the spiritual blindness of the Jews about Zechariah's prophecies. The rabbis interpreted them materialistically and politically. And, of course, the Jewish populace (for the most part) was glad to hear such interpretations. Teachers, make sure your class members read all of Zechariah, chapters 9 through 14. All these chapters in Zechariah are one large context describing in apocalyptic, symbolic terms the Messianic age (the Christian dispensation—the church). They are not about the second coming of Christ—they are about his first coming! (a) the Messiah brings victory, peace & redemption ch. 9-10; (b) the Messiah is the shepherd-slave for the nation, sold for its redemption, ch. 11; (c) the Messiah is the King who will be pierced and over whom all the tribes of the Jews will eventually mourn when their nation is destroyed, ch. 12 (see Jn. 19:37); (d) the Messiah-King will become a "fountain" for cleansing by being the stricken shepherd, ch. 13; (e) the

Messiah-King brings in the Messianic era of “Tabernacles” (“Ingathering”) which follows atonement—highly festive and memorializes redemption and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, ch. 14 (see Jn. chs. 7-8-9-10). All of this Jesus was signaling and symbolizing for the Jewish people—but they were oblivious to its spiritual implications.

Jesus did not have a “temper-fit” when he cursed the fig tree. He was graphically illustrating his sovereignty. This tree, like the Jewish nation, was a hypocrite! It gave the appearance of bearing fruit, but it was not bearing fruit! Fruitlessness will inevitably be destroyed by God the Creator of all that exists (Matt. 3:7-10; Lk. 13:6-9; Jn. 15:5-6; Isa. 5:1-7). God expects all his creation to obey him. Even the oceans obey his divine fiat. Any part of his creation that rebels against him, he destroys! And that includes mankind! It includes nations. He has every right to do with his creation as he pleases. He brought it into existence. It would not exist without him. It does not exist by its own right! This is another thing man must acknowledge in order to call himself “converted.” Jesus also meant to teach that fruitless, non-bearing “trees” (nations or individuals) would not be hindrances to those who have faith. This barren tree of Judaism did not hinder Jesus from bringing salvation to the whole world. Neither will any such unbelief (be it communism, humanism, denominationalism, or any other “ism”) hinder one of his disciples from being faithful to him. This “dry tree” of rebellious unbelieving Judaism (see Lk. 23:31) may put Christ (and his disciples) to death (as the Jews did Stephen and thousands of others, or as Rome did millions), but God’s kingdom will triumph. He inexorably destroyed the “barren” Jewish nation as his “chosen” people, just as surely as he withered the fig tree. The Lord not only expects “fruit,” he demands it! Everyone must read the scriptures for himself and decide what “bearing fruit” is—and do it!

The Temple was never made to be a place of business. It was ordained by God as a place to be devoted to giving, not selling. God’s Temple today the Church, is not a place to get, it is a place to give. Many people are asking, “What can I get out of church” when they should be asking, “What can I give through the church!” No one gets unless he first gives. No one grows unless he produces. There is no such thing as passive growth. No one appreciates unless he participates. This was true of the Old Testament Temple and it is true of the New Testament Church. The second problem with the Temple in Jesus’s day was the cheating that was going on within its walls. The Jewish rulers were taking advantage of their position to “fleece” the people (or as Micah the prophet put it, “tearing the skin from off my people...” Micah 3:3:1-12). This has been going on now for centuries. One of the greatest blights on Christianity in our day is the shameful greed and exploitation by so-called religious leaders building their little “empires” while giving their donors no spiritual help from the word of God at all. Just such exploitation by some “authorities” at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK, was exposed in the national news media in early 2008. Many are, in fact, misdirecting people from the truth in order to dupe them into “giving” to “the cause.” Christianity (true and false) is reviled all over the world because of this more than any other fault. Christianity has become “big business” in the areas of music, trinkets, Christian “spas,” publishing, etc. etc. If you don’t believe this, just get any issue of the Wittenberg Door and turn to the “Truth is Stranger Than Fiction” section and see what people are huckstering in the name of Christ!

Jesus needed to cleanse the Temple right at that moment in order to make another claim to his authority. He dare not die and leave this world without an explicit, graphic claim that he has authority over the one place central to all Jewish existence—the Temple. Claiming authority over the Temple was not just directed to the Jews. It was a claim to authority over every religious inclination of humanity. There is only ONE God. And this ONE God manifested his glory in only ONE place—in his Temple. His Temple was authorized to exist only in Jerusalem (John 4) in the first covenant. This is a lesson that human beings do not “run the church!” Jesus runs it! It is to be “run” according to Jesus’ word! Hear what the Spirit says to the churches! Jesus gives the orders (cf. Rev. chs. 2-3). The churches (including its apostles and evangelists) take orders! They either take orders or have their lamp-stands removed. The church is not here primarily to serve mankind (serving mankind is the church’s secondary function)—the church is here to be served by mankind! The church (the new covenant Temple of God, Eph. 2:20-21) is like the fig tree—it is here to bear fruit. When it does not, it is cursed by Christ (see Rev. chs. 2-3). Is Jesus “running” the church today? If Jesus came to our town tonight how many churches would he find being “run” according to his word, and how many being “run” by the word of men? Would he “cleanse his Temple?” Would he wither some of his “fig trees?” Would he remove some “lamp-stands?”

YES! Any obstacle can be removed by faith! Jesus is not talking about human caprice or human selfishness. He is talking about the will of God. Any obstacle to any believer as he attempts to do God’s will can be removed by faith! Total, unreserved, unqualified faith in God removes spiritual “mountains” which stand in the way of any one of God’s people to do his will. “Mountains” of doubt, despair, confusion, fear, depression, hesitancy, are cast into the sea and drowned by faith. Did God remove all the obstacles of doubt and despair and fear which stood in the way of the “fishermen” disciples? YES! Did God remove all the obstacles to Paul’s heart and mind when he called him to take the Gospel to the Gentile world. YES! But what we might call immovable “obstacles” were really removals of obstacles in their cases! Most of us would call a “thorn in the flesh” an immovable obstacle (2 Cor. 12:7ff). Not Paul! Most of us would call persecution and affliction an immovable obstacle (2 Cor. 1:1ff). Not Peter, John and Paul! Most of us would call poverty an immovable obstacle (Phil. 4:10-13). Not Paul! Most of us would call having to work for a living and serve the Lord at the same time an immovable obstacle (1 Thess. 2:9-12). Not Paul! The real obstacles in our lives to doing the will of God are not things and people—they are the obstacles of the soul, of the mind and of the will. The biggest obstacle is our will! That can be overcome by faith alone! We can do God’s will if we want to do so!

YES! It was proper for the Jewish rulers to question Jesus about cleansing the temple. They were supposed to be the “spiritual shepherds” of God’s flock at that time. They were to be alert to anyone claiming to be speaking for God. It was their duty to protect the flock from false teachers. However, Jesus had given sufficient evidence that he was God’s “Anointed” (Messiah) and had authority as God’s spokesman. His evidence was sufficient, in fact, to prove he was none other than God-in-the-flesh which the OT prophets (Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2) predicted the Messiah would be. Thus, the Jewish “spiritual shepherds”

should have submitted to his authority over the temple without question! And that is precisely why Jesus refused to answer their question when they asked, “By what authority are you doing these things?” They were not really asking to protect God’s temple, God’s word, or God’s flock. They were asking to trap Jesus into some “mistake” so they could condemn him and protect their own wickedness. That is the case with many today who insist that all people cannot understand the Bible alike. They do not oppose the “Movement to restore the ancient order” (i.e., New Testament Christianity in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ) to really learn, but to protect their own denominational empires. It is basically an attack on the authority of God’s word! It is just like the parable of the wicked husbandmen. They do not want the “heir” (Jesus and his word) taking over the vineyard—they want it for themselves.

Jesus brought up the question of John the Immerser’s insistence upon “immersion” (baptism) “unto remission of sins,” because it was widely acknowledged by the populace to be by the authority of God! Most Jewish people then considered John an approved, anointed, ordained prophet of God. Remember, also, how very innovative John’s “baptism” was! It was totally revolutionary. Not only in the ceremony, but in the message. John preached “cleansing” by the grace of God through the “Lamb of God.” He had pointed out Jesus as that “Lamb of God” which was to take away the sin of the world. John preached Christ as the Messiah! He preached that genetic, physical descent from Abraham was not efficacious! He preached repentance. He preached judgment on the Jewish nation. He preached personal baptism (immersion), rather than priestly ritual washings, as a new covenant relationship with Jehovah. Thus, the law and the prophets were until John and after that, the gospel was efficacious. He was the “way preparer (Malachi 3:3:1)” the “voice crying in the wilderness (Isa. 40:3).” He was the “Elijah” that was to precede the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6). Among those born of women there will not be a greater than John the Immerser. What these Jewish rulers give as an answer to Jesus’s question concerning the identity of John and his message revealed their true heart. They could not play the hypocrite in the face of the inexorable logic of Jesus’s challenge. Christians must learn to use their wits like Jesus did. We must learn to put enemies of Jesus on the spot just like this. It may be the only way to reach past the hardness of their minds!

NO! There is no possibility that the Jewish rulers could be innocently ignorant of the origin of John’s immersion. His life, his ministry, the miracles surrounding his birth, all confirm that he was sent by God. There could be no doubt that he was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies mentioned in question #8. If there had been any proof or other possibility that John’s immersion was copied from the Essenes, or that he made it all up himself, or that it was a modification of Levitical rituals, certainly the Jewish authorities would have presented such evidence and exposed him as a fraud. John unequivocally claimed his message was directly from God. Either it was, or it wasn’t—and the historical record proves it was. The Jewish rulers acknowledged John was a unique individual (John 1:19-28) and some of them even came to John to be immersed (Matt. 3:7-12; Lk. 3:1-21), while most of them refused (Lk. 7:18-30). But they were not ignorant of its origin! They deliberately rejected for themselves the counsel of God, refusing to be immersed in John’s immersion

(Lk. 7:30). All unbelief is deliberate. There is no excuse for any unbelief (Rom. 1:18ff; 2 Pet. 3:5, etc.).

NO! It is not out of character for Jesus to refuse to answer the wicked questions about his authority! As stated before, they were not asking honestly, for information to be used for good. There are some people, who want to use the truth for evil purposes, who do not deserve to have the truth given to them. This must have been the case with the wicked men of Canaan who questioned Rahab about spies in her house; the case with the people of Ai and Joshua (Josh. 8); the case with Saul and David and Jonathan; the case with Herod and Jesus; and now with the Jewish rulers and Jesus. Jesus himself said, “Do not cast your pearls before the swine or bread before the dogs lest they trample them under foot and turn and attack you.” (Matt. 7:6). The truth should not be given to those who are determined to “trample it under foot.” They do not want to believe it, they do not want to keep it, obey it, love it or respect it. They want only to pervert it, misuse it and turn it into evil. God does not want that to happen. Extraordinary steps are to be taken to keep that from happening—definitely silence, and in some cases even deception (e.g., Rahab, Joshua, Jonathan and David). Jesus publicly refused to state the truth to these rulers in order to expose their unbelief and wicked perversity. There are times when we must make the same choice and take the same action.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 12:1-44

The “tenants” (Jews) killed the Son because he was the “heir”! These “tenants” had previously killed the vineyard owner’s servants (prophets) because the owner had sent them demanding fruit from the vineyard for himself. Now, comes the “heir” claiming not only fruit, but claiming to be the owner of the vineyard. These “tenants” said, “Let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours!” Did they really expect to take over what belonged to God? Yes! These are not heathen. These are Jews with thousands of years of religious heritage? How can that be? It happens even today with “Christian-tenants” who have thousands more Biblical privileges than the Jews had! What is the “fruit” the owner expects to receive on demand? **GODLY CHARACTER! NOT “THINGS”!** God is not interested primarily in “things” (only as they contribute to acquiring godly character). God can take things any time he wants. But he will not violate the human will and force character upon us. That is the “fruit” that he expects from us by letting his loving commandments do in those who are willing. God wants the fruit of repentance, faith, love and a willingly chosen life of holiness. This parable applies first to the Jews. There is no doubt about that. These Jews were guilty of killing Christ! But it applies to all the world, Jew and Gentile alike today. Anyone who seeks to be justified by the Old Testament law (even the Ten Commandments), or by any other “law” man-made or otherwise, is guilty of “crucifying the Son of God on their own account and holding him up to contempt” (Heb. 6:6). All the world is God’s “vineyard” or “field.” He expects the fruit of repentance from all of it (Acts 17:30-31). It applies to each of us individually. We either yield fruit to the “heir” or we seek to have the inheritance for ourselves. And this second choice puts us under the same condemnation as those who killed the “heir.” The “heir” has come and proved that he cannot be disinherited. Death could not hold him. So what will the owner do to those who try to take over his vineyard? **HE WILL DESTROY THOSE WICKED TENANTS!**

Nothing really belongs to Caesar! Everything belongs to God (Rom. 13:1-7; Jer. 27:5-15; Dan. 2:21-22; 4:34-37; 6:25-27, et al.). “Caesars” (i.e. civil rulers) are given dominion at God’s pleasure to serve his designs—willingly or unwillingly. But in giving human rulers certain dominions, God expects rulers to exercise their dominion by obedience to divine principles set forth in the word of God and by levying taxes to finance their stewardship of God’s gift of dominion. To “Caesars” belong the privileges of serving God and humankind. They are not given dominion to serve themselves. With the privileges come the responsibilities outlined in the Bible (i.e., Eccl. 8:11; Isa. 26:9-10; Jer. 29:7; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 1:8-9; 2:1-4, etc.). Man’s final, absolute allegiance belongs to God. God’s will must come first. No “Caesar” has any right to demand allegiance or obedience to any law that is not in harmony with God’s revealed will in the Bible! So long as “Caesar” does not deprive man of any of his “unalienable rights” (i.e., “life, liberty, and proprietorship”)

man is supposed to support “Caesar”. The Romans, at this time, were not depriving the Jews of worshiping God according to their scriptures, nor depriving them of any other “unalienable” human rights. The Jews tried to deprive the apostles from obeying Christ—and that is when the apostles disobeyed the Jewish rulers. Both the Jews and the Roman government later “outlawed” the practice of Christianity—and many Christians “rebelled” against this edict of Caesar. They suffered torture, the confiscation of their property, and death (Heb. 10:32-34) but they disobeyed “Caesar” and the Jewish authorities, nevertheless. The Jews knew what belonged to “Caesar” and what belonged to God. Ever since becoming a nation they knew! God told them what to expect beginning on the day they demanded “a king like the nations” (1 Sam. 8:4-22). Men have never been in the dark about what belongs to “Caesar” and what belongs to God. No “Caesar” ever need be ignorant of his responsibilities and limits, either. They are clearly outlined in the Bible. Teacher, recommend to your class, the book *What The Bible Says About Civil Government*, by Paul T. Butler, 1990, pub. College Press. EVERYTHING GOD HAS REVEALED ABOUT CIVIL GOVERNMENT IS DISCUSSED THERE! the American Declaration of Independence says, “We hold these truths (i.e., truths about civil government’s responsibility to God and citizens) to be self-evident...” and they are not only “self-evident” but REVEALED IN THE BIBLE! NO CHRISTIAN SHOULD EVER BE IGNORANT OF GOD’S REVEALED WILL ABOUT CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND THE “CITIZEN’S” RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD IT!

This is a hard question to answer! I believe the American War for Independence (a.k.a. “American Revolution”) was justified. We must understand that the reason for this War for Independence is not as simplistic as some historians would have us believe. It was not precipitated simply from “taxation without representation.” There were numerous factors that evoked the Declaration of Independence and the subsequent “war:” (a) religious tyranny—this was probably the “leading” cause; (b) restrictions on human liberties (a restriction on migrations on this continent, etc.); (c) deliberate refusal of the English crown and parliament to furnish enforcement of laws to protect the citizens rights and properties in the colonies; (d) taxation without representation; (e) deliberate exploitation of the commerce and private properties of colonists; (f) billeting of armed troops in people’s homes; (g) naval blockades of colonial ports against commerce and travel; etc. etc. The English crown and parliament, did, in fact, INVADE the American colonies with armed troops and instituted a tyrannical rule that deprived American colonists (English citizens) of their rights stipulated in English “common law” (i.e. the Magna Carta, parliamentary laws, etc.). SO IT WAS NOT SO MUCH A “REVOLUTION” AS IT WAS AN ARMED DEFENSE BY THE COLONISTS OF THEIR ENGLISH CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS! Do not forget that God authored the Hebrew “revolution” against Egypt! God authored the “revolution” of David against Saul and the “revolutions” of the prophets and their followers against the wicked kings of Israel. God predicted the Maccabean “revolution” in the book of Daniel ch. 11, (apparently approving of it—Hebrews 11). Would believers be justified in revolting against those today who are forcibly depriving them of the unalienable right to worship God, or of civil government’s refusal to enforce law and protect them against criminals, or of civil authorities or anyone else exploiting their property and invading their homes? MY OPINION IS YES!.....IF THOSE WHO PROTEST OR REBEL ARE PREPARED, AS WERE AMERICA’S FOUNDERS, TO PAY THE PRICE OF GOING AGAINST TYRANNY!

The Sadducees thought they had proved there was no life after death by rationalizing thus: Their theoretical woman was “wife” seven times. The Levirate law of Moses decreed this was o.k. In heaven it would be impossible for one woman to be wife to seven different men. Therefore, rationalized the Sadducees, the Levirate law of Moses (scripture) denies the possibility of there being a “heaven.” Their rationalizing says, in effect, God would not tell man something to do on earth that would not also apply to heaven. Therefore since God did tell man something to do on earth that can’t be done in heaven—there is no heaven! But what about eating, dying, procreating, civil governments and rulers—what about the infirmities of the body and the very existence of heaven itself? All these things done on earth have been used by others than the Sadducees to deny the possibility of heaven (e.g., Madalyn Murray, Bertrand Russell). The Sadducees never had a corner on skepticism about heaven! Many have convinced themselves of its non-existence because they can’t accept any existence outside human experience. Belief in heaven is not based on human experience! It is based on revelation! Forgiveness of sins is not based on experience. Being child of God is not based on experience. Salvation is not based on an experience. Truth, right and wrong, are not based on human experience. THESE DIVINE PROMISES ARE BASED ON THE REVELATION OF GOD. THE EVIDENCE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE REVELATION OF GOD IS BASED ON FACTS, NOT FEELING OR SUBJECTIVE “EXPERIENCES”! The Bible as God’s authoritative revelation is based on the facts eye-witnessed by those who wrote the Bible. Paul defined the “gospel” as the “death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ”—seen by eyewitnesses—by as many as 500 at one time (1 Cor. 15:1-11)! As Walter Scott, great evangelist of “The Golden Oracle” in the Restoration Movement taught us, the doctrines (teachings) of Jesus are not based on evidence—they are based on Jesus’ authority— BUT JESUS’ AUTHORITY TO GIVE COMMANDMENTS AND EXPECT TO BE OBEYED IS BASED ON THE EVIDENCES THAT PROVE HIS CLAIMS TO BE WHO HE SAID HE WAS—THE MESSIAH! But to skeptics like the Sadducees, no amount of evidence would have led them to trust the authority of Christ to reveal the possibilities of heaven. They approached the possibility of another existence with a priori conclusions that it was not possible. THAT IS SKEPTICISM. To approach possibility with the a priori that anything is possible regardless of evidence to the contrary is credulity. Neither skepticism nor credulity is acceptable to God. GOD DEMANDS TO BE BELIEVED IN ON THE BASIS OF THE FACTS HE HAS GIVEN TO PROVE HE EXISTS AND THAT THE BIBLE IS HIS REVELATION (SEE JOHN 10:37-38).

The only viable answer to the question of immortality (life after death) is: What does the Bible say about immortality? Is there a revelation from God on the subject? Human beings have never “experienced” anything but this earthly existence. Death closes the door on this existence. But is there information from the other side of death? Has anyone in human history had the authority to speak about existence beyond this earthly life? The Bible (which has existed for at least 3500 years, when Moses wrote the Pentateuch), claims to reveal the other side of death. Through his divinely-inspired apostles in the New Testament scriptures God reveals a continuation of life beyond this one. The Bible documents eternal life through the teachings, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. All humanists make the unforgivable mistake of a priori rejection of the Scriptures—just like the Sadducees! The Bible says (Eccl. 3:11) God “has put eternity into man’s mind.” It also says

people may know that God is eternal from “the things that have been made” (creation) (Rom. 1:18-21). However, Jesus never appealed to experience, nor to some subjective feeling in the human heart, but to Scripture (even the Old Testament). The Bible claims to be an accurate documentation of historical events. It demands to be tested. If its historicity can be established by all the accepted canons of historical verification, it deserves to be studied and accepted on the basis of evidence for its authenticity. The Old Testament testifies to life after death stating that Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph were all “gathered to their fathers” after they died. David said after his infant son by Bathsheba had died, “He cannot come to me, but I can go to him.”). Jesus expected the Sadducees to believe God on the basis of the O.T. alone! Jesus expected his disciples to believe from the O.T. that he would be resurrected from the dead and ascend into heaven (see Lk. 24:25; 24:44-49). There is no rational problem with revealed scripture about the possibility of immortality or the verification of that revelation. The problems is moral—it is the problem of the deliberate refusal of human beings to accept the evidence for the Bible’s authenticity. **MANY PEOPLE SIMPLY DO NOT WANT TO TRUST CHRIST’S WORD ABOUT ANYTHING!**

The three great fundamentals in the two “great commandments” are: (a) the nature of God—he is the only God there is and there is no variation in him—he is One—he is of one mind, of one purpose and his word is immutable—he never turns or vacillates; (b) man’s relationship to God—to hear (obey) and love God with all his being—to love means to cherish, to treasure (God is our portion) he is all we need—we should desire nothing in our total life-experience that does not make him ours—we must love his character and want it for ourselves; (c) man’s relationship to his fellow man— to love (care for) one another as much, at least, as we care for ourselves Mt. 7:12; 22:37-39 (and even more, Phil. 2) —we are to love one another as God loves us. These are the 3 great fundamental truths that form the very essence of God’s law and human existence. This is what we are created for—nothing else. Life consists in these two basic laws of God. There is nothing else in life that really matters besides what is encompassed in these 3 fundamentals. The essence of life is not happiness, self-esteem, fame, fortune—it is in finding the One true God and desiring him with all one’s being and loving him by loving others better than oneself. This philosophy of life must come by faith in God’s revealed “great commandments.” It does not come by human wisdom or experience. We will not accept this philosophy of life unless we do so by revelation!

All the Law and the Prophets depend (“hang”) on these 2 commandments. If you read the OT from Genesis to Malachi, you will find that the three fundamentals in these 2 commandments form the encapsulation of it all. This is what they teach: (a) Jehovah is the only God and he is unchangeable—absolutely faithful; (b) man finds his reason for existence in loving God with all his being; (c) man loves God through loving his fellow man more than himself! This is the essence of the Law and the Prophets. This is what Moses and the prophets say God’s “Anointed” (Messiah) would come and establish in the hearts and minds of all. We tend to think the Law and the Prophets hang on ceremony, formality, or on specific deeds and actions. **BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE.** They hang on who God is and what we cherish about him! Formalities and deeds are irrelevant, and actually wicked, if we

cherish the formalities and deeds rather than the faithfulness of God himself! That is why Jesus kept insisting, “Who do men say that I am—what do you think about Christ, whose Son is he?” That is why he told the rich young ruler, “Do not call any one good except God alone!” All of God’s will, all he has revealed for man’s redemption, hangs on these two great commandments. This is why Jesus asked Peter, repeatedly, “Peter, do you love me?” Peter’s identity and salvation depended not on formalities and deeds, but on Peter’s desiring the person of Christ with all his being!

The Messiah cannot be both David’s son and David’s Lord, unless the Messiah is the incarnate God! This is the crucial issue of life! The most imperative issue is whether God became flesh, entered the world, conquered sin in the flesh for man’s salvation, and was raised from the dead to bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel! On these two commandments, hangs the issue of the Gospel! The law and the prophets, the Gospel, these are all pinioned on the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The deity of Jesus, his Lordship, his incarnate work of redemption, is the cornerstone of man’s existence here and hereafter. Life has no meaning apart from the fact of the incarnation of God. This is the fundamental issue. Is Jesus God? Did God become man? Did he conquer sin and death as a man? If not, all is vain and useless. This is Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians ch. 15. If Jesus was God and did die and was raised from the dead, then all is profitable and redeemable by cherishing him with all one’s being! The incarnation of God is still the fundamental issue of Christianity. It must still be the imperative content of our preaching. God became flesh, and did what man could never do for himself, conquered sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3-4). It is useless to preach conversion to people until they are convinced of that fact. It is useless to preach ethical living to people until they are convinced of that fact and accept his death in their place and his life as their life. Because until they are convinced of that they will be trying to save themselves (an impossibility) by self-righteous codes of behavior.

Jesus inserted his warning about the scribes in the context of this day of questions because they were missing the fundamental issue of life by being all wrapped up in their self-righteousness. They would not accept that David’s son (the Messiah) was also the Lord God Almighty, incarnate, living a sinless life in which they would need to vicariously participate . That was unacceptable to them because it destroyed all their pride in themselves. They could not cherish Jesus as God incarnate, because they cherished themselves, their formalities and their deed above God’s grace. The Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians pretended to raise the fundamental issues of life in their enigmatic questions. But they were only touching the peripheral, the trivial and circumventing the fundamental issue. Jesus revealed that the fundamental problem of human life is to identify and surrender in faith to the God who became incarnate in the Son of David and delivered infinite grace unto redemption. Everything else in man’s life is minor!

Jesus held the widow up as a paragon of love for God. The widow gave about 60cents in today’s rate of exchange while the rich were giving “bags full.” Isn’t large always better? No! It depends on how much is left over! And it depends primarily on motive! The

rich gave out of what they had in abundance. The widow gave all she had to live on—all she had between her and starvation! THAT'S ALMOST INCREDIBLE! Lord forgive us for miserliness in our giving!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 13:1-37

The disciples pointed out the huge, magnificent buildings of the temple (and palaces, etc.) to Jesus in sheer apoplexy at a couple of things Jesus had said after he pointed out the widow giving all her living into the offering boxes. First, between Mark ch. 12 and Mark ch. 13, Jesus shocks the disciples by denouncing the Pharisees with a long and bloody blast (found in Matthew ch. 23). At the end of that tongue-lashing he says, “Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate.” Doom was pronounced upon the religious system and hierarchy of Judaism, and the city of Jerusalem itself. Their Second shock comes between these two chapters when Jesus preached the alarming sermon on death and life (John 12:20-50). In it, he declared, “Now is the judgment of the ruler of this world, now is the ruler of this world cast out!” Translated literally, that would read, “Now is the crisis of the cosmos...now is the pretender ruler of this cosmos cast out...clear outside.” The Greek text of this statement makes it emphatic by using a word for “out” twice! It was very plain to the disciples that Jesus was predicting the imminent destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism and that he was equating Judaism with the pretended rule of the devil! (Why isn’t it clear to modern prophecy-preachers that this is what Jesus is primarily predicting in these texts of Matt. 24, Mk. 13, and Lk. 21?). The disciples were mentally visualizing the destruction of their “world.” Judaism was all they knew. Their very lives were all wrapped up in it. All their hopes had been in it since childhood. It sounded like the end of the world to them. It sounded like the end of the old world and the ushering in of a completely new world (the Messianic world that the Jewish rabbis had conceived in their apocryphal misinterpretations). They wanted to know when Jesus was going to destroy the present Jewish corruption and set up “new world” messianic utopia!

The “end is not yet” says Jesus in Mk. 13:7—and that “end” is referring to the “end” of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus had just a few days earlier given a very plain but vivid prediction of the holocaust coming upon Jerusalem and Judaism at his “Triumphal Entry” (see Lk. 19:41-44). But he has not yet told the end of that terrible judgment (which will last from about A.D. 65 to A.D. 70). He has a work for these apostles to do in Jerusalem and Palestine which will take some 30 years to accomplish after his death, resurrection and ascension (Lk. 24:47; Acts. 1:8). He does not want them to be terrified when wars and instability, false Messiahs, earthquakes, and famines precede that holocaust. He wants the disciples to know that all those wars and famines are only preliminary signs of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. He does not want them to start fleeing the city too early. They must evangelize there, even in the midst of difficult circumstances (e.g., Acts of the Apostles, 1 Thess. 2:14-16; Heb. 10:32-39, etc.). READ LUKE’S VERSION OF THE PROPHECY. He says Jesus told the apostles, “When you hear of wars and tumults...do not be terrified or intimidated for this must first take place, but the end (of Jerusalem) will not be at once” Lk.

21:9. Jerusalem's "end" will not come until about 30 years after Jesus's crucifixion. Jesus' warnings here have nothing to do with the end of the world. They all refer to the coming judgment of God upon the Hebrew nation for rejecting the Messiah. Jerusalem is going to be leveled. It was predicted in the Old Testament (Isaiah ch. 66 and Daniel ch. 9). Jesus predicted it more than once. Paul wrote that God's wrath was going to come upon the Jews "to the end or completion (1 Thess. 2:15-16; Paul wrote 1 Thess. ca. A.D. 51-52, 15 years prior to the Roman siege of Jerusalem). Paul wrote in Heb. 8:13, ca. A.D. 61, that Judaism was "obsolete" and "ready" (Greek, engus, "on the verge") to vanish away. God predicted it in the O.T. also in Deuteronomy, ch. 28. They must encourage their fellow Jewish-Christians to remain steadfast in their faith in Jesus "as they see the day (of Jerusalem's destruction) drawing near" (Heb. 10:19-25). The only "day" the Jews could see "drawing near" was the destruction of Jerusalem. They certainly could see no "signs" of Christ's second coming, because Jesus said at least 8-10 times there wouldn't be any "signs" of his 2nd coming.

Of course, all the signs predicted by Jesus in Mk. 13:5-13 could have occurred before A.D. 70. In fact, they did occur before then! There were false Christs, there were wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, Christians being beaten in synagogues, standing before governors, being delivered up and yet given revelations from God's Spirit to speak to their oppressors, brother delivering up brother to death because one is a Christian and one is a Jew—and the gospel was preached to all "nations" (not in total, but to people from every tongue, tribe and people (cf. Rom. 1:5,8; 10:18; 16:26; Col. 1:6; 1:23; Acts 2:9-11; Rev. 7:9). Please read the notes on Luke ch. 21, in *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press, for information on the fulfillment of Jesus' predictions here preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The "signs" predicted by Jesus in this text were never intended to be "signs" signaling the imminent end of the world and of time—or the second coming of Christ. "Signs" such as these have been going on since man sinned in Eden and God cursed the world for man's sake. "Signs" such as these have been going on, in intensity and massiveness, from one generation of civilization to another, for centuries. They are not "signs that Jesus is coming soon." There are NO signs to be given by which mankind will be able to anticipate the second coming of Christ! JESUS MAKES THAT PLAIN BY SAYING IT ABOUT TEN (10) TIMES IN THIS WHOLE DISSERTATION WHEN YOU STUDY ALL THE PARALLELS IN MATT. 24, MK. 13 AND LK. 21! So do not be led astray by modern "false prophets." NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS COMING, NOT EVEN THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN!

The "desolating sacrilege" spoken of by the prophet Daniel is one of the signs that the destruction of Jerusalem was upon the Jewish nation. When they saw the Romans coming into their city and desecrating their temple, they should know that its total destruction is imminent. Daniel predicted this would happen in his great apocalyptic statement in Daniel 9:24-27. Daniel predicted the Messiah (and he uses the literal Hebrew word for Messiah) would be slain, and the Romans would destroy Jerusalem as a consequence of the Jew's rejecting their "Anointed" (Messiah) prince. Daniel said this would happen 490 years after the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth which took place 457 B.C. And thus it came to pass exactly when and how Daniel said it would! Rabbinical law prohibits Jews today from

reading Daniel 9:24-27—for if they did they might discover that Jesus was the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy! God is in control of history, not men. History is not “happenstance” it has a climactic orientation. It is proceeding toward a divine goal. That goal is redemption. And all of history is working toward that goal. History serves God just like nature. He is in command of it all! It is never “out of control.”

Although this sounds like what some people have “depicted” will be taking place when the end of the world finally comes, it is not predicting the end of the world! This is simply apocalyptic language being used to describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the system of Judaism. Remember, the whole Jewish national sovereignty was going to be destroyed. They would have their temple destroyed. God was going to cast them off—disown them—disenfranchise them! They would no longer be allowed to “repent” before God through the law of Moses—they must henceforth do their repenting through Jesus Christ (see Heb. 6:1-8). What Jesus was predicting was the “end of their world” as it were! That culture and civilization would never again be God’s chosen people! They had rejected Christ! This was predicted by the OT prophets, by Moses, and by Christ and the apostles. This kind of apocalyptic language is used by the OT prophets over and over to talk about the downfall of great civilizations and cultures (e.g., Isa. 13:10; 14:12ff; 24:23; 34:1-4; Jer. 4:23-28; 15:9; Joel 2:10; 1:30—3:21; Amos 8:9; Micah 3:6; Hab. 3:11). It is not unusual for the Bible to use highly figurative (apocalyptic–crisis) language to speak of extraordinary natural phenomena accompanying great battles and the fall of great empires. John uses the same kind of language in Revelation to depict the fall of the Roman empire.

The lesson to be learned from the fig tree is that when these disciples see the signs Jesus had enumerated, they should know the fall of Jerusalem was at hand. The signs of Jerusalem’s destruction and God’s judgment of the Jewish nation (the rulers included) will be as easily recognizable as the signs that summer is drawing near as when the fig tree signals summer ahead by leafing-out. They may know from the destruction of Jerusalem that the kingdom of God on earth (the church of Jesus Christ—not Judaism) has been thoroughly and emphatically established by God as his redemptive kingdom on earth! Redemption’s program will no longer be hindered by a godless, oppressive, rebellious Jewish nation. The gospel will be spread all over the globe when Judaism is taken out of the way. That is the lesson of the fig tree. Certainly, Jesus emphasizes here that all the destruction enumerated before will be easy to anticipate. That is not so of his second coming. The fig tree means that all Jesus has said up to this point is about something other than the end of the world. It must, therefore, be about the destruction of Judaism.

Jesus pronounced such dreadful judgment upon Judaism and Jerusalem because of its obstinate attempt to stand in the way of God to redeem the world! He makes it clear in a number of parables. He says “they” wanted to kill the heir and take the vineyard and inheritance for themselves (Matt. 21:33-46). They did not want “this man” to rule over them (Lk. 11:14-27). They made light of the king’s invitation to his banquet (Matt. 22:1-14). In all these parables the Jews are “they”! The book of Acts and all the epistles of the NT make it clear that the Jews opposed God’s gospel in every way and at every opportunity they could!

They persecuted God's messengers, contradicted God's gospel, and stirred up others against it! Paul says of them, "...the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us (Christian apostles) out, and displease God and oppose all men by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them to the end! (1 Thess. 2:15-16). No one can stop God from redeeming the world—not Egypt, not Babylon, not Rome, not even the Jews! Anyone who opposes his redemptive program will suffer ultimate, utter, unmitigated defeat and punishment for ever and ever!

YES! The OT does predict the destruction of Jerusalem (a second time, after it was destroyed in 586-606 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar and rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Nehemiah) and displacement of the Jews as God's "redemptive, covenant" people. The Jews, of course, would not admit that, nor acknowledge it! Isaiah 66:1-24 predicts the "burial" of the Old Zion in order that the New Zion may be made in one day! (the church was instituted in one day— on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2). Jeremiah predicts that the time would come when "the ark of the covenant would not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed...it would not be made again." (Jer. 3:15-18). And Jeremiah is the one who predicts that God would make a completely NEW covenant (Jer. 31:31ff). THAT SURELY PREDICTS A TIME WHEN THE JEWISH SYSTEM WOULD NO LONGER EXIST. Daniel 9:24-27 predicts the destruction of Judaism at the coming of the "prince" (i.e., Messiah). And Judaism will not be needed anymore because all the redemptive work of God will have been fulfilled in the Anointed One who will "finished the transgression, put an end of sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal (authenticate, validate, confirm) both vision and prophet, and anoint a holiest of holies. When that has all been done, who needs Judaism? NO ONE—NOT EVEN A JEW! There are a number of other such predictions and inferences, but Jews then (and now) for the most part will not acknowledge that God is through with them as Jews and that he only claims them if they are in Christ! And even more surprising is the insistence of some Christians that God still has something for the Jews in redemption apart from Christ and the NT church! NOT SO, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER! To go back to the law of Moses one "falls from grace" (Gal. 5:4) and is an "apostate" (Heb. 6:1-8). Only in Christ are people "perfected forever" Heb. 10:12-14! All this "destruction" of Judaism does not necessarily mean Jews must completely renounce their genetic ancestry or rid themselves of certain cultural and traditional practices so long as they do not depend on any of their Jewishness for justification from God. That has to come by the grace provided in Jesus's vicarious atonement and their surrender in faith to it as delineated in the New Testament scriptures.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 14:1-72

Jesus could say he would be crucified at Passover when the elders were definitely planning not to kill him at feast-time, because Jesus was God and he knew they would eventually decide to do what they had not planned to do. He did not make them do it. They chose to do it at that time—Jesus simply had the divine power of foreknowledge. Jesus, the Gospels often report, could read men's minds and know what they were thinking without them telling him. He could predict great future events (like the destruction of Jerusalem) which would seem so unlikely to any mortal being. BUT IN NO CASE DID HE FORCE THEM TO THINK OR ACT AS HE KNEW BEFOREHAND THEY WOULD. All this supernatural power was simply to establish the deity and authority of Jesus Christ—to show that he was God-incarnate. Miracles (healing, prophecy, etc.) were never intended to make the recipient sanctified. Some who had miracles worked upon them were not, so far as we know, sanctified (e.g., the 9 lepers who were ingrates). Some who worked miracles were not sanctified (e.g. Judas). Some who heard divine prophecy (the same prophecy that others heard) never believed and were never sanctified. It is faith in, and obedience to, the word (commands) of Jesus that sanctifies—not miracles. Miracles were intended only to prove that the miracle-working source was divine and trustworthy. Faith in the faithfulness and love of God and Christ to keep their word is what sanctifies the believer (2 Cor. 5:14-21; 7:1). Jesus's display of foreknowledge here is simply another portion of the cumulative evidence that we must believe and obey his word to be sanctified.

Jesus did not manifest a disregard for the poor by his remark, "The poor you have with you always..." Jesus always showed compassion for the poor, but compassion in the ultimate and most blessed sense, would be to bring them to salvation before feeding them. When Jesus healed the paralytic let down through the roof, he first stated, "Son thy sins are forgiven thee." The man needed forgiveness if he never was to walk a day in his life! Jesus was rebuking Judas (and the other apostles) for using the poor as a "cop out" for ignoring the most important thing—Jesus' great redemptive work. Mary was imminently sensitive to that. She had anointed Jesus for burial. She understood that he was about to die. These apostles could only think of material things. There is a tendency for many religious people to lose sight of divine priorities and perspective. There is always the pressure from the world, the flesh and the devil to take the Christian's heart and mind away from the spiritual and focus it on the material. The devil even uses the inclination of man to be compassionate to lure man's mind away from spiritual-first priorities (glorifying Christ by concentrating on redemption). That has happened in a Christendom which elevates the "social gospel" above the proclamation of the word of Christ and often even to the exclusion of the proclamation of Christ's deity and his commandments!

How did Satan enter into Judas? It certainly was not what was classified in the Gospels as “demon possession” (nor what is alleged as demon possession today). But Satan had Judas in a much more certain grasp than he had those who were physically demon possessed. Christ was able to do something to deliver those who were physically demon possessed—he could do nothing to deliver Judas unless Judas made his choice for Christ. Judas entered into a compact with the devil of his own choice. The devil entered into Judas because Judas allowed him to enter. It was not miraculous at all—it was a matter of Judas’ surrender of his thinking and moralizing processes to the falsehood (deception) of the devil. The devil entered into Judas just like he entered into Eve and Adam, 2 Cor. 11:3 (and Peter, Matt. 16:23). And that is the most threatening danger possible from the devil. Everyone gets excited about alleged supernatural occultism, but jokes about and makes comfortable the worldliness (the materialistic mind-set) of modern society. That it is what trapped Eve, and Judas and Peter, and Demas (2 Tim. 4:10), and countless billions in every generation. Money! Popularity! Betrayal! Unfaithfulness! Ingratitude!—all symptoms of a this-world-only-mind-set! Judas never meant to hurt Christ—he just wanted to make a little money! Surely a little compromise here and there with the enemies of Christ will not hurt anyone—not even Christ—if some money can be made—we could do good with that money made with just a little compromise here and there! It would be better for any person never to have been born if they are faithless to Christ!

Jesus instituted the “Lord’s Supper” at the Passover feast because of the similarity in the two “feasts”! The Passover was initially constituted to Moses and the Israelites to commemorate God’s redemption (deliverance) of the OT covenant people from their Egyptian bondage. God instituted that feast and called it “Passover” so that in its repeated observance the mind of the worshiper would be focused on God and not on the worshiper. Thus they would know or be constantly reminded of the source of their “passing-over” or redemption. It was also instituted to give the Israelite what he needed most—an objective point in time and an objective ritual through which the Israelite might express his faith, his gratitude, his obedience. This particular Passover was also the last opportunity Jesus would have with his disciples in his incarnate status to fortify his intimate relationship with them. Very shortly after this he is taken away and tried and crucified. He wants to impress upon them his consuming desire for them to remain faithful to his imminent sacrifice on their behalf. He also wanted to try to turn their minds from themselves and their argument over who would be greatest unto the matter of servant-hood which he was about to display to the ultimate on the cross. All these things made it imperative that Jesus institute the “Lord’s Supper” in connection with the Passover. The Lord’s Supper is, to the Christian, what the Passover was to the Jew—an objective point in time (the Lord’s Day) and an objective ritual (the breaking of bread and drinking of fruit of the vine) through which the Christian may express his faith, his gratitude and his obedience to Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholicism teaches that at one particular point in every “mass” (the point called “the elevation of the host” when the priest raises the wine goblet toward heaven) the wafer and the wine become, miraculously, the actual blood and the actual body of Jesus Christ who is then literally sacrificed all over again at every mass for the atonement of the

worshiper's sins—right then and there—AGAIN AND AGAIN, when the ritual is done over and over again! Here is a quotation from a Roman Catholic Catechism of Christian Doctrine, Question #278: “The holy mass is one and the same sacrifice with that of the cross, inasmuch as Christ, who offered himself, a bleeding victim, on the cross to his heavenly father, continues to offer himself in an unbloody manner on the altar, through the ministry of his priests.” —quoted in Roman Catholicism, by Lorraine Boettner, 1962, The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., Philadelphia, PA, pp. 173-174. And ,again, quoting The Dignity and Duties of the Priest, by A. Ligouri: “With regard to the power of the priests over the real body of Christ, it is of faith that when they pronounce the words of consecration, the incarnate God has obliged Himself to obey and come into their hands under the sacramental appearance of bread and wine. We are struck with wonder when we find that in obedience to the words of his priests—hoc est corpus meum (i.e., Latin for “this is my body”)—God himself descends on the altar, that he comes whenever they call him, and as often as they call him, and places himself in their hands, even though they should be his enemies. And after having come he remains, entirely at their disposal and they move him as they please from one place to another...the power of the priest surpasses that of the blessed virgin because she cannot absolve a Catholic from even the smallest sin.” Roman Catholicism, Boettner, op.cit. p. 175. Jesus definitely did not intend such a blasphemous thing to happen when he instituted the “Lord’s Supper.” John 6:63 clearly states that Jesus placed NO premium on the literal flesh and blood of his human body! The above stated doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church fly in the face of the book of Hebrews in the NT which states numerous times that Jesus’ sacrifice WAS ONCE FOR ALL TIME DONE ON THE CROSS AT CALVARY, 2000 YEARS AGO! (See Hebrews 9:23-28; 10:12-18).

The apostles fled and scattered the night of Jesus’ arrest not because they were afraid of a fight, or afraid to die—they proved that in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were afraid they were going to be the laughing-stock of Judaism for following a “Messiah” who could not make good on his promises. They were afraid they would be mocked as idiots, dupes, and bunglers for joining in a movement whose leader was humiliated by dying on a Roman cross. These men were not afraid of physical deprivation or even of death. They would not have been fishermen had they been cowards. But they were “ashamed of Christ and his word” because they had visualized Jesus’ kingdom in their own selfishly ambitious and materialistic concepts. They wanted no part of “a flop.” Their idea of “kingdom” did not include humiliation—especially a king who willingly allowed himself to be humiliated as Jesus had done before the Sanhedrin, before Herod and before Pilate. Not even a struggle did he put up—hardly a word. Not even a retort! Not even the last word! It was not until they witnessed Christ’s glorious, sovereign, powerful victory over humiliation and death by his resurrection from the dead were they ready to suffer the same humiliation. THEN, THEY LOOKED FORWARD TO THE SAME GLORY!

Jesus praying for the “cup” of human sinfulness to pass from him, three times, teaches us: (a) the terribleness of sin—Jesus did not want to become sin for us—he was sinless—it was not just, not fair—it would cut him off from his Father—it would be suffering the divine torture when he didn’t deserve it; (b) the humanness of Christ—he was no stoic—

he was no “wholly-other” God unable to actually, really, enter into the human predicament—he did enter it—he was tempted in all points like human beings are tempted; (c) that what we want, that what seems right to us, or good to us, may not be the will of God for us—and above all else, above what we want, and above what we think is right and good, stands the will of God—immutable, inflexible, unvarying, without compromise; (d) that God gives us the choice—when each of us comes to our own Gethsemane (and come we will, nearly every day), ultimately the choice is ours—God makes his will known, he will not change his will—he wants us, for the reward before us, to do his will no matter the personal cost—but we must make the choice for God will not choose for us nor will he force us to do his will (Heb. 5:7-9; 12:1-2, etc.); (e) prayer does not change the will of God—prayer changes us (2 Cor. 12:7ff)!

There are many glaring illegalities in the entire trial of Jesus. However, in the text we are dealing with (Mark 14:53-65), these are some of the illegalities: (a) in arresting Jesus they allowed the rabble of the streets to form a “mob”—he did not have the security and protection of official law enforcement; (b) he was put on trial at night—that was against Jewish law; (c) the verdict was decided before the trial; (d) though many witnesses came and gave testimony, what they said was blatantly false; (e) none of the witnesses agreed—it should have been at least a “mistrial” and the witnesses put on trial; (f) the high priest forced Jesus to testify against himself; (g) sentence was pronounced when guilt was not established by evidence; (h) the defendant (Jesus) was physically abused by the mob and by those not officially authorized to act as executioners, etc. But what more could be expected of men (the Jewish Sanhedrin) whose very wicked character had already been exposed by Jesus in almost every matter of life. They could not be fair with their own parents, with widows, with merchants, with anyone! How could one expect them to be fair with one they pre-judged to be their enemy?! Jesus has told us not only to be fair with our enemies—but to pray for them and love them and do good to them!

Jesus said the high priest would SEE visible and knowable signs of him seated with power and coming with the clouds of heaven. Jesus meant that particular high priest! Now when would that happen? AT THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, OF COURSE! Jesus was not talking about his second coming here! Jesus was warning this high priest who was accusing him of blasphemy that he would himself soon suffer the judgment of God because of actually committing blasphemy by crucifying the Son of God (God-incarnate)! This high priest scoffed at the idea that Jesus could be the Son of God, or that Jesus could have any divine power or authority. But Jesus told him, in effect, “Scoff all you want—you will soon see that I have power when my words about the destruction of Judaism comes to pass. Many times in the OT God speaks of himself “coming on the clouds” in judgment on both wicked Gentiles and wicked Jews. Those instances were fulfilled historically when God judged Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome and Israel and Judah. My interpretation of Revelation (ch. 1:7) is that Jesus is warning about his coming upon the Roman empire in judgment soon after he gave the revelation (and he is not there in 1:7 speaking about his second coming). In all the cases (including Matthew 24 and parallels) Jesus’s “comings” in judgment were preceded by visible and knowable signs. That will not be the case when Jesus comes at the consummation of all the ages at the end of time!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 15:1-47

After sentencing Jesus to death, the Jews took him to Pilate for at least three reasons: (a) officially, they were not permitted to execute death upon any person without permission from the Roman authorities. They certainly did not want to put themselves in the position of incurring the wrath of the Roman Procurator. They had enough estrangement between them as it was. Pilate could report them to Caesar and Caesar might make their circumstances worse than they considered them to be. Pilate was always looking for some way to “make it rough” on the Jews. He did not like them. There were numerous political conflicts between Pilate and the Jews; (b) they wanted to have someone else do their killing for them! They insisted that Pilate find him guilty of sedition against Rome so Pilate would have to give the order to have him crucified—the Jews wanted him crucified (like a common criminal). Thus, they would not be thought by the Jewish public, then, to be the executioners of Jesus—they could say, “He was sentenced as a seditionist and executed by Rome”—Pilate tried to get the Jews to take Jesus and execute him according to their law, but they refused; (c) also, probably, they wanted Jesus to be executed by crucifixion because of the humiliation and torture associated with such a death—the very stigma of death by crucifixion carried with it incriminating inferences—only criminals, bad criminals, were executed by crucifixion. According to Jewish law, to be “hanged on a tree” meant the victim was “cursed by God” (Gal. 3:13). But they killed him nevertheless. God holds them guilty in his word because their actions were rationally premeditated (Matt. 23:29-36; Acts 2:36; 3:15, 17 1 Thess. 2:14-16). And everyone who seeks justification in any way other than through Christ’s vicarious death is guilty of crucifying Jesus afresh (Heb. 6:6).

Jesus did not answer the accusations of the Jews before Pilate because: (a) he had already answered them sufficiently to have been vindicated against the charges—any more answering was useless—the Jews had already made up their minds—the evidence was there, there were plenty who would have testified on Jesus’ behalf—but the Jews had used false witnesses, contradicting witnesses—their prejudgment was evident; (b) Jesus eventually did answer Pilate (see John 19:33-40)—Jesus’ initial silence was to get Pilate’s attention (“But Jesus made no further answer so that Pilate wondered.”). Jesus wanted Pilate to have time to think, to meditate, to search for the deepest essence of the matter being brought before him and not get caught up in debating and arguing with the Jewish priesthood when he tried to answer each and every accusation they brought forth. Jesus wanted Pilate to form conclusions of his own and see clearly on his own that the accusations of the Jews were false (see John 19:34)—“Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”

Pilate was a pragmatist. His statement, “What is truth?” betrays that. Truth, for the pragmatist is always relative—always “becoming”—always changing, never static never absolute. Truth, for the pragmatist is that which “works.” Pilate’s condemnation of Jesus, even after he admitted 8 times that Jesus was innocent, under pressure of the Jews shows that Pilate was a pragmatist. Pilate permitted Jesus to be crucified because it “worked” for him to keep his job and more probably his own life if the Jews accused him to Caesar of failing “to do his duty.” Most Romans were dedicated to pragmatism! Most Americans are! John Dewey was a strict pragmatist and he is responsible for our modern public education system. Our whole public education system, and as a result, every facet of government, the business world, communications media and higher educational system is built on pragmatism and espouses it loudly and long today! Few people today believe in any absolute truth. They are shocked that anyone else would espouse absolute truth. They think it is un-American! If it works, it must be true, is the philosophy of Main Street America. But the big question is, WHO DECIDES WHAT “WORKS”?

Jesus refused to drink the wine mixed with gall, not because it was wine, but because it was designed to relieve the pain wracking his body. He was determined to “taste” every dreg of death at its very worst, both physical and spiritual. Later (John 19:28-29) Jesus cried, “I thirst!” and someone put a sponge in a bowl of vinegar and offered it up to the thirsting Jesus to give him a drink. But whether he even drank this or not we do not know. It appears that he did not since others interrupted the one offering the vinegar filled sponge, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.”

God forsook Jesus on the cross to the extent spoken of in the Bible as the “Second Death” (i.e., Hell). He was “cut off” from God completely (see Isa. 53; Dan. 9:24-27; Psa. 22; 1 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). All the justice of God against sin fell upon him. In him God was both just and the justifier of those who have faith (Rom. 3:21-26). Do we have any idea what it would be for a Perfectly sinless Being to take upon himself all the sins of all mankind (think of all the horrible sins which have been perpetrated since the Garden of Eden). Think how unjust, unfair, unholy that would be to a perfect individual. What would it be like for any of us to suffer the Second Death? It will be torment forever—eternal, absolute, complete, perfect punishment and torment. God’s judgment will be perfect, just like his salvation will be perfect! That is what Jesus suffered for us!

The “curtain” of the temple was torn in two at the death of Jesus to signify symbolically that the way into the presence of God was now opened up for all who believe in Jesus (Matt. 27:51)! This “curtain” was probably the one that was just inside the front doors of the temple—it is reputed to have been 60 cubits high (a cubit could be 21 inches or 24 inches making the “curtain” at least 100 ft. in length) and as thick as the width of a man’s hand (about 6 inches). It was rent from top to bottom signifying it was done by a supernatural force. This miracle, witnessed no doubt by many priests at 3:00 p.m. may be part of the reason many priests became followers of Christ (Acts 6:7). It was clearly a miracle of God. It should have signified to any reasonable witness that God was through with Judaism. This was no phenomenon at the hands of men, but at the hands of God. There

were other miracles surrounding the crucifixion of Christ—how many can your pupils recite?

Both Matthew and Mark record that the centurion said, “Truly this was a son of God.” The Greek text in Mark says, *alethos outos anthropos huios theou en*, or, “Truly, this man, son of a god was.” The definite article is absent in the Greek text indicating “indefiniteness.” It is doubtful that the centurion made the same confession as Peter made at Caesarea Philippi calling Jesus the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God. The centurion probably conceived of Jesus as “a god” in the sense that the Romans thought of “many gods.” It is clear, however, that the centurion thought of Jesus as someone supernatural. The centurion’s statement is much like that of Nebuchadnezzar when he looked into the fiery furnace and saw the angel of God with the three Hebrew men. Luke adds that the centurion said, “Certainly this man was innocent.” The centurion knew he was in the presence of someone who was supernatural, and someone who was innocent of all the charges that had been brought against him. And don’t forget, one of the charges was that he had blasphemed when he had called himself God. The centurion said, “He is innocent—he is a god.” The centurion was not far from the kingdom! He was nearer at least than the Jewish rulers who refused to acknowledge Jesus’ deity, and he was nearer than Pilate who compromised his knowledge of Jesus’ innocence to keep his office.

The point of the Gospels detailing so much about Jesus’ death is to make an unassailable record that he died. For if he was not actually dead, the accounts of his resurrection are suspect. And that is precisely the point belabored by Dr. Schonfield in his ridiculous “Passover Plot” book. It is also the point of many modernists and unbelievers through the years. It is extremely important that we be able to trust the Gospel records to be authentic, credible, eye-witnessed accounts to the death and burial of Jesus. If the people who say they saw him buried, and say his burial was in a specific place, were inaccurate, confused or lying, then what is said about the resurrection is a myth (at best), or a hoax (at worst). No literal death, no literal resurrection. No resurrection, no Christ, no hope of heaven!

Most of the world has no place for a humiliated, dead, resurrected Savior. They will tolerate a “good teacher” (though most of them think Jesus would never ‘make it’ in today’s sophisticated world). They will tolerate a “victimized philosopher-Jesus” (similar to Socrates). But not a suffering servant whose death (vindicated by his resurrection) was a vicarious atonement for the sins of all mankind—and a willing death (which was the will of Almighty God) at that! But that is because the world is not “servant-oriented”—it is “be served” oriented. The world is not “humble-oriented”—it is “pride-oriented.” The world is not “faith-oriented”—it is works-oriented. Those who wish to receive the blessed promises of Jesus must accept his way (the cross) of humiliation, service, faith and grace. It is in direct opposition to the way of the world!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

The Gospel of Mark

MARK 16:1-20

(For a thorough study of the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a refutation of anti-resurrection arguments, and a chronological harmony of all the post resurrection appearances of Jesus, see *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, 1981, pub. College Press, Joplin, MO, pp. 576-604).

Kirsopp Lake, late professor at Harvard Divinity School, proposed that the women found a tomb empty on Easter morning because they failed to get to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but stopped in front of another tomb in which no body had been recently placed. He believes the reason the women missed the tomb was that they were convulsed with sorrow, their eyes were blinded with tears, and hardly knowing where they were going, got to the wrong tomb. The Gospel records say the following: (a) the women, on Friday afternoon when the Sabbath was beginning (Luke 23:54) "...saw the tomb and how his body was laid..."; (b) Saturday night, before sunset (Matt. 28:1, some women "went to see the tomb"; (c) Sunday morning, before sunup (Lk. 24:1; Mk. 16:2; Jn. 20:1), the women started back to the tomb again, and arrived there Sunday morning just after sunrise (Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1a)—they then saw the tomb already opened (Mk. 16:3-4; Lk. 24:2; Jn. 20b); (d) an angel announced to them the reason for the emptiness of the tomb (Mk. 16:5; Matt. 28:5-8); (e) the women entered the tomb, looked around, and saw the empty burial clothes (Mk. 16:5-8; Lk. 24:3-8). Now how, in the name of honest evaluation of the documents, can anyone think the women got to the wrong tomb?! YES, it is important to know they got to the right empty tomb! If we can't trust their testimony we can't know that Jesus arose from the dead, and cannot believe in forgiveness, salvation, or eternal life. Whom are we to believe? Are we to believe Kirsopp Lake who lived 2000 years after the events, or the authors of the Gospels who were Jesus's disciples and were eyewitnesses of the events?

There was a "young man" sitting in the empty tomb because God sent him there. He was an angel, a heavenly messenger. God sent him there to confirm by supernatural messenger that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead. It was another one of the supernatural signs given to convince some very skeptical disciples that Jesus had risen. Most of them had a difficult time accepting this fact! Jesus' resurrection was no "idea," "myth," or "theology"—IT WAS A FACT. That empty tomb had to be explained. None of the disciples were present to witness the actual resurrection of Jesus. None of them saw him exit the tomb. They had no idea where he was. The angel told them he would meet them in Galilee. There they would see for themselves that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead. They would eventually (in Jerusalem and Galilee) be invited to touch the nail prints in his hands, the spear wound in his side, to eat with him to talk with him, to see him walk and move, and do so in the same manner, in the same body they had seen before his death on

the cross. Jesus “presented himself alive after his passion (death) by many proofs, appearing to them forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). God spoke to many people in Bible times through angels—even to heathen emperors—but especially to his appointed ambassadors—prophets and apostles. This was done to confirm the divine source of the message, the imperativeness of the message, and the authenticity of the message. Once the complete work of redemption was finished, recorded, and authenticated by miracle-working apostles, there was no longer a need for God to send angels to talk to men and women. They could believe on the basis of a permanent record.

Yes, the women actually saw an empty tomb! The record says they did. And who is Kirsopp Lake, 2000 years after the event, who was not there, to say they didn't? There has never been a document, with any proof of authenticity, or credibility, to contradict the Gospel records that the tomb was empty! We can believe the Gospel accounts! Had there been any explanation possible for the women going to the wrong tomb, or had there been any evidence (like Jesus' dead body) that his tomb was not empty, the Jewish rulers would have produced the evidence. That would have killed all the “resurrection” preaching of the apostles and the women immediately! Christianity would have been exposed as a hoax. These women and apostles laid their lives on the line for their testimony that the tomb was empty and that they had seen Jesus alive after his resurrection for a period of at least 40 days. What did they have to gain by perpetuating such a story about an empty tomb and a resurrected Jesus, if it were not true? Would they have gone on with the testimony even if they had been mistaken, once they found out that it was not true? Could they have been mistaken for 30 years? Could so many people (above 500 at once saw the resurrected Jesus, 1 Cor. 15) have been mistaken about the same thing? The women believed the “young men” because they were angels. If you saw a real angel, you'd believe too! The apostles did not believe the women.

Did anyone see Jesus after his crucifixion? Yes! There were at least twelve (12) different occasions when Jesus was actually seen by eyewitnesses after his resurrection from the dead. There may be more appearances not even recorded (John 20:30-31). Many of these instances were cases where more than one person at the same time saw him. As many as 500 people saw him at one time (1 Cor. 15:6)! How could 500 people all have the same hallucination at the same time? How could 500 people all be deceived at the same time? And then think of all those who saw him at various times in various places doing a multitude of different things—did they all see the same hallucination or were they all duped? One man refused to believe in his resurrection until he placed his fingers in the mark of the nails on Jesus' hands—and he (Thomas) was later given exactly that opportunity when Jesus appeared to him! Was Thomas hallucinating—was he hoodwinked???? How do we know these people actually saw a risen-from-the-dead Jesus? Because they refused at first to believe what they were told and even what they saw! Because for 2000 years the Gospel documents have been subjected to the most rigid, exacting, scientific literary testing for authenticity, credibility, accuracy, and historicity that any documents have ever undergone! These Gospel records have been found to be completely trustworthy, authentic, reliable,

credible, accurate and historical. More so than any other documents of antiquity!!!!

The women were afraid because they realized they had been in the presence of a divine being—an angel. Furthermore, they had been near to a spot where a dead man came back to life. It was awesome—it was “spooky”—it was all couched in an aura of supernaturalism. They were being asked to deal mentally with something the human mind cannot comprehend. They were asked to believe something the human being does not experience—coming back from the dead! We are always afraid of the unknown. Even more so of the unknowable. Most of us still (even as adults) “whistle through the grave yard at night.” Few of us like to be around dying people and death. We are very quiet at funerals and in hospitals. Few of us know what to say to the terminally ill or at catastrophic death scenes. These women were simply awed and intimidated by the mysteriousness of it and the manifestation of supernatural power. We would have been, too!!! Mary Magdalene apparently was the one who ran on ahead of the other women and told Peter and John. The other women were so paralyzed by fear they were afraid to tell anyone. They probably feared their report would be overheard by someone and repeated to the “authorities.” Then Jesus appeared to this group of women all at once (including the returned Mary Magdalene). Peter and John had also run to the empty tomb and found it empty, and had run back to the dwelling place of the apostles (probably the “upper room”). After Jesus appeared to the women, they finally decided to go and tell the apostles they had seen the risen Lord (Luke 24:9-11; Matt. 28:9-10; Jn. 20:18; Mark 16:10-11). They did finally do what the angel told them to do, but not for a while!

I believe in Christ BECAUSE of the resurrection! The resurrection I KNOW AS A FACT, just like I know any other fact of history which I have not seen with my own eyes. There is nothing subjective to it at all. It is strictly good news from the past. Paul even classifies it as such in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. My faith in Christ, my trust in him to keep all the promises he has made which are not demonstrable in history, are based on what I know about his ability to fulfill such promises because of the FACT OF HIS BODILY RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD! You ask me how I know he lives—I know he live because of history! He does not live just because I want him to—just because I wish it were so—just because the early Christians wished it were so. He lives because he was seen to be living and capable of living forever. Death could not keep him. That is established as a fact of history. IT IS NOT A “FEELING!” History has established that death has kept Caesar, Napoleon, Winston Churchill, F.D.R., my great-great grandfather and yours. But history has established that death could not keep Jesus of Nazareth. The resurrection of Christ does not have to be repeatable in my sensate experience for me to accept it as a fact any more than Gen. George Washington’s crossing of the Delaware River and surprising the enemy troops during the American War for Independence has to be repeatable in anyone’s experience. The factuality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is what was the focus of all preaching, evangelism, edification, correction of church problems, and worship in the first century church. You can check out that statement by simply reading the sermons in the book of Acts and the admonitions in the Epistles. God give us wisdom to restore it to the 21st century church!!!!!!!!!!!!

It is foolish to refuse to believe in Christ unless his resurrection can be demonstrated historically because we conduct most of our daily living on the basis of things we trust historically. We trust these matters in our daily living without personally repeated scientific demonstrations. We even act or believe certain things as fact on the basis of some things we could never have eye-witnessed ourselves nor could they ever be repeated just as they were when they happened. For example, none of us ever saw “the Battle of Gettysburg in America’s Civil War with our own eyes but we believe it happened and we give money to erect monuments to those who fought in the battle. Science itself, space technology, medical advancement, economic trade, business, shopping at the grocery store, having our children vaccinated, and a million other things we do without ever going back to square-one and repeating every laboratory experiment or process for proof that we should act thus. Albert Einstein (famous scientist who gave us $E=MC^2$) was right when he said: “No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can at any time prove me wrong.” After a scientific experiment is concluded or an observation is made, the result continues to be scrutinized. When it is submitted for publication, it goes to a group of the scientist’s colleagues, who review the work. If the work is important enough, just before the report is published in a professional journal or read at a conference, a press release is issued and an announcement is made to the world. The world may think that the announcement signifies the end of the process, but it doesn’t. A publication is really a challenge: “Here’s my result. Prove me wrong!” THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT THE GOSPELS ARE! PUBLICATIONS OF A ONE-TIME OCCURRENCE (THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD), SAYING, “PROVE ME WRONG!” IN 2000 YEARS NO ONE HAS PROVED THEM WRONG! We take people’s testimony and live by it constantly—every hour of our lives—because no one has proved it wrong! Our entire judicial trial system is based on testimony of eyewitnesses. Those who commit crimes are convicted, beyond a reasonable doubt, on the basis of eyewitnesses testimony and physical evidence. The reason people make excuses for not accepting the resurrection of Christ is not a lack of credible testimony—it is because of its moral implications and imperatives! People just don’t want to face the moral obligations to their personal lives necessitated by the authority of a resurrected Jesus Christ! As Paul said to king Agrippa, “These things have not escaped your notice, for none of these things were done in a corner.” And the king said, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Do we dare to think that if we cannot live physically without accepting factuality based on testimony, that we can expect to live forever in the next spiritual world without it?

The verses of Mark 16:9-20 are not in the oldest and best manuscripts of the Greek texts. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, the Old Latin, and the Sinaitic-Syriac, (the most ancient and best Greek manuscripts) all attest that this section was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them. So do the early church “fathers” Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius and Jerome. Not only so, but there are two or three other endings in other manuscripts. Bruce Metzger, highly respected Biblical Greek textual scholar (one of the authors of the RSV) says: “Thus on the basis of good external evidence and strong internal considerations it appears that the earliest ascertainable form of the Gospel of Mark ended with 16:8.” Christians should not fret over this! We still have the “Great Commission” and the command of Jesus to make disciples and baptize them in Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-53;

John 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-11; 2:38; 8:34-40; 10:44-48; 16:15; 18:8; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-11; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12-13, etc. etc. Because this is a spurious passage we should give no credence to the allegations that all Christians were to be given power to tread on serpents, drink poison and not be hurt, or to cast out demons, speak in new tongues and lay hands on the sick so they recover! All such signs were to confirm the first century message and first century messengers as sent from God (see 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4, etc.)—and were to “pass away” (1 Cor. 13:8) when the New Testament was finished in written form. Church historians indicate the miraculous “gifts” did cease with the death of the apostles and those to whom the apostles had imparted such miracles. Signs were intended to convince unbelievers, and were always wrought openly in the presence of unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). If Mark 16:9-20 was to be passed on to 21st century Christians, LET US SEE SUCH SIGNS TODAY AND WE WILL BELIEVE!

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

