

**WEST VIRGINIA
SCHOOL OF PREACHING**

**VICTORY LECTURES
October 29 — November 1, 2001**

Theme: THE BOOK OF MARK

**Church of Christ
Fourth Street and Willard Avenue
Moundsville, West Virginia 26041**

Published by & Order From
West Virginia
School of Preaching
P.O. Box 785
Moundsville, WV 26041
(888) 418-4573

Table of Contents

Overview of the Book of Mark.....	4
Dan Kessinger	
Popularity of Jesus	17
Emanuel Daugherty	
Blaspheming of the Holy Spirit	25
David Stevens	
Parable of the Sower	32
Doug Minton	
The Widows Two Mites.....	37
E. Claude Gardner	
Growth of the Kingdom	44
Bob Winton	
The Withered Fig Tree.....	58
Brent Gallagher	
The Baptism of Jesus	63
E. Claude Gardner	
Jesus and the Sabbath.....	69
Glen Hawkins	
Preparatory Work of John The Baptist	75
E. Claude Gardner	
Demon Possession	81
Bruce Daugherty	
Rejection of the Carpenter	93
Michael Barclay	
The Olivet Discourse in Mark.....	100
Frank Higginbotham	
Jesus Came Preaching.....	108
Terry Jones	
Inheriting Eternal Life.....	113
Matt Thomas	

New Wine In Old Wineskins	120
Charles Aebi	
Introduction, Source Criticism, Q, Date, Order	128
Owen Olbricht	
The Alabaster Box	140
Albert Farley	
Humility & Service Of Jesus	148
Bob Eddy	
The Execution of John the Baptist	155
E. Claude Gardner	
Miracles of Jesus in Mark	161
Louis Rushmore	
Jesus' Transfiguration	173
J.D. Conley	
Crucifixion And Burial	185
Owen Olbricht	
Is Mark 16:9-20 Fraudulent of Genuine?.....	193
W. Terry Varner	
Great Commission Baptism	216
D. Gene West	
Confirming the Word With Signs Following.....	227
Charles Pugh, III	
Other Disciples.....	245
Robert Johnson	
Marriage and Divorce in Mark	253
Owen Olbricht	
Traditions of Men vs The Word of God	263
Denver Cooper	
The Passover and Lord's Supper	272
Alan Cole	
The Resurrection of Jesus	283
Owen Olbricht	

Overview of the Book of Mark

Dan Kessinger

Introductory Issues

Although the Book of Mark will be formally introduced in another lecture, some pertinent questions seem to be in order that we might better understand the themes therein. The text itself makes no signature claim, but ancient sources seemed universally confident that the author is Mark, the John Mark who was the source of contention between Paul and Barnabus. Mark was also called the "interpreter of Peter," and it is supposed that his knowledge came from the preaching and or dictation of the apostle. The Gospel of Mark is sometimes called "Peter's Gospel." On these points, Papias, Eusebius, Clement, Origen, and Irenaus all concur.¹

Though some downplay direct ties between Peter and this Gospel, the same sources which identify Mark as the author also claim Peter as Mark's fount of information. Mark is also identified as the son of Mary in whose house the disciples were praying for Peter's release from prison (Acts 12:12), and by tradition as the young man who fled naked from the authorities at Jesus' arrest (Mk. 14:51-52). Given the parenthetical nature of this brief account, it seems most reasonable (to this writer) that the tradition is accurate.

The book of Mark was probably written in the mid 60's AD, though liberal scholars push the date forward by a matter of decades. The matter of date becomes a bone of contention with the advocacy of transmission via oral tradition or previous and extensive written sources. Therefore, the farther one can remove the author from the events, the more doubt is cast on the veracity of the material.

Many believe this Gospel to have been written to a Gentile audience, or even to a Latin speaking one. Some of the linguistic clues include "Latinisms" in the Greek text. On another front, Jewish customs are thoroughly explained, as to folks unfamiliar with them.

The so-called Synoptic Problem must certainly be addressed. Why are the three Gospels similar, with virtually parallel accounts and wording? Why is there not just one? What is the correct sequence? Did each Gospel build on the previous work, or did they rely on a previous source (the infamous and fictitious Q document)? These questions have actually proved valuable to those interested in the text as the Word of God, as they encourage a better focus on each Gospel as an independent document rather than creating an amalgam of the three.

It is tempting, but overly simplistic to dismiss the Synoptic Problem as yet another brainchild of rampant liberalism. Instead, we need to address the question. However, it is ironic to compare these New Testament criticisms with those of the Pentateuch. In the Synoptic case, we have three parallel documents, so liberals tell us there must have originally been only one (Q). In the other case, we have but one account, so of course, there must originally have been four sources (JEPD). The irony, though unintended, is glaring.

Another irony comes from those who cite Gospel parallels as evidence of their being mostly the product of man. When the various Gospels record individual facts, skeptics call them contradictions. When they record the same facts, skeptics tell us they must have copied. It is difficult to win with those rules. But unless one cedes all the rule making to skeptics, there is no real synoptic problem. Why are there three books so similar? They are individual documents written for various purposes, but each one precious on its own merits. Which one came first? Sequence is only a problem if one assumes the gospels are

(a) not really true, (b) entirely dependent on sources, and (c) un-inspired by revelation from God. The four (and the three) are unique, and each serves a special need, then and now. None is a simple history, and if they were, the other three would be superfluous. They each contain parallels as those accounts pertained to their respective messages; they differ for the same reason. And despite the strident claims, agreement does not always, or even usually, imply collusion.

...the similarities observable in the Synoptic Gospels can be accounted for only on the basis of literary dependence...Modern criticism finds it difficult to conceive that the common teaching material in Matthew and Luke could have come about in any other way than by their respective authors both using an earlier source...Q may after all be no more than the creation of modern imagination, ²

To concern ourselves primarily with the historical intricacies and linguistic niceties is to miss the point, to study the frame rather than the masterpiece. While it is interesting and sometimes informative to better know the author and audience, this is only the framework of the truth. As with all of the Gospel accounts, Mark's first and primary purpose is to reveal the savior of mankind. Whether or not these truths were first learned at the feet of Peter, whether directed to the Gentiles, or even if truly composed by Mark, are at best secondary considerations.

Though we may succeed to a certain degree, it may well be beyond the capability of this author to properly identify the major themes in this book. In a similar vein, someone once described violin playing as "rubbing horse hair across a cat's guts." While technically correct, it is an inadequate description. There are some vistas which defy the grandeur of any language. We believe this to be true of

the Bible in general, and those books describing the life of Christ in particular. A modern arrangement of themes cannot approach the power and the unsearchable riches of Christ, nor of the Holy Spirit's story as told through Mark.

The Presentation of the Christ: The Son of God

One of the great themes of Mark is found in the very first verse. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mk. 1:1) The goal of each Gospel is to "Tell Me the Story of Jesus." Each is semi-independent of the others, and Mark should not be studied as volume 2 of a four part history. Mark's portrait of Jesus differs from that of Matthew, where Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy, the Messiah. It also differs from Luke's orderly account. Though almost all of Mark's material may be found in these other two Synoptic Gospels,³ the theme is similar in some respects to that of John. There, Jesus as the living word, the eternal and Divine Son of God. Mark says little or nothing of Jesus' pre-existence, but he too focused on the Divinity of our Lord as proved by his deeds on earth. And so the Christology according to Mark is established in verse 1; he is the Son of God.

As has been frequently noted by virtually all observants, not only is Mark the briefest of the Gospels, it also seems brimming with energy. In Mark, Jesus is a man of action, scarcely finishing one great deed before beginning the next. The word "εὐθύ" (straightway, immediately)⁴ is found some forty - two times in the text. In this, some inevitably see the influence of Peter, believing the restless energy of that apostle to be in evidence in Mark's Gospel. But the deeds of the Lord in the Book of Mark are not presented as a personality trait, but rather as a matter of conviction. The doing of the deeds outweighs the fact that they were done straightway. But the dedication of the works of Jesus and the way Mark emphasizes how and

when they took place is evidence of the fact that Jesus was aware of his own nature. He must do those things, because he was the absolute and unique Son of God.

The phrase "Son of God" and other explicit claims of Sonship are found in eight verses in Mark (1:1; 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 12:6; 12:37; 13:32; 14:61). It is not only the use of the phrase but also the selection of material and the significance given to it that helps us to see the divinity of Jesus through Mark.

Mark does not contain the birth narrative, but begins with John's ministry in the wilderness. While the virgin birth is certainly proof of Jesus' divine origin, the phrase "Son of God" is better applied to an adult and public Son of God and his power.

So it is that Mark immediately begins to prove his case through the work of John. We are introduced to Jesus by Mark as a king, presented in a royal fashion through the preaching of a forerunner. As one would alert the countryside when a king intended to visit, so John lauded the coming of his master who was mightier than he (1:7). It is significant that the book is scarcely begun before claiming that Jesus is the son of God directly from Heaven. "Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (Mk. 1:11)

A statement from God's own lips is sufficient proof, but Mark then tells of the great miracles of Jesus as additional evidence of the deity of Christ. The frequency of and prominence given to miracles in the book of Mark has been well documented. Given the relative brevity of the book, Mark contains more than its share of miracles (nineteen total), with six recorded in chapters one and two. But what is the significance of these great signs?

In the Gospels, but particularly in Mark's, the miracles are different somehow. It is not only the wide range of works done in such a variety of settings, but also how absolute they were. This is not to suggest that in other

Gospels Jesus was pictured as a man with limitations, but the emphasis seems clearer on Jesus' unlimited power. Jesus is asleep in absolute confidence that his father controls the wind and the sea. Jesus removes an evil spirit after his miracle working disciples had failed. Jesus heals a woman who but touches his garment. He raises Jairus' daughter who had died. And if indeed Mark's Gospel was intended for a Greek audience, Jesus cleansed a Gentile (7:24-30) demonstrating that he was absolutely the savior of all nations.

Other clear and evidence that Jesus was the Son of God is presented in the book of Mark. "When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.'" (Mk. 2:5) This claim proved contentious to the critics of our Lord, as they said to themselves "Why does this {Man} speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk. 2:7) Were they correct? Indeed they were. While anyone may claim to forgive sins, a man who claimed this right should expect God to ignore his requests. But Jesus healed the man. If he had not been the Son of God and had pronounced forgiveness, the healing would have been nullified. With absolute confidence, Jesus connected his divinity with the sign.

In the last hours of Jesus' life there came a flurry of events proving that he was the Son of God. As he is being interrogated by the High Priest, we read

(61) But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (62) And Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mk. 14:61-62)

After all of the previous signs, Jesus will say once more to a hostile audience "I am the Son of Man and the

Son of God." The theme continues throughout the dark hours of the crucifixion. At the very moment of his death, Mark tells us the veil in the Temple was rent, surely proving this was no mere man who died. Mark also records the words of an un-named centurion. "Now when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mk. 15:39) And so by a final three witnesses in a trial of fire, Jesus is proclaimed to be the Son of God absolutely. It is then fitting that the book ends with Jesus seated in his proper place at the right hand of God the Father.

The Presentation of the Christ: The Son of Man

Jesus is also revealed as the Son of Man in Mark's Gospel. This designation is surely not unique, appearing frequently throughout the New Testament. But when one considers the Son of God who powerfully worked who is also the Son of Man, he is taught a wondrous lesson. His being the Son of Man is vital to both the doctrine of the incarnation and the Christology of Mark, virtually as much as the Son of God concept. There would never have been a controversy over his divinity had he not become flesh and dwelt among men.

Mark's Gospel is full of the kind of vivid details that help us to see this humanity in Jesus. As in other areas some claim to clearly see the Apostle Peter's influence in this factor,⁵ and perhaps the connection is warranted. But the details serve much more than to reflect the aged apostle's prowess as a storyteller. The vividness serves not to reveal the eyes of the witness, but the things he saw. These vivid details serve to demonstrate a Divine savior who was the Son of Man, not a son of Joseph.

We are suggesting a concentrated effort in the book of Mark to show how the Living Word actually conducted

himself in the flesh. It is the practical side of his philosophical pursuit by John's gospel, similar in content to the statement made to Moses: "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but {by} My name, Lord, (YHWH - DK) I was not known to them." (Exo. 6:3) This was not the first time that human ears had ever heard the name "Yahweh," but the first time God would choose to reveal his own personal nature to mankind. He did that through his close communion with his servant Moses, but he also did it through the revelation of a detailed law. In the same way, the name of God would be known through a servant, and through the teachings revealed through him. In Mark, we see the name of the father revealed in the life of a human Jesus.

Consider specific incidents which tie the Divinity to humanity in the life of Jesus. In chapter three several such details surface in his healing of a man's withered hand. Though the healing itself is proof of his being the Son of God, the courage of Jesus is impressive, in that he does not hesitate and heals him openly. As the narrative continues, we are also privy to the anger of Jesus at the hard hearts of the observers. While we recognize that righteous anger is also an attribute of Divinity, the portrait seems to make Jesus slightly more visible to us. While the Son of God is perfect and sinless, there can be no doubt that the Living Word laughed, cried, was frustrated, hurt, and experienced the full range of normal human emotions. Likewise, the courage of the master is noteworthy because of its human appeal.

Another interesting tie in between these two factors is found in the calming of the storm. One detail that is elsewhere omitted is that Jesus was asleep on a pillow (Mk. 4:38). At the conclusion, there can be little doubt that the story is cited to prove the limitless power of this Eternal One, as the disciples marvel "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mk. 4:41) But as the story

begins, we see a man who is in desperate need of some rest. Fatigue is a human quality, but some would point to his sleep as evidence of his Divine power, an absolute trust in his father, a faith beyond human capability. But it is not true, this trust was neither miraculous nor a "Son of God" issue. The Son of Man is trusting in the face of danger, just as any of his brethren could have done. In fact, he himself rebuked them for this very failing. "Why are you so fearful? How {is it} that you have no faith?" (Mk. 4:40)

The third example is that of Jesus claiming that he was "Lord of the Sabbath." But in making that claim of authority, Jesus did not call himself the Son of God, but rather the "Son of Man." (Mk. 2:28). Clearly, they are one and the same. Just as importantly, they can co-exist since the Son of Man chose to obey rather than simply override the Law.

The final example of Jesus being portrayed as the Son of Man who was also Divine is found under the general heading of service. In ch. 8:31, Jesus began to teach the disciples that he Son of Man must suffer many things. In both chapters 9 and ten we read of Jesus' teaching how that greatness is achieved through service in the kingdom of God. In summing up these lessons, Jesus states "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mk. 10:45)

Through a rapid fire style of presentation and a similar breathtaking pace, the book of Mark reveals to us a unique savior as characterized by his unique qualities. The Christology revealed there is unmistakable: Jesus was the Son. His deeds proved his claims.

The Proclamation of the Christ

Though there is always considerable room for variation in emphases, one powerful theme in the gospel of Mark seems largely ignored. Mark's gospel must also be read under the general heading of the preaching of Jesus. We do

not intend to suggest that there is a preponderance of the actual sermon material preached by our Lord. Rather, it is the power of the preaching of Jesus and his apostles; it is the absolute unity of true preaching that finds its beginning in the wilderness with John the Baptist and concludes with the great commission; it is the consistency between the message and lifestyle.

Given such lofty themes as Jesus being the Son of God, the notion of preaching seems pedestrian by comparison. But this is the very point. It is through the humble medium of preaching (and the humble tool of preachers) that this message will ever be learned. So as Mark sets about to show by the actions of Christ that he was all he claimed to be, he also shows us how the world would learn that soul-saving fact.

In the very first chapter of Mark, the word "preach" or variants thereof are found on at least five occasions. In verse four, John comes preaching. In verse seven, we have a description of John's preaching and his subject. Then in verse fourteen, Jesus public ministry is defined as the time that he began to preach. In verse 21, Jesus entered the synagogues and taught, while in verse 39, Jesus preached throughout all Galilee. And this is just the first chapter.

At the beginning of Mark, we have this flurry of emphasis on preaching, but the subject continues to surface in a number of ways. For instance, the timing of the preaching of Jesus comes under scrutiny. At the beginning, John's task was to preach in preparation for the coming of the Lord. Jesus himself will silence those who threaten the timing of his ministry through misguided preaching (Mk. 7:36). The disciples are cautioned that they should not preach until the time was correct as well. "Then He charged them that they should tell no one about Him." (Mk. 8:30) The demons were forbidden to tell the good news at all. (Mk. 3:11-12)

When the time was as it should be, Jesus commissions his disciples to preach as he has trained and encouraged them to do. Finally, as Jesus prepares to leave the earth, he gives the Great Commission, an order centered on preaching (Mk. 16:15). Viewing this pattern in this fashion, the power of preaching in Mark is impossible to miss.

Though Mark is usually described as being full of actions and deeds, and though relatively few (four) parables of Jesus are recorded, the prominence of preaching is undeniable. But how does this fit with the themes we have already identified?

The answer is best demonstrated by a verse that many identify as the crux in purpose of the entire book: the confrontation at Caesarea Philippi. "He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." (Mk. 8:29) It is here that the true nature of Jesus is plainly demonstrated in the description of a disciple. Jesus clearly anticipated that this proclamation would be the cornerstone of their preaching, and that this conviction must be taught in face of varied opinions. It mattered not who thought what of Jesus, the truth that he was the Son of God, must be preached by disciples.

It is from this preaching that the facts of Jesus, his true nature would be known. If Mark is a book of action, it is also a call to action. Through preaching, the world could come to the Christ, the Son of God. And the disciples are called to the action of preaching as well.

From the beginning of the book unto the end, Jesus is the Christ, worthy of belief. He is the Son of God, full of Power. He is the Son of Man, the servant of all. He is the sermon which will save the world. That is the Christ according to the book of Mark.

Endnotes

- 1 Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, 1953) p 155
- 2 Guthrie, Donald *New Testament Introduction* (Inter-Varsity Press Downers Grove IL, 1983) p 132
- 3 Brownrigg, Ronald and Joan Comay *Who's Who in the Bible* (Bonanza Books New York, 1980) p 276
- 4 Strong, James *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Abingdon Press Nashville, 1978) p33 -Greek Dictionary
- 5 Vincent, Marvin R *Word Studies in the New Testament* (McDonald Publishing Company McLean Va) p 157

Additional Bibliography

- Brown, Raymond E. *The Birth of the Messiah* (Doubleday New York, 1993)
- McMillan, Earle *The Gospel According to Mark* (Sweet Publishing Co. Austin TX, 1973)
- Stonehouse, Ned B. *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels to Christ* (Baker Book House Grand Rapids, 1979)
- Stonehouse, Ned B. *The Witness of the Synoptic Gospels to Christ* (Baker Book House Grand Rapids, 1979)

Biographical Sketch

Previous biographical sketches have indicated that Dan was born in Riverview Michigan, the son of Bob and Doris Kessinger. However, it shall heretofore be reported that Dan was born south of the Mason Dixon line and prefers to stay there. He considers himself a “good ole boy,” and has never said “You’uns” in his life, preferring the grammatically correct and Biblical (Ep. 4:6) “you all.” He likes Southern ballads and fiddle music, not Northern Polkas and accordions. He roots for the Dallas Cowboys, not the Detroit Lions. He despises hockey. If there is any more doubt about whether Dan is Northern or Southern, please see Dan for more further details. After brief

boyhood stints in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Georgia, his family returned to West Virginia to stay in 1973. He and his wife, the former Mary Amy West have two boys, D.J., and Thomas.

Dan graduated from Walton High School in Roane County WV, and attended Ohio Valley College where he earned associate and bachelor degrees in Biblical Science.

Dan preached his first sermon in the Spring of 1982 at the Mt. Zion church of Christ in Walker WV. He has served congregations in Belle, Long Valley, Gandeeville, Proctor, and since February of 1994, the Dewey Ave. church of Christ in St. Marys.

In addition to his local work (including a weekly radio program), Dan conducts gospel meetings and appears on lecture programs each year. He is a frequent contributor to religious journals, and is the author of "A Cloak of Malice." He has worked with WV Christian Youth Camp since 1984, and West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995.

Popularity of Jesus

Emanuel Daugherty

Introduction

The Book of Mark is exciting, action-filled book. One of the features of this precious gospel account is that the writer is showing the continuous movement and active, busy schedule of Jesus. Over and over again Mark uses the word “straightway” showing the vigor and enthusiasm which underscored the Master’s work. One notes at the very beginning of the book that it is quite a different approach than Matthew, Luke and John. Whereas Matthew begins with the genealogy and birth of Jesus, Luke with the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, and John with Jesus as the pre-existent Word in eternity, Jesus is introduced by Mark immediately in the first chapter as being of age and already at work.

John himself was a very popular preacher (Matthew 3:1-12). With his rugged appearance, fiery preaching, and uncompromising attitude John was able to draw the multitudes. All the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem came to hear him (Mark 1:5). However, John's work was preparatory and temporary; he reached his peak quickly. Upon inquiry of the Jews he had said “I am not the Christ.” (John 1:20) and pointed men to Jesus. “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30).

But the popularity of Jesus soon grew well beyond that of John as one can see from Mark’s account (1:28, 33, 37, 2:2, 13, 15, 3:7, 10, 20, 4:1; 12:37). The early disciples eagerly reported “We have found the Messiah.. Come and see” (John 1:45). The popularity of Jesus hinged on two things: His preaching and His miracles. Like John, Jesus did not attract the crowds by being a compromiser and crowd pleaser. Jesus’ preaching was what men needed to

hear not what they wanted to hear. “Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (1:14). It was straight forward and power packed. “...and they were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes” (1:22). In a time when men today are turning to entertainment and gimmicks to draw the crowds into the church we need to take a lesson from Jesus and John. Let us faithfully proclaim the true gospel of Christ! (Romans 1:16-17).

The miracles Jesus performed were a verification of His authority. They were His credentials proving His Sonship (John 20:30-31). But Jesus would not allow Himself to be known as a mere wonder worker. Jesus looked on the miracles, signs and wonders as incidental to His teaching. Note the miracles and amazement of the people to them in the section from 1:23-35 and Jesus reaction to Peter’s statement “Everyone is looking for you” (37). Jesus said, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth” (38). When the time for miracles passed, it was the preaching that would continue to be a part of God’s plan of salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21).

Truly Mark was not exaggerating when he said “They came to him from all quarters” (1:45). In the context, “all quarters” has reference to geographic localities. This applies not only geographically but in several other ways. Let us look at the popularity of Jesus as presented in Mark’s account of the life of Christ.

The Popularity of Jesus Drew All Men To Him

Geographically, men and women from all over the region came to hear the wonderful words of Jesus (Mark 3:7-8). Even this was a matter of prophecy.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ³And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:2-3).

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.” (Isaiah 11:10).

“And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.” (Isaiah 62:2).

Haggai, speaking by inspiration, said of the Messiah “And I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:7).

The Gentiles did seek Jesus. There was the Greek woman, a Syro-Phoenician, who came seeking Jesus to have Him cast out a demon from her daughter (Mark 7:26). John the apostle reports, certain Greeks approached Philip and ask to have an audience with Jesus saying, “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:20-22). This antagonized the Jews who said “behold the whole world is gone after him.” After Pentecost the spread of Christianity was rapid (Acts 1:8, Colossians 1:23); first in Asia, Europe, and Africa and eventually all over world (Matthew 28:18-20).

Those who came to Jesus were from every strata of the social sphere. There were rabbis, doctors, lawyers, soldiers, statesmen, merchants, rich men, poor men, and beggars. There were adulterers, thieves, blasphemers, murderers, idolaters, sinners of every stripe; outcasts of society.

There were the blind, lame, deaf, sick, lonely, grieving, demon-possessed, widowed, literally “sheep with no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). There was blind Bartimaeus and Luke the physician, Nicodemus the rabbi and Joseph of Arimethea the rich man, Lydia the merchant and the widow of Nain, Sergius Paulus the statesman and the murderers of Jesus, Cornelius the soldier and the grieving father of Jairus, Matthew the tax collector and Peter, Andrew, James and John the fishermen. There was Simon the Zealot and they of Caesar’s household. They crossed every racial and social barrier. They crossed both ends of the social scale, and all points in between.

Jesus broke down all the barriers which divide men! “He is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Ephesians 2:14).

Religiously, there were men and women from the Jewish sects - Scribes, Lawyers, Elders of the Jews, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots. Later there were pagan idol worshipers, whether Greek or Roman or heathen - Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Diana, all the gods and idols of men bow to Christ. Foreigners and social outcasts would be welcome in the church of Christ. Note the prophecy in Isaiah 56:3-8.

“Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even

unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.”

Truly Jesus showed himself to be the Savior for all men!

Jesus Was Popular Because of A Common Problem

Sin is the first and greatest problem the world has ever known. It is responsible for all the sorrow, sickness and death that has come into the world both physically and spiritually. It is responsible for the greed, lust, envy, strife and warfare. It is sin that causes the division between husbands and wives, parents and children, labor and management, nation and nation, man and man, man and God! SIN IS THE GREAT SEPARATER! (James 4:1-2, Isaiah 59:1-2).

It is sin that defiles, abominates and alienates us from God.

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the

righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezekiel 18:20).

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written,

There is none righteous, no, not one;

There is none that understandeth,

There is none that seeketh after God;

They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable;

There is none that doeth good, no, not, so much as one:

Their throat is an open sepulchre;

With their tongues they have used deceit:

The poison of asps is under their lips:

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Their feet are swift to shed blood;

Destruction and misery are in their ways;

And the way of peace have they not known:

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:9-18, 23).

The word “religion” means “to bind back, tie together.” Only the religion of Jesus can bring men back and bind them to God.

Every person that came to Jesus then and everyone who comes to him now must admit that he has the same problem that has plagued mankind from the Garden of Eden. I AM A SINNER AND I HAVE NO WHERE ELSE TO TURN: I MUST COME TO JESUS OR DIE IN MY SIN. “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 8:24, 21).

Because Men Came to Jesus They Got Results

Remission of sins. It was now Paul the Apostle instead of Saul the Persecutor. It was no longer Nicodemus the rabbi, but Jesus the Master. It was no longer Cornelius the soldier of Caesar, but the soldier of Christ. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were now fishers of men instead of fishers of fish. The Greeks and heathen no longer served dumb idols, but the Living God. It was no longer the murders of Jesus of Nazareth, but the servants of the Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. It was no longer the slave Onesimus and the master Philemon, but brother and brother in Christ.

They all had a new social standing. They were not any longer divided socially, religiously, politically or racially—**THEY WERE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS**

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:27-29, 1 Corinthians 12:13).

They all had a new standing religiously. Not only were they now ONE, but they were one IN CHRIST. In Christ where men have the right to all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). In Christ where we are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Christ where there is no more condemnation (Romans 8:1). In Christ where we have forgiveness and redemption (Ephesians 1:7).

Conclusion

No matter who we are, from all quarters and all walks of life we must come to Jesus to be saved (John 6:68, 14:6).

Coming to Jesus is accomplished in five simple steps:
Hearing the gospel of salvation (Romans 1:16, 10:17).
Believing in Christ as the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

Confessing His name before men (Acts 4:12, Matthew 16:16).
Repenting of sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30, 2:38).
Being baptized to wash away sins. (Acts 2:38, 22:16).

Won't you come to Jesus TODAY?

Biographical Sketch

Born: Philippi, WV January 12, 1939

Baptized: February, 5, 1950 by Miris Wright in Warren, OH

Married: Judith R. Null, July 16, 1958

Children: Bruce, preaches Beville Rd church of Christ Daytona Beach, FL; Mrs. Ramona (Stephan) Haynes, deacon, Alkire Rd church of Christ, Grove City, OH; Mrs. Rachel (Maken) Cornell, church of Christ, Alkire Road, Grove City, OH; Mrs. Rebecca (Bradford) Poe, husband preaches Northridge church of Christ, Dayton, OH

Grandchildren: Eight

Education: Graduated from Braceville HS, Trumbull County, Ohio 1956, Memphis School of Preaching 1968, Alabama Christian School of Religion (Southern Christian University) 1982

Preaching: Alkire Road Grove City, OH 1968-1989; Dewey Avenue St Marys, WV 1989-1994

School of Preaching: Taught nine years at Central Ohio School for Preachers and Teachers, Columbus, OH; Currently serving as Director, **West Virginia School of Preaching** since February 1994

Gospel Meetings: West Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee

Blaspheming of the Holy Spirit

David Stevens

The *hard sayings* of Jesus are identified as such for two reasons: (1) some are difficult to understand and (2) some are difficult to practice because they demand so much of us. The teaching of Christ concerning the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a hard saying due to the difficulty in understanding the passage. I have read extensively in preparation for this lecture. There seems to be no end to the explanations commentators give to this saying of Christ. I, along with many others, are humbled by the task of ascertaining precisely what Jesus said and what He meant by what He said concerning this topic. Armed with humility of heart and deep respect for God's Word, I submit the following analysis of Mark 3:22-30.

Background

The early chapters of the book of Mark record the beginnings of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. He is involved in the preparatory work of the kingdom. He is preaching, healing and selecting His future apostles. In the course of His work, He cast out demons (Mk. 3:11). He also empowered His apostles so that they could cast out demons (Mk. 3:14,15).

These miracles were signs that Jesus was the promised Messiah and that His kingdom was at hand. Christ was demonstrating His power over Satan—a prelude to the crushing blow He would give Satan by means of the Cross (Heb. 2:14, I John 3:8).

On one occasion, the scribes and Pharisees, who continually sought out ways to discredit Jesus' work, attributed the power by which He cast out demons to Beelzebub. Matthew and Mark share this context—the *Beelzebub charge* (Matt. 12:24-37; Mark 3:22-30). Luke

manifests a different context. He uses the phrase in a series of sayings addressed to the disciples about the need for fearless confession of Jesus. They are to trust in the Providence of God without fearing what men will do to them. (Luke 12:10).

In the remainder of this lecture, we will consider the *accusation* of the Jewish leaders, the *answer* of Jesus and His powerful *admonition* to them.

The Accusation

The accusers on this occasion (scribes and Pharisees) made the journey from Jerusalem to Galilee where Jesus was preaching and working. They were probably sent from the capital by their party to spy upon Jesus and secure evidence against Him. They had already become His enemies and sought to discredit His work.

The accusation they hurled at Jesus was diabolical. They said, “He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.” They leveled this devilish charge against Jesus because of their fear that He was dispelling the unbelief of the multitudes who had gathered to hear Him and witness His great power. They could not deny the miracles that He performed. They could only attempt to discredit them by attributing them to the power of Satan.

Beelzebub is a Jewish name for Satan. It is not clear when this designation developed. It is possible that the Jews adopted this name as a vile name for Satan due to its strong connection with paganism. *Beelzebub* (from II Kings 1:2) is the Syriac and Latin Vulgate (hence KJV) rendering of the Greek New Testament’s *Beelzeboul* probably meaning “lord of the height” (*prince of the air*—Eph. 2:2).

Often those who attempted to discredit the character and work of Jesus resorted to poor logic. Such is the case in

this instance. The absurdity of this accusation is easily exposed by the Lord.

The Answer

Jesus' reply was given in the form of parables. The word *parable* indicates *that which is placed beside for the sake of comparison*. Jesus used pungent words and precise logic to expose the inconsistencies of the scribes and Pharisees. These short parabolic quips concern: Satan's casting out Satan; a kingdom divided against itself; and a house divided against itself (Mark 3:23-26).

First, Jesus poses a question: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Is Satan against Satan? Does Satan seek to destroy his own kingdom? The question points out the incongruity of thought required in making the charge stated by the scribes. Satan would not work to destroy his own kingdom.

Second, Jesus illustrates the absurdity. "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." Jesus speaks of a kingdom because the scribes had referred to Beelzebub as "the prince of the devils." What Jesus asserts is the universal experience of men which no man would think of contradicting. To show the universal application of this maxim, Jesus uses a second illustration—that of a house divided against itself. The maxim applies to kingdoms, houses (households) and to every organization. Lenski points out that Jesus actually uses *understatement* in His reply. He purposely understates the case to maximize the force of His own logic in countering the charge made by the Scribes. "When a kingdom (or house, v. 25) is split in two, one half destroys the other, and both end in ruin. But the assertion of the Jews expects people to believe something that is more impossible, namely that the ruler of a kingdom is himself divided from his kingdom..." (*Interpretation of Mark*, 150).

Jesus makes the application of these illustrations in verse 26. If Satan is against Satan the inevitable result is that he cannot stand (he will be destroyed by his own hands).

The very thought is absurd! Jesus has effectively reduced the charge of the scribes to an absurdity and defeated it.

Now, He proceeds to teach the importance of His power already demonstrated (v. 27). “No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.” Jesus was at that very time involved in binding (limiting and thus overcoming) the strong man (Satan). The fact that Jesus cast out demons proved that His authority and power was greater than Satan’s was. The *miracles* demonstrated Jesus’ true identity as the Son of God and Messiah. The *signs* indicated the approaching kingdom of heaven and pointed to the complete overthrow of Satan’s kingdom by the redemptive work of Christ.

Verse 27 is again parabolic language. Complete victory precedes plundering the vanquished. Christ would utterly defeat Satan and spoil his house! Jesus accomplished this great work of Redemption with His death upon the cross. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

The Admonition

In Mark 3:28,29, Jesus gives a solemn warning. He states, “Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.”

The word blaspheme derives “either from *blax*, sluggish, stupid, or, probably, from *blapto*, to injure, and

pheme, speech...” (W. E. Vine, I, 131). The word refers to “injurious speech.” In the New Testament, “blasphemy” is practically confined to speech defamatory of the Divine Majesty (Ibid.).

Jesus made this statement to warn the scribes who had leveled the charge against Him that His power derived from Satan. Jesus’ power derived from His own nature and the Holy Spirit which He possessed without measure.

Such defamatory speech revealed a condition of heart that, if not already, was on the brink of disaster. Jesus’ speech indicates that there is still hope for these men, but He clearly indicates that the condition of their heart in manifesting such unbelief could result in an eternal sin (one for which they would not be forgiven). Such impenitent hearts would reject the only hope available to them—the redemptive work of Christ sealed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The “sin against the Holy Spirit” is, in principle, the rejection of the revelation which the Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, made, first through our Lord, and then through His representatives. It is the denial of the Spirit’s message initially by direct inspiration, and then through the written Word of God, the practical effect of which is the rejection of the deity of our Lord, the repudiation of His sacrificial death, and the rejection of the atonement.

In making this statement, Jesus envisioned the time when the Comforter would accomplish His Work as part of the Scheme of Redemption. The Holy Spirit was primarily responsible for revealing and inspiring the New Covenant. To blaspheme His work, and so reject His law results in disaster for the soul.

The following observations are given to help clarify this statement by Jesus even further:

(1). The statement of the scribes attributing Christ’s miraculous power to Beelzebub was directed toward Jesus.

(2). The warning Jesus gave in His own defense was also calculated to protect His disciples from such charges when they worked by the power of the same Spirit.

(3). “It goes without saying that no interpretation of the saying can be acceptable that is out of harmony with the general tenor of Jesus’ teaching on the subject of sin and forgiveness; the single saying in which He speaks of sin for which no forgiveness is possible must clearly be interpreted in the light of His general attitude to the question of Divine forgiveness. The attitude of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32) is sufficient proof that Jesus thought of God as ever graciously ready, and anxious, to forgive the sins of men. If, therefore, He held that there is such a thing as unforgivable sin, we may be sure that he regarded the impossibility of its forgiveness as being due, not to God’s unwillingness to grant, but to the sinner’s incapacity to receive forgiveness” (Owen Evans, *Unforgivable Sin*, Expository Times 68:240-244, May ’57). The incapacity to receive forgiveness is due to impenitence. Forgiveness is predicated upon repentance. When the heart is so hardened in unbelief that repentance is not forthcoming, then divine forgiveness will not be given.

(4). One must not interpret these passages in such a way as to contradict or diminish in any way the atoning power of Christ’s blood. To do so, would be to make the *words* of Jesus contradict His divine *work* in Redemption.

(5). One must not interpret these passages in such a way as to make Jesus contradict Himself in this immediate context. Jesus said that He would enter the strong man’s house (defeat Satan) and spoil his goods –v. 27. He would not then assert that there is in Satan’s house a sin so great that His (Christ’s) blood could not remit it!

(6). One must not interpret Jesus’ statement in Mark. 3:29 in such a way as to contradict plain passages of

Scripture such as Eph. 1:7; Heb. 8:12; I John 1:9; 2:1,2; 3:8 and a host of others.

The dispelling of evil spirits was a sign or indication of the “breaking in” or “coming” of the spiritual kingdom of God. Thus, the scribes and Pharisees who misappropriately attributed the power of Christ to an evil spirit unwittingly advanced Satan’s cause. Jesus’ warning to them was a powerful effort to stop this and correct the misapprehension.

Biographical Sketch

David was born April 19, 1956 at Barrackville, WV (Marion County). He is the son of Earl and Vonda Stevens of Fairmont, WV. He was baptized into Christ May 3, 1969 and began preaching at the age of 15.

He graduated from St. Marys High School, St. Marys, WV in 1974. He furthered his training at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg Community College and Fairmont State College, Fairmont, WV. He has also completed a Masters in Science in Ministry from Southern Christian University, Montgomery, Alabama (1999).

On Jan. 7, 1978, he married Kathy Stewart of St. Marys, WV. They have two children: Rachel Lynn and Scott Andrew.

David began preaching in July of 1971 at Moresville, WV in a meeting held with his dad (Earl) and his brother (Steve). He has held full-time works at New Lexington, OH (1978-1991) and Groveport, OH (1991 to the present).

He has been writing a monthly article entitled “Gems From the Greek” for *Therefore Stand*, edited by Terry Varner, for the past ten years. Also, January 1, 1997, he became the associate editor of *Therefore Stand*.

He published a book with his father and brother in 1995 entitled, *100 Years Preaching*.

David has been preaching the Gospel for thirty years. He resides at 7396 Lithopolis Rd., Groveport, Ohio 43125.

Parable of the Sower

Doug Minton

Jesus began again to teach by the seaside and there gathered a multitude to listen to him. There were so many people that Jesus had to enter into a boat. He used Parables to teach people so they could understand. Webster defines a parable as a “short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude”. He used many stories that the people could relate to that he might be able to bring forth the truth. Parables were instruments of teaching that Jesus used to make it easier for his disciples, apostles, and the people he was teaching to see the truth. This method of teaching also served as a way to keep the truth from the insincere.

Jesus Stated

A sower went out to sow the seed. This seed fell by the way side and the birds devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, but the sun came up and the plant died because of a lack of earth to spread its roots. Some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it so it could yield no fruit. Others fell on good ground and the seed grew and increased and brought forth plenty.

The Sower And The Seed

Jesus used this because it was a familiar site and the people could easily relate to a sower. Here Jesus is relating to the people that a sower is a teacher of the truth (verse 14). Jesus stated in Matthew 28:19 “go ye therefore, and teach all nations...”. We now see the seed that we are to plant is the truth. John 8:32 “and ye shall know the truth, and truth shall make you free”. What is this truth that the sower must sow: John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth”. Let us look at the seeds that we

plant in our everyday life. If I plant apple seeds it will only produce apples, corn seeds will only produce corn and tomato seeds will produce tomato's only. God so states this in the beginning in Genesis 1:11 "God said let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed in itself, upon the earth and it was so". There could be no Christian without the word of God. The germ of life for a Christian is found in John 6:63 "it is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you, they are spirit, and they are life".

The Soil

If the sower is to be successful then he must have good soil and he must work the soil so it will be receptive to the seed. When Jesus speaks of the soil he is speaking about the heart (mind) of mankind. Luke 8:11,12 states that if we do not prepare the hearts (minds) of mankind to receive the word it will not grow, just as the seed will not grow if the soil is not prepared.

Way Side (Verse 4)

The wayside could be the path that leads to the field, where the ground is packed down because of travel and is not suitable for planting. It can be said that Pharaoh was this type of ground. It did not matter how much God showed him his power, his heart became harder. Jesus said in verse 15 "the word has been sown but Satan cometh and taketh it away". Remembering the words of Agrippa "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Paul's commission to be a sower began on the road to Damascus. His account in Acts 26:16-18 shows that Christ intended for Paul to be a sower of the word. Paul asked Agrippa if he believed, and then he answered his own question, "I know that thou believest" (Acts 26:27). If we

do not keep the word of God in our hearts, then it will not produce salvation. The germ of life will eternally die.

Stony Ground (Verse 5)

In preparing the soil it must be worked where the roots can grow deep and feed the plant above. In the stony ground the plant comes up and dies because it has no roots to support itself. This represents people who stand for a while but allows the pressure of life to drive them away. These are people who care about pleasures of life such as popularity, money and power. Rich men and women die even though they have the advantages of the best doctors and hospitals. Paul spoke of Demas in II Timothy 4:10 “as forsaking me, having loved this present world”. Demas allowed the world and the things in the world to entice him away from the word of God. We must have our guard up everyday of our life or we could become like Demas. Satan is working extra hard on Christians. We must see that this parable teaches that we can fall from the grace of God and that if we want life everlasting we must be faithful unto death (Revelations 2:10 “...be thou faithful unto death, and I give thee a crown of life”). This is why Jesus said when the Sun (meaning the trials and temptations of life) comes our way we will wither and die (verse 6).

Thorn Ground (Verse 7)

These are people whom after becoming Christians allow the “...cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word and it becometh unfruitful” (verse 19). We can see this attitude in Judas. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son which betray him, “why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” John 12:4,5. Judas could not see what the woman had intended because of his blindness and love of money. This is the man that sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Where was his heart and who had control of it at this point of his life. Do we really think he was concerned about the poor? We must watch and guard against this in our lives today especially in this fast free world. In this kind of ground the plant lives but they will not produce fruits because the thorns will rob them of their strength. Matthew 6:24 “No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”.

The Good Ground

This is ground that has been worked and well prepared. There are no rocks, weeds, and thorns in this soil. This is the soil that will produce a Christian, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

Paul told Timothy how to grow and stay faithful “study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Tim. 2:15) He also spoke to Timothy and explained to him what a Christian should do to keep his soil ready for the seed. II Timothy 2:2 “and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Examples of good ground are Timothy’s Mother and Grandmother, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy Grandmother Lois, and thy Mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. (II Tim. 2:20) Good soil will produce some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Conclusion

We are now looking at eternity in one of two places. Heaven or Hell, the choice lies with how we prepare our ground. II Timothy 4:2 “Preach the Word: be instant in

season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Longsuffering and doctrine”. Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”.

Jesus gives us warning throughout the New Testament that we must plant the seed of the gospel deep within our hearts. As an illustration, my wife and I planted tomato plants in five buckets. We went to the store and bought the best soil that we could buy and planted the plants in different size buckets. One of the buckets was much smaller than the other four. We went out and bought tomato plant food to put in the soil. I would go out in the evening after the sun went down and would water the plants. This was done for several months and the plants in the larger buckets grew. I would also care for the tomato plants by suckering them. This is pulling off sprouts that will take the strength from the plants & cause them not to produce like they should. The plant in the small bucket died even though I cared for it as I did the others. This is because even though I had good soil and plant food, the roots did not have enough room to grow. We may read the Bible everyday, but if we do not do that which is written within the Bible we will die just as the tomato plant did. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 we must be doers of his word. In John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments”. The key word here is keep. Matthew 15:13 “...every plant, which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up”.

Biography

King James Version of the Bible
Youngs Analytical Concordance
Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

The Widow's Two Mites

E. Claude Gardner

Mark 12:41-44

The Lord's church does not tithe because it is not a part of the gospel, but this does not excuse the small percentage the church gives. Knowledgeable researchers believe the average is three or four percent given by the Lord's church. More teaching needs to be given to impress generosity and to help Christians to love to give. The example of the poor widow will cause one to reevaluate the giving budget to give more liberally.

When Jesus observed the giving of the rich and the poor widow it was on Tuesday of His last week before His crucifixion on Friday. Just prior to this occasion he had been engaged in heavy controversy with Jewish leaders. He now settled in the Outer Court of the Temple to see what was contributed into the treasury.

THE CONTRIBUTION BOXES

Located in the court of the Gentile which enabled women to enter and contribute were thirteen boxes to receive contributions. The funds were used for the temple service for maintenance, etc. J.B. Lightfoot stated that the boxes were designated for specific uses. He said, "Nine chests were for the appointed temple tribute, and for the sacrifice-tribute; that is, money-gifts instead of sacrifices; four chests for free will offerings, for wood, for incense, temple decoration, and burnt offerings." To make a gift was a requirement of the Old Covenant. The Law required a free will offering when they came to the annual festivals (Deut.16:17).

THE RICH GAVE

The rich Pharisees, Saducees and scribes made a large contribution. They gave out of their “abundance”--that which they did not need. In that they “gave much” it made an impact on what could be accomplished with their funds. Jesus knew what amount they gave because he was deity and not by natural observation. Jesus knew their hearts and He knew them as hypocrites. Their gift was not pleasing to God because the motive was wrong. Paul taught that love must prompt the gift.”And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing”(1 Cor.13:3).

Rich people are not automatically condemned to hell. Their giving must be both quality and quantity. Paul tells how wealthy Christians can go to heaven. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19). One measure of our giving is how much we have left after we make a contribution. Paul charged, But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”(2 Cor. 9:6-7).

POOR WIDOW

All widows are not poor but this one was. Without embarrassment she brought her two mites, the smallest of all coins in use. She gave as a duty even though she had no knowledge as to whether the money would be misused. She

gave “all her living that she had (Lk. 21:4). A person may volunteer to help a cause by saying, “I will give a widow’s mite” but that is not the case unless the individual is being divested of everything. The widow gave more than all the rich men.

The widow’s gift was based on self-denial and sacrifice. Christians should learn to sacrifice and deny self in order to advance the kingdom of God. David is an example of this spirit. When God required David to offer a sacrifice Araunah offered to give him the needs for making the offering. David rejected it by saying, “Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver” (2 Sam. 24:24). An appropriate question for us: What comforts or luxuries have we foregone in order to give to the Lord’s work?

We also learn from the poor widow that no gift is too small if it is given with the right motive and according to one’s ability. God expects us to give as prospered (1 Cor.16:2). If we do not prosper but little then God is pleased with little.

She had her priority right. She put her duty to give ahead of her survival. Some have the practice of setting aside their contribution before dispensing funds for any purpose.

Her strong faith is evident. She surely trusted God to provide for her livelihood and to supply her wants. The Bible abounds in promises to those who are faithful. “I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psa. 37:25). Jesus promised But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Mt. 6:33). Solomon assured, Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy

winepresses shall burst with new wine”(Prov. 3:9-10). To God’s people in the Old Testament who were required to tithe He said, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10). It is lack of faith for a person to say, “If I and my family give generously to the church and the Lord’s work we would starve to death.” It is a challenge to try giving generously for twelve months and see the difference it will make. One will not be in poverty.

One observed that the widow gave everything voluntarily that Jesus commanded of the rich young ruler. Jesus said to him, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” {Mt.19:21-22).

JESUS SAW

Jesus saw how everyone gave and the issued a compliment of the poor widow who gave only one-third or one-half a cent. He was pleased with her but troubled with the rich. This event highlights that He is observing what we give to the Lord s Cause in different ways. One may hide it from others but not from the all-seeing eye of God.

Christians learn that giving is an act of worship the same as the Lord’s Supper, singing prayer and teaching. Giving is called fellowship, in the worship pattern in the Jerusalem church. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Giving was a part of the first day of the week regular assembly. Paul wrote, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in

store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come”(1 Cor.16:2).

When Jesus taught the disciples the great lesson on sacrifice he gave it great emphasis by prefacing His words with, “Verily I say unto you.” It is significant that in the book of Mark Jesus used this expression 13 times (Mk.3:28; 8:12; 9:1,41; 10:25, 29; 11:23; 12:43; 13:30; 14:9,18,25,30). What Jesus taught was extremely important and we should give heed.

Today we cannot observe what people give but those who serve as treasurers have a good idea from counting the money that 90% of the contribution is made by 10% of the members. The ten percent need to be taught more fully. They should learn that covetousness is idolatry. (Co1.3:5). There is to be “willing mind” as Paul states, “For if there be first a willing mind, It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not”(2 Cor. 8:12).

It should be noted that when Jesus saw the error of the rich men he did not go to them and try to correct them. Rather he went to the disciples and taught them the lesson on sacrifice. Why did he refrain from going to the rich? Was it likely that Jesus knew they were calloused, hypocritical and fixed in mind that it would be useless. We remember that Jesus once spoke of casting your “pearls before swine” (Mt. 7:6). We see God’s attitude toward those who are hardened (Hosea 4:17-18; 2 Thes. 2:10-11; Acts 14:16).

WE MAY LEARN

Commentator Albert Barnes lists several appropriate lessons that can be considered from the story of the widow’s mites.

1st. That God is pleased with offerings made to him and his cause. 2d. That it is our duty to devote our property to God. We received it from him, and we shall not employ it in a proper manner unless

we feel that we are stewards, and ask of him what we shall do with it. Jesus approved the conduct of all who had given money to the treasury. 3d. That the highest evidence of love to the cause of religion is not the amount given, but the amount compared with our means. 4th. That it may be proper to give all our property to God, and to depend on his providence for the supply of our wants. 5th. That God does not despise the humblest offering, if made in sincerity. 6th. That there are none who may not in this way show their love to the cause of religion....7th. That it is every man's duty to inquire, not how much he gives, but how much compare with what he has ; how much self-denial he practices, and what is the motive with which it is done. 8th. We may remark that few practice self-denial for the purpose of charity. Most give of their abundance--that is, what they can spare without feeling it, and many feel that this is the same as throwing it away. Among all the thousands who give to these objects, how few deny themselves of one comfort, even the least, that they may advance the kingdom of Christ.¹

Biographical Sketch

E. Claude Gardner, preacher, Christian educator, writer and community leader. He began preaching at age 15 and has preached in local and foreign evangelism in several states and a number of foreign countries. He has preached in over 350 gospel meetings and he has written over 400 articles for gospel papers. In 43 years he was a teacher and administrator at Freed-Hardeman University, Henderson, Tn. He was President of Freed-Hardeman for 20 1 /2 years

¹ Albert Barnes, Barnes on the New Testament, Matthew-Mark, Baker Book House, p. 377

and two years as Chancellor. He is now President Emeritus. As an advisor he is Chancellor of Crowley's Ridge College, Georgia Christian School, and Kakinada (India) College of Preaching.

He is married to the former Delorese Tatum and they have four children and six grandchildren.

Growth of the Kingdom

Bob Winton

The greatest preacher and teacher of all time, Jesus Christ, used parables with great effect. The Lord's parable of "The Growth of the Kingdom" (Mark 4:26-29) is the subject assigned for this study. This is one of the many parables related by our Lord during his public ministry. During one stage of his work, it was said that he spoke in parabolic language exclusively. "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:34-35).

Those who heard him were impressed greatly with both the authority and clarity with which he spoke. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). "...Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

Our Lord's beautiful and poignant parables have enriched our understanding of God's will, and have embellished our language. The story of the Good Samaritan is so well known that we use the expression, "Good Samaritan," to describe anyone who comes to the aid of someone in need. The parables of the Sower, Prodigal Son, and the Lost Sheep are also very widely known in the western world.

Parables were stories that grew out of real life. They either did happen or could happen. They were drawn from common experiences of humanity, and were used to illustrate some important spiritual truth. They were used for several reasons:

1. **To reveal truth.** This is the pre-eminent purpose of all inspired writings, including parables. Some familiar situation was placed beside some truth for the purpose of illustrating and teaching an important lesson. The story of the Foolish Farmer is just such a case (Luke 12:13-20), having this application: “So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

2. **To immortalize truth.** Some parables have such graphic imagery that the truth presented is fastened so tightly to the heart that it can scarcely be forgotten. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) is such a case, as also is the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24).

3. **To conceal truth from those who hate the truth.** The truth is too precious to be abused by evil men. “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*” (Matt. 13:10-17). A

parable can arouse interest in an honest heart, but the worldly-minded heart rejects it as foolishness (cf. Exod. 14:19-20; Matt. 7:6; 11:25-26).

4. **To cause men to admit the truth before they see its application.** This was the purpose of the parable Nathan related to David (2 Sam. 12:1-14). Jesus related the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen for this same purpose (Matt. 21:33-46).

The Parable Of Mark 4:26-29

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

Mark is the only inspired writer who reports this parable. The other writers have nothing with which we may compare this story for enlightenment and the Lord did not give us the interpretation of this story, so we must use our best judgment, guided by our present knowledge of the Bible, and regulated by godly wisdom, to learn the central truth the Lord intended. *A parable had one main point.* We can discern the main lesson Christ intended by this parable, or else it would serve no useful purpose, and would not have been included in the sacred text.

The passage sets certain facts before our mind. The kingdom of God is likened to a man who cast seed into the ground; afterward, he went on with his normal affairs, sleeping and rising, night and day for some unspecified period of time. In the meantime, the seed put forth the blade, then the ear, and finally the full corn in the ear.

When the crop was ready, the man quickly used the sickle to bring in the harvest. These are the facts stated by the Lord.

The farmer does not know how the seed germinates and puts forth the plant which produces many seeds identical to the one planted. He knows what he must do to cause the grain to germinate, but he does not comprehend the scientific principles by which a plant can grow out of the seed. How well do modern scientists fathom this process? With all of our advancements in science, we are still not able to duplicate a grain of corn that is able to reproduce. We might be able to fabricate an item that looks identical to a grain of corn, but it will not germinate and produce a stalk of corn! It is not necessary for a farmer to understand all the specifics of how the grain germinates. He is satisfied with the knowledge that the earth, acting on the planted seed, is able to cause the seed to germinate and produce according to the design the Creator placed within the grain. “The mystery of growth still puzzles farmers and scientists of today, even with all our modern knowledge. But nature's secret processes do not fail to operate because we are ignorant.”¹

“For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:28). The word from which “of herself” is translated is the basis of our English word “automatic” [*automatee*]. The word is also used in Acts 12:10: “When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them **of his own accord**: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.” The secret of the growth is in the seed, which when planted in the proper soil, with the right amount of moisture and

¹ Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright © 1985 by Broadman Press

warmth, will germinate and produce after its kind (cf. Gen. 1:11), without any direct action on the part of the farmer. He has every reason to trust the seed to do what it was designed to do.

When the New Testament speaks of *corn*, it does not mean what we call “corn” in this country. The reference is to a grain crop such as wheat or barley. However, the same lesson is illustrated if we think of the grain as corn. What is the great lesson our Lord intended that we should gain from these facts?

Some Interpretations Are Obviously Incorrect

Herbert Lockyer referred to a fanciful interpretation which must be rejected out-of-hand. “Others, like Straton, accepting the unproven theory of evolution, see in this parable of gradual growth an application to the development of the world and also of man. From the *seed*, the protoplasm, there evolved a full harvest. Needless to say, we have no sympathy with such an interpretation or application of Mark’s parable.”² Evolution is untrue and no amount of time and argumentation can make it true. The Bible offers nothing in support of this godless theory, despite the efforts of foolish men to reconcile evolution and God’s word. There is nothing in nature to prove the theory of evolution. There is no evidence that evolution is in progress today; and the fossil record offers no proof that it took place in the past.

Mr. Lockyer himself offers an interpretation that also runs counter to the truth.³ He asserts that the three main parts of the parable relate to the three stages of “The Kingdom of God.” Says Mr. Lockyer, the *Blade* refers to

²Herbert Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1963, P.252

³ Ibid.

the “Church Age,” the *Ear* to the “Millennial Reign of Christ,” and the *Full Corn* represents the “New Heavens and New Earth” [eternity]. It is apparent that the gentleman has drunk deeply from the poisoned well of millennialism. It is not within the scope of the study to refute this materialistic menace of millennialism in detail, except to declare that there is no proof to support it, and there is much clear scriptural documentation to show that it is false. The kingdom has come (Dan. 2:44; Mark 9:1; Col. 1:13-14). The kingdom and the church are the same institution (Matt. 16:16-19). God indeed fulfilled his promise to establish the kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9). There is no biblical evidence that Christ will ever set foot upon the earth again. Therefore, we know that this view of the passage is incorrect.

The Gospel Was Developed And Revealed In Stages

N.B. Hardeman presented a masterpiece of a sermon in Nashville, Tennessee in 1922. It was entitled, “The Evolution of the Gospel.”⁴ Brother Hardeman traced the development of the gospel through five stages, which he deemed to be parallel to the Lord’s parable in our text (Mark 4:26-29). The points he made are excellent; they do indeed have much in common with our text.

Before a crop is planted, it exists first in the form of seed; it next exists in the mind of the farmer, who makes the commitment to plant the crop; predictions can be made about the expected harvest; the seed is planted into the soil and the shoots appear and produce the full stalks; and finally, when the ears are mature, the crop has been brought to perfection and is ready for harvesting..

⁴ Hardeman, N.B., *Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. II, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, pp96-103

Consider another illustration of these same points. Suppose you (1) get the notion to establish some kind of business; you do a feasibility study and decide that the business can be set up, so you (2) commit yourself to develop the plan; next, you (3) announce your plan and make promises regarding its fulfillment; (4) you are now in a position to take the preparatory steps to the establishment of your business; and finally (5) you bring the plan to completion.

Before time began, God had (1) a plan to bring the gospel into this world so that the lost could be saved; (2) he made a commitment to bring the plan to fruition; (3) he made certain promises (and predictions) regarding the intended plan; (4) he took the necessary preparatory steps to complete his plans; and (5) finally, he brought the gospel into existence. There never was a time when the gospel did not exist—in some form. (1) It existed in eternity in the mind of the Almighty; (2) it then existed in the commitment to bring it into reality; (3) it then existed in the promises that he made regarding its coming; next (4) it existed in the preparations God made to bring it about; and finally, (5) the gospel came into actual existence. There was the Plan, the Purpose, the Promise, the Preparation, and the Perfection—of the gospel. “And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” (Mark 4:26-29).

The Gospel Penetrates The Human Heart And Brings Forth Fruit By Stages

Our great mission is to present the gospel to individuals. The purpose at hand is to get them to believe

that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:30-31). They must be shown that sin has separated them from Almighty God (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 3:23) and that they are in dire need of what God offers to mankind through the gospel. Convincing them of these truths, we get them to see why Jesus died, and show them their obligations, and identify for them the blessings promised through the gospel.

✧ “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

✧ “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

✧ “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4).

The human soul becomes corrupted by sin. Selfishness generally prevails in the human heart. Sinful practices, words, motives, and attitudes predominate in the fleshly mind. The individual must be changed into a completely different way of life. But how?

In the natural realm, there is a process called “conversion.” It means “to change some person or thing” into something else. Corn is converted into cornmeal; cornmeal is converted into cornbread. Rags are converted into paper; paper is converted into books. Training and

experience can convert a novice into qualified medical doctor. This primary meaning is retained when the word is used in a religious sense. A moral and spiritual change takes place in the process by which one turns to God.

✧ “The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple” (Psa. 19:13).

✧ “*Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee” (Psa. 51:13).

✧ “And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren” (Acts 15:3).

✧ “And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe” (Acts 15:7).

This process of conversion requires several things: (1) The free will of man must make the final choice (Matt. 23:37; cf. Josh. 24:15; John 5:40; Acts 2:40). (2) The influence of the truth must be exerted (Jas. 1:21; 1 Cor. 4:15; John 8:32; 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; Rom. 1:16). (3) The individual must have the capacity to understand (Matt. 13:15,19; Acts 8:30; John 6:44-45; Acts 11:13-14).

Some marvelous changes occur in the conversion process. Sin makes a man to be radically wrong; a deep change occurs in conversion that affects the whole man (2 Cor. 5:17), returning the individual to the original spiritual condition he enjoyed before sin corrupted him. The heart is the seat of the intellect, the emotions, the conscience, and the will power. The gospel is addressed to the intellect;

facts are presented with sufficient evidence to convince the honest mind that the information is truth. Once the person has accepted the truth presented, his thinking is changed: he sees his real spiritual condition; he perceives that he needs to make a change; he ceases to love his old sinful way; he believes that Christ is the Son of God; he now loves the Savior more than he loves sin and himself. This leads him to make a great commitment to live for the Lord henceforth. His conscience is now at ease when he obeys; he is content in the knowledge that all is well between himself and God, between himself and other people, and he is at peace within his own heart.

His intellect (his mind) is changed by the testimony of the truth; his emotions are changed by the attractiveness of Christ and his word; his will is changed by proper motives presented by the gospel; and his conscience now approves of his faith and obedience. The entire process was consummated when he obeyed the gospel in baptism (Rom 6:17; Gal 3:26-27; Acts 2:36-41).

There must be a **change of heart**, or baptism is useless; he would enter the water as a dry sinner and come forth as a wet sinner. This change is brought about by faith; it destroys his love for sin and arouses love for Christ.

There must be a **change of life**. One who continues his old manner of living has not been converted (Col. 3:5-14). This change is brought about by repentance (cf. Matt. 21:28-31; 2 Cor. 7:10). Repentance destroys his practice of sin.

There must be a **change of state** or relationship. When a woman becomes a bride, her state (her relationship to the bridegroom) has changed; but she is not a bride until the proper procedures are completed. A young man enlists in the military; his state is different from before; but he was not a soldier until the enlistment process is completed. A sinner's state must be changed, which occurs when he is baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 1:13-14).

Baptism puts him into Christ where the guilt of his past sins is removed; in Christ he experiences a change of state.

A change of his heart, a change of his life, and a change of his state result in the approval of his conscience. What makes our conscience hurt? The realization that we have disobeyed God or that we have not measured up to the proper standard (cf. Acts 2:37; 2 Sam. 24:10; Rom. 2:15). What makes our conscience to be at ease? The realization that we have done what we know we ought to have done. The rejoicing comes after obedience. The man from Ethiopia rejoiced after his baptism (Acts 8:39); the jailer in Philippi rejoiced after his baptism (Acts 16:34).

There are certain well-defined steps that are taken in the process of changing an alien sinner into a faithful child of God. The process is not instantly done; it is not a painless operation. When the gospel enters into the fertile soil of an honest and good heart, fruit is produced—the fruit of obedience. Having now obeyed the gospel, we have the opportunity and means to go on toward spiritual maturity, to become more and more like the Savior: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

With this process in mind, read again our text: “And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” (Mark 4:26-29). We can understand the process sufficiently to do our part; God is fully able to do his part.

As The Gospel Penetrates A Society, The Kingdom Grows By Stages

The kingdom had its beginning on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2, when about three thousand people obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:36-41). It began to spread in Jerusalem, Judaea, and beyond. This is the way Christ planned for the kingdom to progress:

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

✧ “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:15-20).

✧ “...And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria....Therefore they that were scattered

abroad went every where preaching the word”
(Acts 8:1,4).

By the time the faithful brethren of the first century completed their work, the gospel had been carried to the far reaches of the Roman Empire, and beyond. “But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18). “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 15:19). “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel...If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister” (Col. 1:5,23).

The prophecy of Daniel 2 met with fulfillment: “Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces....and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth....And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:34,35,44).

CONCLUSION

The power to convert the alien sinner is in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Our part in the process of saving the lost is to instruct them in the gospel (Mark 16:15). The power to save souls is not in the person who does the instructing. Our part is essential, but it does not complete the operation. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6). The

farmer prepares the soil and plants the seed. He has no power to make the seed germinate, grow, and produce. A Christian does what he can to prepare the soil (the human heart) for the reception of the gospel; he plants the seed of the gospel in that heart; he can encourage, but he cannot cause the seed to germinate, grow, and produce.

As precious souls hear, believe, and obey the gospel, they are added to the church; or to say the same thing in a different way, they are translated into the kingdom (Col. 1:13). When souls respond in obedience and are added to the church, the kingdom of Christ grows and spreads. “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). The process is necessarily slow, and often tedious and discouraging, but the word of God is the most powerful force on the face of the earth! Hebrews 4:12.

Biographical Sketch

Bob Winton is from Tennessee. After serving in the U.S. Air Force, he worked with the Federal Aviation Administration as an air traffic controller. He was graduated from Memphis School of Preaching in 1972, and has since preached in local work in Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Florida, and Ohio. He has also authored more than thirty books, primarily Bible commentaries.

The Withered Fig Tree

Brent Gallagher

“And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them: and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses, (Mark 11:20-26 ASV).”

The account of the withered fig tree is found in the eleventh chapter of Mark. Early in the Passion Week, following an evening spent in Bethany, Jesus and His apostles are approaching Jerusalem. Jesus, seeing a fig tree in the distance with leaves on (a sign there would be fruit on the tree) nears the tree hoping to find fruit. Upon realizing there are no figs, Jesus pronounces a curse on the tree. The next morning, as Jesus and the apostles are nearing Jerusalem, they come upon the fig tree and see that it has dried up from the roots. Jesus uses the withered tree to teach the apostles about faith, prayer and forgiveness.

There are many things associated with this miracle which critics of the Bible point out. First, in Matthew’s account (Matthew 21:18-22), the cursing of the tree and the

disciples' response appear to take place the same day. Upon closer reading though, it is obvious that Mark is being more detailed with the chronology and Matthew is simply stating what happened (not necessarily when it happened). Second, some ask why Jesus would be hungry after He would have presumably spent the night with friends (perhaps Mary, Martha and Lazarus) in Bethany. It is entirely possible Jesus spent the night in prayer or in teaching His apostles and did not even bother to eat. There were other occasions in the ministry of Jesus when He had difficulty finding time to eat (Mark 6:31). Third, some wonder why Jesus was not aware of the absence of figs if He were divine. Even though Jesus was divine, He was also human. Jesus could choose to limit His miraculous abilities whenever He desired. It appears this is one of those instances. Fourth, critics charge it is wrong to curse and destroy something which has no free moral agency. Christ is Creator of the universe and obviously can use nature however He chooses and for whatever purpose He desires. Fifth, opponents of the Bible claim Jesus simply lost His temper and destroyed the tree. This is obviously an invalid criticism to anyone who believes in the integrity of the Bible (Hebrews 4:15). Finally, some say it is unfair to the tree to curse it since it was "not the season for figs." This seems to be the very reason the tree is cursed. There is a common fig tree in Palestine in which the fruit comes on the tree before the leaves. Therefore, when one would see a tree with leaves he would assume it had figs. The tree was appearing to be something it was not.

Jesus does not explicitly state why the tree was cursed. Israel is represented as a fig tree in a parable of Jesus in which her future punishment is predicted (Luke 13:6-9). Some suggest this cursing is a warning of what would happen to Israel. Others see the tree as representative of the hypocrisy of Israel's religious leaders. Undoubtedly, the scribes and Pharisees were claiming to be something they

were not. Jesus frequently used the term “hypocrite” to refer to such people (Matthew 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 22:18; 23:1-36).

Regardless of Jesus’ exact purpose in cursing the tree, He used the tree to teach His apostles some lessons. Upon seeing the dried up tree, Peter reacted by stating, “Master, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away” (Mark 11:21). Jesus responded by saying, “Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he sayeth shall come to pass; he shall have. Therefore, I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them: and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:22-24). Was Jesus talking here of the faith which all Christians have or a miraculous faith which would have been limited to the first century? There is a possibility that Jesus was using exaggeration to prove the power of faith. The figure of casting the mountain into the sea was just an illustration to show how small the apostles’ faith was. If Jesus were talking of miraculous faith (the ability to actually cast a mountain into the sea) this would have been a spiritual gift available to some in the first century which would have ceased existing when the word was completed (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10).

Jesus intertwines faith and prayer in this passage. One cannot exist fully without the other. The one who truly has faith will pray; and the one who truly prays will have faith. James links the two together in James 1:5-8 where he states that the one who prays without faith is like a “wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” Jesus’ teaching on prayer is to be qualified by other passages on prayer. One needs to ask for the right things in prayer, to pray according to the authority of Christ and also to pray according to God’s will (James 4:1-3; John 14:13; 1 John 5:14).

Jesus also teaches the necessity of forgiveness when one enters into prayer. “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25). Jesus taught that God does not accept the worship of one who fails to forgive another. In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus stated, “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” And then again in Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus said, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” J.W. McGarvey suggests a possibility as to why Jesus teaches about forgiveness in this context. In his New Testament Commentary, volume one, page 338 he says the following:

The logical connection of this precept with its context is somewhat obscure, but it seems to be this: The disciples had seen Jesus curse and blast the fig-tree, and they doubtless understood the significance of the act. They might, from this example, when they encountered the hypocrites represented by the fig-tree, be encouraged to curse them in a similar manner; but they are guarded against this by the precept, “When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any.” Instead of praying for a curse on them, pray God to forgive them, and do so yourself.

Jesus’ apostles were going to face some very trying times within a short time following the incident of the withered fig tree. They would watch their Lord suffer and be crucified. Following this, they would witness Him resurrected and receive instructions concerning taking the

gospel to the world. No doubt there would be times their faith would be weak and it would waiver. Undoubtedly Jesus used the withered fig tree for preparing them for such times.

What application does this story have for Christians today? First, a lack of faith will probably always be a problem with God's people. Even though Christians today cannot literally cast mountains into the sea, there are multitudes of other works left undone simply because of a lack of trusting in God. How many times have people gone untaught, good works not performed, and missions not supported simply because Christians have not had the faith to do such. The incident of the fig tree reminds everyone that it is possible to limit oneself by a lack of faith. Second, one is reminded of the power of prayer in this story. In an age of unparalleled materialism and technological growth, it is very easy to rely more on self and science rather than on God. Jesus reminds his hearers that it is those who have faith in God and ask of God who will receive what they ask (if in accordance with God's will). Third, the need to have a forgiving spirit is always necessary for a Christian. It is possible when dealing with human beings for anger and bitterness of spirit to dominate a Christian's heart. One needs to be reminded of the Apostle Paul's statement in Philippians 4:5 where he said, "Let your gentleness be known to all men."

Biographical Sketch

Brent Gallagher was born in Dover, Ohio. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University and Harding Graduate School of Religion. He is married to the former Janie Higginbotham. They have three children, Ryan, Amy, and Jason. He has worked for churches in New Matamoras, OH; Pine Grove, WV; and is currently working with the Oakwood Road congregation in Fairmont, WV. He is also an instructor at the WVSOP.

The Baptism of Jesus

E. Claude Gardner

**Mk.1: 9-11; Mt. 3:13-17;
Lk. 3: 21-22; John 1:19-34**

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

The most famous and significant baptism in to history of the world was the baptism of Jesus. One’s own baptism is memorable because on that occasion it was “O happy day that washed my sins away.” It is like the Ethiopian nobleman who after his baptism “went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39). Likewise the jail keeper “rejoiced” after his immersion (Acts 16:34).

The answers to six questions below will give one the right understanding of the baptism of Jesus.

WHEN?

Scholars differ as to whether the event happened in the spring or summer or winter. One claimed that Jesus was both born and baptized in the month of January. Likely he was baptized six months after John began his preaching career. After the 18 “silent years” working as a carpenter He was baptized at the age of 30. Why at 30? One idea is that this was the age the Levites entered into the service of God. (Nu. 4:3,47). However, His age at 30 is not an example of when a person should be baptized. The

Scriptures do not set an age of accountability when it is time to be baptized.

Was He baptized with the crowd present or was it done in private? “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened” (Lk. 3:21). It could not have been a secret baptism because He was announced to the world as the Messiah on this occasion.

From Nazareth to Jordan he walked or rode a donkey 70 or 80 miles. He made the trip for the specific purpose of baptism. He decided to do so before he heard John preach. His was a voluntary decision and He was not persuaded by any preaching. Let it be noted, however, that it is not improper to persuade people after they have been taught. Paul did this at Corinth. “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (Acts 18:4). This also was the plan of Peter on Pentecost .After he gave the plan of salvation he exhorted. “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:40-41).

WHERE?

He was “baptized of John in the Jordan” River (Mk. 1:9). Where was the spot? Professional guides in Israel today say seven places are identified. It may have been across from Jericho. Whatever location John used to baptize it required “much water” *as was the case in Aenon* (John 3:23).

WHO?

John baptized Jesus after he demurred and out of humility said “I have need to be baptized of thee, comest

thou to me?" {Mt. 3:15). He had the sacred honor of immersing the coming King Jesus.

HOW?

Jesus was immersed because that is the definition of the original word in Greek which Hugo McCord properly rendered in the McCord Translation. It is, therefore, erroneous to speak of "baptism by immersion." It is wrong to say baptism by sprinkling but rather say sprinkling instead of baptism." An ancient artist pictured Jesus standing in the edge of the Jordan River with John pouring a gourd of water on His head for baptism. This did not happen because Mark wrote, "And straightway coming up out of the water" {Mk. 1: 10). The inference is that he went down into the water and then came up. If one desires to be baptized like Jesus, then one must be immersed in water.

Dictionary definition list immersion, sprinkling, and pouring but this is not Biblical. The first case of sprinkling for baptism was Novatian who was sick which took place about 250 A.D. Then as a part of the ultimate apostasy the Council of Ravenna in 1311 sanctified sprinkling which is practiced by Romanism and a large segment of Protestantism.

J. W. Shepherd, produced a classic entitled Handbook on Baptism. This 517 page volume lists extensive quotations from hundreds of commentaries on the action, subjects, and design of baptism. The scholarship of the world is devastating of the false doctrines of baptism. Shepherd gives 11 quotations by scholars on the baptism of Jesus and they affirm that Jesus was immersed. One of these was Geikie who wrote, "John resisted no longer, and leading Jesus into the stream the rite was performed....Holy and pure before sinking under the waters, He must yet have risen from them with the light of a higher glory in His countenance....He entered as Jesus, the Son of Man; He rose from them, the Christ of God."

Theologians argue vehemently against the essentiality of baptism, but if it is not necessary, then what difference would it make as to how much water was used in baptism?

WHY?

Jesus was not baptized for His personal forgiveness and reformation because He had absolute sinlessness. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21).”...but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26). “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Pet. 2:22). John baptized “for the remission of sins” (Mk.1:4) but Jesus was not. For centuries the controversy has raged as to the purpose of baptism whether it is “because of ‘ forgiveness or “in order to” forgiveness The Bible teaches the latter as Peter declared: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” {Acts 2:38). But Jesus was not baptized for either reason.

Jesus give the reason: “It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt. 3:15). The “us” in this verse includes “us” today. The baptism of John was not in the Old Testament teaching and then God required John to command it as the “counsel of God” (Lk. 7:30). Since Jesus was a Jew and he must obey Jewish law as other Jews He must set the example of obedience. Basil Overton, in an editorial in The World Evangelist, pointed out that had Jesus refused to be baptized He would have sinned and could not have been the Savior. His example was significant because some important Jews did not think they needed to be baptized because they were born Jews and the seed of Abraham (Mt. 3: 7-9). “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness”

(Psa. 119:172). He is our example of obedience (not for forgiveness of His sins) but in our case we obey this command of baptism in order to be forgiven.

WHAT HAPPENED AT HIS BAPTISM?

The heavens were opened. This reminds us that heaven is opened to us in the sweet by and by. Also, it is opened for Jesus to return to sit at the right hand of God. (Acts 1:9-11; Psa. 24:7-10).

At His baptism we read: “The Spirit of God descending like a dove” (Mt. 3:17). This was the final proof to John that Jesus was the Messiah (John 1:33-34). The Holy Spirit is not a “dove” as some songs say (as in Sweet, Sweet Spirit) because the text says “like” a dove. a dove suggests peace, gentleness, innocence and purity (Lk. 2:14).

The Father from heaven. “And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mk. 1:11). He gave Jesus official recognition by saying He is “well pleased’ with “my beloved Son.” Two other times the Father acknowledged Jesus as His Son (Mt.17:5; John 12: 28).

Now that He is acknowledged as the Son of God He now enters His public ministry for about three years. He is out of private life and now set apart for His work. His acknowledgement as God’s Son is the truth on which His church is built (Mt.16:8).

It is noteworthy to see in this event that all three in the Godhead were present : Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. There is one God (Eph. 4:6) but three distinct personalities in one. This doctrine of the “trinity” was the beginning of the trouble Thomas Jefferson had with his faith. He said he could accept it as being reasonable.

When Jesus was baptized he prayed (Lk 3:21). When one comes up out of the water of baptism he or she can come up praying since becoming a child of God grants the

privilege of prayer. Surely all of God's commands should be accompanied with prayer.

Jesus prayed at His baptism and He continued to pray. Luke records nine instances of His prayers. He had the habit of prayer which is a good habit for us.

AFTER BAPTISM

Immediately after His baptism Jesus face the three temptations in the wilderness. "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (Mk. 1:12). When one obeys the gospel this does not end temptation and persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

"O WHAT A SAVIOR!"

Thank God for Jesus and His example of obedience in His baptism. Jesus is the servant prophesied in Isaiah 42:1-4: Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul a; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fall nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

Jesus and the Sabbath

Glen Hawkins

The life of Jesus here on earth was a life that was filled with controversy. Jesus did not shun controversy and controversial questions and subjects. His goal in these controversies was the presentation of truth as opposed to the traditions of men, especially the Jewish religious leaders. I have heard of some gospel preachers who boast that they do not preach on controversial issues. If so, they are certainly not imitating Jesus.

In Mark 2, we have the record of four events in the life of Jesus which aroused controversy with certain Jewish leaders. The first matter concerned the healing and the forgiveness of the man afflicted with palsy. The second concerned the calling of Matthew, a publican, to be a disciple. The third concerned the matter of the disciples of Jesus not fasting; and, finally, the subject of our lesson, the controversy over the sabbath. Mark's account of this incident reads as follows, "And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:23-28). This event is also recorded in Matthew 12:1-8 and Luke 6:1-5.

Jesus and His disciples were walking by a field of grain, probably wheat. The disciples began to pluck the heads of grain, Luke adding that they were rubbing the grain in their hands. The significant thing is that this was done on the sabbath day. The Pharisees upbraided Jesus for His allowing His disciples to do what the Pharisees considered unlawful on the sabbath.

The question to be considered is simply this: Did the disciples break the law of the sabbath as set forth in the Mosaical law or not? Or did the disciples simply violate the man-made traditions imposed upon the sabbath? It is the speaker's view that the latter, not the former, is the case.

The sabbath had been given by God to restore man, to give him rest and relaxation from his labor. Properly observed, it would be a joy. However, by the time of this incident, the rabbis and religious leaders had built a fence around the sabbath with their own interpretations. For instance, they held that it was perfectly all right to spit on a rock on the sabbath, but if you spit on the ground, that made mud: mud was mortar, therefore you were working on the sabbath. So it is not surprising that they considered it wrong to thresh a head of grain on the sabbath day, even though you were hungry, because that was working on the sabbath.

Jesus Christ never broke the sabbath law while here on earth. He kept the law perfectly, the only one to ever do so. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:19, He said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." It is the height of absurdity to suppose that Jesus would approve of His disciples breaking the sabbath and then defending them for so doing. His disciples may have broken Jewish traditions concerning the sabbath, but not the sabbath itself.

In the disciples' defense, Jesus called the Pharisees' attention to an incident with which they were familiar – David eating the shewbread, recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-6, “Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee? And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.” Jesus points out in words which cannot be misunderstood in Matthew's account that David “did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests” (Matthew 12:4). Where was the Pharisees' disapproval of what David did? David did what was unlawful. Yet, the Pharisees did not disapprove. What Jesus' disciples did was not unlawful, yet they were condemned. Where is the fairness and justice in this? Furthermore, in Matthew's account of this incident in verse 7, Jesus says, “But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have

condemned the guiltless.” The disciples were guiltless, not guilty.

Brother Burton Coffman, in his Commentary on Mark (pg. 47), makes this statement: “The fact of the Pharisees approval of David’s unlawful conduct, while at the same time pressing their silly little charge against the disciples, is evident in the fact that if they had not approved it they could have said, ‘Ah! So David was a sinner, and so are you!’ That they did not so reply shows that they approved David’s violation; thus hypocrisy was open for all to see.”

Some have tried to reconcile what the disciples did in “breaking the sabbath” by saying that “human need takes precedence over God’s law.” Again, from Coffman’s Commentary on Mark (pg. 46), we read, “Christ taught no such doctrine. His refusal to permit His own dire hunger to cause Him to yield to the devil’s temptation to change stones into bread (Matthew 4:1-4) refutes the conceit that human need justifies setting aside God’s laws. Christ’s true teaching here is that God’s law justifies the setting aside of petty human regulations.” Brother J. W. McGarvey, in his commentary on Matthew, wrote on pg. 104, “If Christians may violate law where its observance would involve hardship or suffering, then there is an end to suffering for the name of Christ, and an end, even, of self-denial.”

Another alleged defense of what Jesus’ disciples did and Jesus’ defense of them is related to the philosophy of situation ethics. Some, including Joseph Fletcher, have declared that Jesus “blessed David’s action on the basis of the situation.” And so, Fletcher argued, it is clear that “only the end justifies the means; nothing else.”

According to situation ethics, love is the only absolute. The situation one finds oneself in will determine the course of action. The thing is always do whatever the “loving” thing is to do. So, who defines what “love” is? As Wayne Jackson wrote, “One person’s love can be another person’s hate” (*Did Jesus Endorse Situation Ethics, The Christian*

Courier, Dec. 7, 2000). I am sure that Adolph Hitler was operating under the principle of “love” for the German race when he planned to exterminate the inferior races!

The incident recorded here in Mark 2 certainly does not endorse the principle of situation ethics. As we have stated before, what the disciples did in plucking and eating the grain was not a violation of God’s law. They may have violated human tradition, but not God’s law. Alfred Edersheim, himself of Jewish heritage, wrote in his book The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. II, pg. 56, that the disciples’ conduct “was not a breach of the Biblical, but of the Rabbinic, law.”

Brother Wayne Jackson, in his work referred to a moment ago, wrote the following worthy of our consideration: “That, then, brings us to this question. Why did Christ introduce the case of David and the temple bread? The use of this Old Testament illustration is an example of a form of reasoning known as *Adhominem* argument. An *Adhominem* (literally meaning “to the man”) argument is not made for the purpose of establishing positive truth. Rather, it is employed to highlight an opponent’s inconsistency. The Lord’s point may be paraphrased as follows: “You Pharisees revere David as a great King and Hebrew hero. David once broke the law of Moses by the illegal consumption of sacred food. But you do not condemn him for that! By way of contrast, My disciples have violated only your silly traditions – yet you charge them with sin. How very inconsistent you are.”

J. W. McGarvey describes the matter in this fashion: “Now the real argument of Jesus is this: David, when hungry, ate the showbread, which it was confessedly unlawful for him to eat, yet you justify him; My disciples pluck grain and eat it on the sabbath, an act which the law does not forbid, and yet you condemn them” (pg, 104).

Jesus goes on to point out in Mark 2:27-28 that “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.” The Pharisees had gotten verse 27 backwards — with all their regulations and traditions regarding the sabbath, man had been made for the sabbath. Yet, God created the sabbath for the benefit of mankind. Since the Son of Man is a reference to Jesus, Jesus is affirming His Lordship over the sabbath.

As long as Jesus walked and talked on the earth during His public ministry, He never once broke the sabbath law of God. He also never encouraged nor approved of anyone else breaking the sabbath law. Yet the time would come when that sabbath law would be taken out of the way and, as Paul wrote in Colossians 2:14, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

The New Testament is God’s covenant in force today. We need to be careful to learn and obey its precepts. And we should never allow human traditions and customs to take precedence over the covenant itself. When we do, we become no better than the Pharisees in Jesus’ day.

Biographical information

- Glenn E. Hawkins, 718 – 9th Street NE, Massillon OH 44646
- Born October 16, 1943, in Dexter, Missouri
- Son of Jack & Frona Hawkins (both deceased)
- Father was gospel preacher for 60 years
- Wife – Hope (Shutts) Hawkins of Parkersburg, WV
- Sons – Ken (Atlanta, GA) and Adam (Massillon, OH)
- Graduated - Ohio Valley College, Harding University, Harding Graduate School of Religion (M.A.)
- Served churches in St. Mary’s, WV (George St.); St. Clair, MO; Waverly, TN; Memphis, TN
- Presently in 27th year at Massillon, OH
- Write weekly column for local newspaper

Preparatory Work of John The Baptist

E. Claude Gardner

Mk. 1:1-12; 9:11-13

John the Baptist introduced Jesus, the Messiah, to the world. His life and work are an inspiration for courage and preparation.

WHO WAS JOHN?

What qualified John to prepare the way for Jesus? He declared "I AM NOT..."

1. "I am not the Christ"(John 1:20). This He said to an investigative group of Jews from the Sanhedrin.

2. "I am not" Elijah (John 1: 21).

3. He said He was not "that Prophet" prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. 4. "I am not worthy" (John 1:27) was His expression of humility when Jesus presented Himself for baptism.

5. The apostle John denies that John the Baptist was "that Light" (John 1:7-9). 6. He was not the bridegroom but "the friend of the bridegroom" (John 3:29). 7. Neither did John accomplish His work through the performance of any miracles (John 10:41).

Who was John? "...a man sent from God" (John 1:6). "...the word of God came unto John" (Lk. 3:2). Gabriel said, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Lk.1:15).

1. "I am the voice" { John 1:23) in fulfillment of prophecies. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway to our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked

shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:" (Isa. 40: 3-4). "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come in the temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord" (Mal. 3:1). "Behold, I will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5).

2. He "bore witness" of Jesus (John 1:15).

3. He announced Jesus as Savior. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). When he baptized Jesus he "bare record that this is the Son of God." "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1: 33-34).

4. He was a preacher and "prophet of the Highest" (Lk. 3:76). " But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet" (Mt. 11:9). Commonly he is known as the "harbinger and forerunner" of Jesus.

5. He WAS Elijah in a figurative way. Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him" (Mk. 9:13). Like Elijah of the Old Testament His was a ministry of reform and preparation. "And he shall go before him in spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk.1:17).

6. John had disciples and He taught them to pray (Lk.11:1). Two of His disciples heard John speak but "they followed Jesus" (John 1:37). Thirty years after the church

was established Paul found disciples of John who knew “only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25; Acts 19:1-7).

HOW WAS HIS CHARACTER SHAPED?

At his birth the penetrating question was asked, “what manner of child shall this be?” (Lk. 1:66). His parents, Zecharias and Elisabeth, were a mighty influence on him because of their character and faithfulness. “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Lk.1:6).

His name was John according to Gabriel, Elisabeth and John. On a tablet his father wrote,

“His name is John” (Lk.1:63). “The Lord is gracious” is the meaning of his name. Baptist was not his name but the title given to him because he baptized. It is like saying John the lawyer. His name is John and lawyer explains his profession.

For about thirty years John lived a rugged life in the desert. “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel” (Lk.1:80). His dress was like that of Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:8) and it was of camel’s hair and a belt of skin (Mk. 1:6). His diet was locusts and wild honey. Locusts were a clean food under the law. (Lev.11:21-22).

Jesus paid him a high compliment as none greater than he.” Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: not withstanding he that is least in the kingdom is greater than he” {Mt.1 1:11}. Even so John was never a member of the church.

John may be described as a Nazarite. (Lk.1:15-16).

Herod, who executed him, knew he was “a just man” and “holy” {Mk. 6:20}.

John's humility was extraordinary. Even though he had a high calling from God he would not call his name and said only "I am the voice."

It is not easy for many but it was for John to be able to take second place (John 3:25-30). He said, "he must increase but I must decrease."

While imprisoned he being human succumbed to doubt when he sent two disciples to ask,

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Mt. 11:2-3). John gave answer by saying, "Go...tell John" of things "ye have seen and heard" (Lk. 7:22).

PREPARED THE WAY BY PREACHING

John's powerful preaching ushered in the Savior. His preaching had a purpose and a mission. His preaching took place in a most unlikely place--in the wilderness of Judea. He worked in the barren desert rather than in the populous cities. It was in "the badlands" which was an arid region, thinly settled near the Dead Sea. Great multitudes poured out of the cities (Mt. 3:5) and he was a popular success. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees came to hear him. (Mt. 3:7). Although large crowds were in attendance not everyone responded. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being baptized, being not baptized of him" (Lk. 7:30).

How long did he preach? The preaching span was short. He began his ministry shortly before he baptized Jesus. It lasted about one and on-half years of public preaching. He was imprisoned for one year and four months.

His preaching style was direct and plain. Earnestly he "cried" the message. He preached what people needed to hear and not just what pleased them. "Which say to the seers, See not; and the prophets, Prophecy not unto us the right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy

deceits” (Isa. 30: 10). “ Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight” (Isa. 5:20-21).

John convicted the people of sin first and then it was easier to get them to be baptized. This also is the plan Peter used on Pentecost. He convicted them of murdering Jesus. “...ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain....Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do” (Acts 2:23, 36-37). It was easy for Peter to teach them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost....They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:38, 41).

John’s themes were simple:

1. “Repent” he cried. He urged moral reform. He was preparing the way for the coming King Jesus (Lk. 3:4-5). He opposed greed and violence. “He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with you wages” (Lk. 3:11-14). Also, he preached on hell and rebuked the religious leaders (Mt. 3:7-12).

2."Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2). This was reason for repentance. He showed that the messianic kingdom was soon to be established. (Dan. 2:44).

3. Baptism "for the remission of sins" (Mk.1:4). The confessed their sins (Mk.1:5) likely in a general way rather than listing specific sins in view of the huge crowd response.

PREPARATION FOR SUCCESS

John's work was preparatory. Was it successful? Obviously his preaching had immediate results of bringing a host to repentance. Furthermore, his teaching softened hearts and put their focus on the spiritual. This was reflected in the response of about 3000 on the day the gospel of Christ was preached in its fulness. Also, his work is reflected in the way the early church grew with rapidity. { Acts 4:4; 5:14; 6:7).

By way of application the need for adequate preparation is essential in planning the future work of a congregation, for preparing for a gospel meeting, for preparing men well for preaching the gospel. The Cause is too great for us to be dilatory. Indeed the "King's business requires haste."

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." (2 Tim. 4:2-3).

Demon Possession

Bruce Daugherty

There are two extremes that are usually seen regarding demons. We can completely ignore them or we can be too fascinated by them.¹ Mankind ignores the reality of the spiritual world or becomes superstitious. When an examination of the interpretation of demon possession in the Bible is made, these same extremes are reflected in current religious thought. On the one hand, there are those who declare that demon possession is how the ancients understood mental illness: "The demon possessed persons of earlier times would today be in our psychiatric clinics or in other institutions for the mentally ill."² On the other hand, there are those who assert that exorcising demons is part of the Christian's task today: "The ancient scourge of demon possession is as real in modern America as it was when Christ was upon the earth."³

This study will examine the encounter between Jesus and an unclean spirit or demon as recorded in Mark 5:1-20. From that examination it is hoped that some general observations can be made regarding demon possession in the Bible, and that some answers can be supplied to questions concerning demon possession today.

¹ . C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1988 reprint of 1941 edition), xix.

² . S. Vernon McCasland, *By the Finger of God*, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), 42.

³ . Keith Bailey, *Strange Gods - Responding to the Rise of Spirit Worship in America*, (Camphill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1998).

Defining Terms

Our English word demon is a transliteration of the original word in Greek: δαίμονιον; δαίμων. The word is translated as demon, evil spirit; god (Acts 17:18) and it occurs about 70 times in the New Testament. Associated with the word for demon is the expression, πνεύμα _κάθαρον- "unclean spirit." This expression occurs twenty-one times in the Gospels and Acts, half of which are in the gospel of Mark.⁴ The frequency of the words in Mark's gospel as well as the incidents of exorcism occurring in his account, leads Page to affirm: "Mark clearly gives prominence to the place of exorcism in Jesus' ministry. For the second Evangelist, exorcism appears to typify Jesus' mission of establishing the kingdom of God by subduing the powers of evil."⁵ From the context of the passage in Mark 5, unclean spirit and demons are used interchangeably (v. 2, 8, 12, 15, 18).

Demons in the Bible

The mention of demons is rare in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moses' song in Dueteronomy 32:17 prophetically speaks of the sacrifices the children of Israel would make to idols, referring to them as demons. Psalm 106:37 speaks of the Israelites who sacrificed their children to demons, another reference to idolatry. 1 Samuel 16:14-23 speaks of Saul as being afflicted by an "evil spirit." Was King Saul's affliction by an "evil spirit" a demon?

In contrast, the New Testament is filled with references to demons and contains many examples of "demon possession." Some of the demon possessions recorded in the New Testament are:

⁴. Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan & Demons*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 137.

⁵. Page, 166.

1. Man in the synagogue - Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-37.
2. Jesus accused of being Beelzebub - Matt. 12:22-30; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-23.
3. Legion -Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-40.
4. Mute man - Matt. 9:32-34; Mark 7:24-30.
5. Canannite daughter - Matt. 15:21-28.
6. Lunatic son - Matt. 17:14-23; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43.
7. Mary Magdalene - Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2-7.
8. Girl with a spirit of divination - Acts 16:16-18.
9. The sons of Sceva - Acts 19:13-16.

Mark 5:1-20

The passage tells of Jesus' meeting a man with an unclean spirit on His arrival in the Gerasene region. It is sandwiched between Jesus' calming a storm on the sea of Galilee (Mark 4:35-41) and His healing Jairus' daughter and the woman with an issue of blood (Mark 5:21-43).⁶ After a description of the pitiful condition of the man possessed, the unclean spirit recognized Jesus and begged not to be tormented or sent out of the region. Jesus cast the legion of unclean spirits out of the man and they entered a large herd of swine. The demons then caused the herd of swine to rush down a steep place into the sea and they drowned. When the fearful keepers of the herd told what had happened, the people of the region begged Jesus to leave the area. Jesus obliged them and got into the boat to leave. As Jesus was getting ready to leave, the healed man begged to accompany Jesus. Jesus refused his request, however, and gave him these instructions, "Go home to

⁶ David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark, " *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, L/3 (September 1982), 424 - "repetition of similar episodes in series of three."

your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and how He had compassion on you."

This account contains many unusual features which are not found in other gospel accounts regarding demon possession.⁷ Jesus asked the name of the spirit possessing the man, leading some to speculate that Jesus practiced exorcism according to the customs of the day (see Acts 19:13-16).⁸ Jesus granted the request of the demons, but He refused the request of the healed man. The demons also were transferred from a human host to a herd of pigs. Along with these unusual features are some variations in the gospel accounts: where does the event take place: Gadara, Gerasa, or Gergasa? (Compare the accounts recorded in Matt. 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8). How many men were healed: one or two? (see Matt. 8:28-34). While these variations in the gospel accounts are unusual, it does not mean that one must reject the historical accuracy of the Gospels. Page states:

Much of the difficulty that some scholars have in accepting the substance of the account as historically reliable is related to the fact that the narrative does not conform to their preconceived notions of what an exorcism narrative should include. This says more about the rigid application of form criticism than about the accuracy of the Gospel accounts.⁹

The problem of the different place names can be accounted by the fact that places are known by more than one name, as in the sea of Galilee, also known in the Bible as the sea of Tiberias (John 21:1) and the lake of

⁷ . Page, 146.

⁸ . Page, 152.

⁹ . Page, 147.

Gennesaret (Luke 5:1).¹⁰ While there is some difficulty in determining the exact location today, this does not mean that the miracle did not take place.

The difficult with the number of men healed is also able to be harmonized. Likely, there were two men healed and Matthew described them both, while Mark was led by the Spirit to focus on only one of the men, maybe because he was better known.¹¹

From this passage, several things can be learned about demons:

1. They were intelligent and rational.
2. They caused suffering and pain to the one's possessed.
3. They knew of what awaited in their future.
4. They recognized Jesus and knew of His authority over them.
5. Jesus acknowledged the reality of demons and demon plagued people.
6. Jesus had all power over the demonic and spirit world!¹²

Theories about the Origin of Demons

The record of demon possession in the Gospel accounts prompts many questions about demons. Where did demons come from? What is their origin? Why were they prevalent in the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles?

¹⁰. Students of the American Civil War are familiar with the fact that the same battlefield might be known by different names, e.g. Antietam/Sharpsburg; Murfreesboro/Stone's River.

¹¹. A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1922), 71. See also J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel*, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914), 346.

¹². Charles Hodge, *A Biblical Study of Satan*, (Dallas: Gospel Teachers Publications, 1973), 34.

Why is there so little mention of demons after the book of Acts?

The Greek and Jewish world abounded with many ideas and notions about demons and the spirit world in the intertestamental period and into the first century. It was believed that ill fortune, calamities, plagues, and even death, were caused by demons who were in the service of the gods. According to ancient beliefs, these spirits inhabited dangerous places: the desert, wastelands, and deserted by-ways. It was also believed that they held power during dangerous situations and times: at night, during sleep, during storms, during eclipses, and especially during child-birth. Demons often were not depicted as having human form. They were acknowledged to be spirits and envisioned as animals, or composite beings, having the powerful and fearsome aspects of animals but including human features. Because of belief in the demon's ability to possess and cause ills, the ancients sought to protect themselves by a variety of means: prayer, incantations, magic and exorcism.¹³

There was also much speculation about the origin of demons. One theory said that the demons were souls of the dead who had been unjustly treated or killed and were allowed to return to execute their vengeance. Another theory believed that they were the souls of wicked men who had escaped or been allowed to escape from the Hadean world. Origen said that the Church held no clearly defined teaching on the origins of demons, but he expressed his view that demons were fallen angels who had followed Satan in his rebellion against God. Jewish speculation at the

¹³. G. J. Riley, "demon," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 236-37.

time of Christ held that demons were the offspring of angels who co-habited with human women.¹⁴

To these ancient views, modern men have added other thoughts concerning the origin of demons. Skeptics and scoffers call them legends and myths. They believe that they were designations of the superstitious for mental diseases or other diseases which the ancients did not understand at that time. While such may have been the case for other ancient documents, this was not true concerning the Bible. The New Testament record is very careful to differentiate between demon possession and illnesses. Certainly, demon possession could produce illness, but not all illness was attributed to demon possession.¹⁵

In contrast to the speculations of the ancient world, the New Testament is silent about origins of demons and any description of them. Jackson believes that this silence is significant and argues for the inspiration of the New Testament.¹⁶ In light of this silence, Christians do not need to spend a lot of time speculating or being dogmatic about the origin of demons.

Distinguish Between Demon Possessed and Demon Used

From this study, it can be concluded that demon possession occurred in the 1st century. Jesus acknowledged the occurrence. Even the enemies of Jesus admitted the fact of His casting out demons, though they wrongly attributed His power as to being in league with the demons (see Mark 3:22). What was the purpose of allowing demon possession to occur and then casting out demons by Jesus and His Apostles?

¹⁴. Riley, 238-39.

¹⁵. Wayne Jackson, "Demons: Ancient Superstition or Historical Reality?" *Reason & Revelation*, vol. 18, no. 4 (April 1998): 27.

¹⁶. Jackson, 26.

Jesus prophesied that He would bind the strong man (Satan - see Mark 3:27). By casting out demons, Jesus was also announcing the coming defeat of Satan.

By demonstrating His power over the demonic world, Jesus was emphasizing His power over evil. This gives believers in every age confidence to place all trust in Christ and His defeat of the Devil and the devil's allies.

Just as Jesus demonstrated His power over nature (Mark 4:35-41), over incurable illnesses (Mark 5:25-34), and over death (Mark 5:35-43), Jesus demonstrated His authority over the spirit world. This is a powerful message for people living in animistic cultures.¹⁷

Jesus gave His Apostles power to cast out demons. The credibility of their message was confirmed by their power to perform miracles which included the casting out of demons (Mark 16:15-20).

Demon possession is rare in the New Testament after the period covered by the gospel accounts. Only two possessions are recorded in Acts and none in the epistles. In contrast, several of the early Church fathers make mention of demons and exorcisms, even up into the fourth century! The writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian all contain references to Christians exorcising demons.¹⁸ It is difficult to evaluate these references from the ante-Nicene period. Not everything that these uninspired men wrote was true. Also, since the powers of the demons were limited by the work of Jesus on the Cross (1 Cor. 15:57), did the limitation happen instantly or gradually, over a period of time? We understand that the miraculous gifts gradually ceased to exist. Could the

¹⁷. This author made a mission trip to Zambia and Botswana in July 1994. I was impressed with how many questions were directed toward the teachers concerning the spirit world.

¹⁸. For a survey of the references of the early Church fathers see David W. Bercot, "exorcism" in *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendriksen Publishers, 1998), 161-62.

powers of demons to possess an individual also have diminished in such a gradual manner? Since the New Testament does not furnish information to satisfy our every curiosity about demons, we must be careful to not be dogmatic on the subject of their limitation.

What use can be made of this study today? Do Christians need fear that demons can possess them today? I believe that it is reasonable to affirm that demons still exist but have been limited by the work of Christ. Satan's power has been limited by his defeat at the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (John 12:31). We need to understand that the defeat of Satan, while accomplished and certain in the action of Christ, still awaits completion at the second coming of Christ. Ferguson illustrates it this way:

D-Day was the designation for the landing of the allied troops on the beaches of Normandy in France, beginning on June 6, 1944. The successful invasion of fortress Europe sealed the outcome of the war against Nazi Germany. There was no longer doubt about the outcome. If the allied powers could successfully sustain an invasion force on the continent, the eventual defeat of Germany must follow. A lot of hard fighting ensued before the German surrender brought on the celebration of V-Day, Victory Day, on May 8, 1945. The first coming of Christ was D-Day, the successful invasion of enemy occupied earth by Christ. We could be even more specific and say that D-Day was Death Day. The second coming will be V-Day.¹⁹

Because of the work of Christ and this limitation on Satan and evil spirits, I believe it is necessary to make a

¹⁹. Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 161-62.

distinction between demon possession as we read in our New Testaments, and demon use, which I believe characterizes those who are outside of Christ today. Someone might object and ask, "What about reports of exorcisms today?" To this we need to understand that not everything done in the name of Jesus is true (Matt. 7:21-23). Just because it is affirmed as having occurred does not mean that the report is true. And, there are a great many differences between the exorcisms performed by Jesus and modern practices.²⁰

While acknowledging the reality of evil and the existence of Satan and demons, we must trust in the power and promises of God. He will not allow us to be overpowered by evil (1 Cor. 10:13). We have the Christian armor to defend ourselves from the attacks of Satan and those allied with him (Eph. 6:10-20). This armor of God does not include how to "exorcise" demons, let alone identify them! If exorcism is not included in the armor of God and in "all that is necessary to life and godliness" (Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3) can we correctly conclude that it is not needed?²¹

It must be understood that sin and deceit are chief weapons of Satan today (2 Cor. 4:4; 11:13-15). These are extremely powerful weapons in the arsenal of the enemy. Demon use can lead many to the enslavement of alcohol, drugs, pornography, etc. Who can read of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) and not be sobered by the power of the enemy? Who can read Paul's warning to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:1-3) and then not observe how many have given themselves to the "deceiving doctrines of demons?" Who has not experienced first hand either in his own life or in the lives of friends, neighbors, and relatives, the destructive

²⁰ . Jackson, 29 and Page, 181.

²¹ . Jackie Stearsman, *Study Notes on the Occult*, (Lakeland, FL: privately published, 1993), 30.

power of Satan? This is what is meant by demon use. As we face such a powerful enemy, we must fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12).

Again, we may think of a wild animal who has been wounded. He has received a mortal wound, a death blow, but until he actually dies, the animal is very dangerous, indeed more dangerous than before the wound was inflicted.²²

May we understand the reality of the spiritual world, but not fall into the ridiculous extremes regarding demons. As Page observes,

. . . the Bible represents every Christian as engaged in spiritual warfare and the struggles as primarily religious and moral. It would be wrong to focus on the sensational and unusual to the neglect of the more mundane but also more common. Demon possession appears to be a rather rare phenomenon, but satanic trials and temptations are the lot of all believers. The call to "put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:11) is applicable to each of us.²³

Biographical Sketch

Born – Warren, OH 4-19-59

Married in 1981 to the former Gayle Gleaton. Two sons: Mike, age 14; Vince, age 11.

Education – B.A. in Bible (1981) from Freed-Hardeman Univ. Presently working toward a Master's degree from Harding Graduate School.

Experience – Preaching for 23 years. Full time ministry:

²². Ferguson, 163.

²³. Page, 270.

Reynoldsburg, OH ('81-83)

Cervignano, Italy ('83-90)

Beville Road, Daytona Beach, FL ('90-2000)

10th & Clairmont, Cambridge, OH (2000-present).

Stateside campaigns – VA, OH

Foreign campaigns – Italy and Zambia, Botswana, Africa.

Instructor – Florida School of Preaching (1995-2000)

West Virginia School of Preaching (2001)

Rejection of the Carpenter

Michael Barclay

Introduction:

The account of the rejection of Jesus by His own people, those dwelling in Nazareth, is presented in a somewhat different light in the Mark's account than it is in the other gospel records. Here, Jesus is referred to not as the carpenter's Son, but as the Carpenter Himself. By implication, Jesus' earthly occupation gives us insight into His heavenly vocation. As the Builder of the physical world and the Author of our salvation, Jesus is shown to be the Master Craftsman. William Barclay says of the word "tekton" which is translated "carpenter" in Mark 6:1-6:

In Homer, the tekton is said to build ships and houses and temples. In the old days, and still today in many places, there could be found in little towns and villages a craftsman who would build you anything from a chicken coop to a house; the kind of man who could build a wall, mend a roof, repair a gate; the craftsman, the handy-man, who with few or no instruments and with the simplest tools could turn his hand to any job. William Barclay, The Gospel Of Mark Revised Edition, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1975, p.138.

The proposition under consideration is that in rejecting Jesus; the Jews of Nazareth rejected He who had crafted the universe, as well as, the plan for the redemption of mankind. It will be shown that the hand of Jesus Christ, the Master Craftsman, was in the the creation of all that exists, physically; and that He was among the planners of the only spiritual hope that could be held out to sinful man. In rejecting the Carpenter, the Jews had rejected both their Creator and their Savior. We will examine the Text soliciting thoughts that play into the theme of our study.

Then, we will present Jesus as the Creator of the physical universe. And, finally, we will note Jesus the Savior of the world in His role as a Designer and the Implementor of the plan of salvation.

I. An Examination Of The Text.

MARK

6:1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

6:2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

6:4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

6:5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6:6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

In the assigned Text, I found a couple of things that I thought were worthy of mention as it relates to the craftsmanship of Jesus. Verse 2 states that “many hearing him were astonished.” Upon arriving in Nazareth, Jesus begins teaching in, I would suggest, a similar fashion as is seen in the Sermon on the Mount. My thinking is based

upon the reaction of the hearers. Matthew recorded, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (MATTHEW 7:28-29). The statements of the Nazarenes seem to indicate amazement at the otherworldly wisdom of Jesus. And, yet, their statements belittle Him as one of them; common, not scholarly, a hometown Boy; a simple Carpenter. Therefore, they reject Him by which they have been astonished.

Verse 2 also suggests, I believe, that the power Jesus displayed was wielded by the Carpenter, the Craftsman, the Tekton, of the Universe. George Ricker Berry translates the end of the verse, “that even works of power such by his hands are done?” Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981, p.141. But, I like the concept found in the King James Version where the translation reads, “that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?” The word “wrought” reminds me of the wrought iron columns that were so common on the houses of the Memphis area of my childhood. “Wrought” carries the idea “worked” as a blacksmith, another type craftsman, would work iron or steel. Jesus had performed “mighty works” in His miracles, but He also was performing “mighty works” in His preaching as evidenced by the “astonishment” mentioned earlier. Yet, through power and astonishment, He is rejected. In rejecting the Carpenter, the people of Nazareth rejected their Creator.

II. Jesus, The Creator Of The Universe.

In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, God is presented as the Creator of “the heavens and the earth” (GENESIS 1:1). The Psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (PSALM 19:1). The Hebrews writer stated,

“For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God” (HEBREWS 3:4). In these passages, God is presented as the Creator of all, a Handy-man, and a Master Builder.

It is important to note that just as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were involved in the creation process, so was God the Son. Speaking of Jesus, John said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (JOHN 1:1-3). In this passage, Jesus is shown to be present “In the beginning.” He is also shown to be part of the Godhead. Further, He is counted an equal participant in the making of all that was made. Paul also acknowledges this fact by saying, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (COLOSSIANS 1:16).

Jesus, during His earthly ministry, preached His claim of deity and performed miracles to back up His claims. John claimed that God had become a Man. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...” (JOHN 1:14). Jesus claimed to be that Man. “...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (JOHN 8:58). Here, Jesus was referring His audience back to a conversation between God had with Moses. “And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (EXODUS 3:13-14). Nicodemus is an excellent example of one who saw the signs and believed. John wrote, “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same

came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (JOHN 3:1-2). The purpose of Jesus' preaching and miracles was was to bring about belief. “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (JOHN 20:30-31). In rejecting the Carpenter, the people of Nazareth rejected their Savior.

III. Jesus, The Savior Of The World.

In His position as Savior of the world, Jesus is said to be “the author and finisher of our faith...” (HEBREWS 12:2). Berry translates the word “author” from the King James Version as “leader.” I admit that I like the term “author” better. I think of a writer who crafts a great novel or an architect who crafts the plans for a skyscraper. The Hebrews writer continues, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (HEBREWS 12:2). Berry translates the word “finisher” from the King James Version as “completer.” In the spirit of the theme of the Carpenter, I am drawn to the term “finisher” as in finishing nails. The decorative work or finishing touches require a special kind of small nail. The finishing touches of the plan of salvation came at the cross when Jesus said, “It is finished” (JOHN 19:30). Jesus as the Author or Writer had His hand in the design of the plan. In His death, His hand was in the implementation of the plan.

That Jesus would be the Savior of the world and that the plan of salvation would be built on Him, using another building analogy the Cornerstone, was prophesied by Isaiah. “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious

corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” (ISAIAH 28:16). That there would be those who reject Jesus, particularly among the Jews, was also prophesied. “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner” (PSALM 118:22). Later, Jesus reminded the Jews of this very prophecy. “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?” (MATTHEW 21:42). After the Lord's death, Peter identified Jesus for the rulers and elders of Israel as the Cornerstone which they were rejecting. “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner” (ACTS 4:10-11)

The Cornerstone analogy continues as Paul describes the structure or “construction” of the church. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (EPHESIANS 2:19-22). Peter likewise uses Cornerstone and other building terminology to describe the church and our Lord. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house...” (1 PETER 2:5). “...Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious...” (1 PETER 2:6). “...The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (1 PETER 2:7). In rejecting the Carpenter, the Jews had rejected not only their Creator, but their Savior. They had rejected He who was a partaker in

the design of the only plan by which they could be saved. They had rejected He whose death had implemented the the plan. And, they had rejected the Chief Cornerstone in the church of God.

Conclusion:

The Jews of Nazareth rejected the local Carpenter who claimed to be the Son of God. Though they were astonished by His teachings and the miracles that had preceded His arrival, they saw only a man familiar to them, a simple Craftsman. They failed to perceive that this Craftsman was the Maker of all things and the Bringer of eternal life. The evidences were there and yet; they rejected Him. As Christians, we are searching for a city built by a Master Craftsman "...a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (HEBREWS 11:10).

Biographical sketch:

Michael D. Barclay preaches for the Roseville church of Christ in Roseville, Minnesota, a suburb of St. Paul. He has previously preached in Duluth, Minnesota and Iola, Kansas. He is a 1996 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He is also a 1986 graduate of Middle Tennessee State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science.

Michael is a past board member the Beaver Creek Bible Camp in Eau Claire, Wisconsin; which is now under the leadership of the elders of the Crystal Lake, Illinois church of Christ. He is an active teacher/counselor at BCBC. Michael is also a volunteer Chaplain for the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department.

Michael married the former Terri Lynn Elders in 1985 and they have two daughters, Caitlin Erin and Florence Adrianna. He enjoys Science Fiction, scary movies, military games, cross-country skiing, and dog-sledding.

The Olivet Discourse in Mark

Frank Higginbotham

On Tuesday in the week of the crucifixion of Christ, Jesus spoke the very important words that make up the Olivet Discourse. His words, spoken to his disciples on this occasion, have been twisted and misapplied with regularity since that time. From the speculation of the doctrine of Premillennialism to the 70 A.D. theory, the words of Christ have been twisted to justify many false ideas. It is imperative that we give careful study to this important lesson of Christ. There are three accounts of this discourse given by the writers of the New Testament. Matthew's account is found in Matthew twenty four and twenty five. Luke records this event and teaching in Luke twenty one and the account in Mark is in chapter thirteen. Mark is the basis for our study at this time. However, we will need to refer to the two other accounts remembering that they all teach the same thing and carry the same message.

The immediate background for this discourse is seen when we return to the stern words of Christ in Matthew twenty three. The Pharisee is strongly rebuked for hypocrisy. The fall of the Jewish nation is at hand. With tears Jesus explains that He often times wanted to draw them to Him but they would not. Judgment for their sins would soon be seen. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Mt. 23:38). They were still filled with pride which could be seen in the urging of one of the disciples for Jesus to observe the majesty of the great temple. With this Jesus makes a remarkable prediction concerning the temple. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (Mark 13:2). This statement would surely lead to other questions which would form the basis for the Olivet Discourse. Two subjects are

given attention in the Lord's lesson. First, there was a discussion concerning the fall of the nation of Israel and the destruction of their great temple and then the discussion would turn to the events concerning the Lord's return and the end of the world. Clear distinction needs to be made between these two events and the things that will accompany both. Next we need to look at the questions that were asked.

- Matthew When shall these things be?
 What are the signs of thy coming?
 What are the signs of the end of the world?
- Mark When shall these things be?
 What are the signs when all will be fulfilled?
- Luke When shall these things be?
 What signs will there be when these things
 come to pass?

It is possible that all of these questions asked may have been in regard to one event in the minds of the disciples but the Lord's answer covers two events. In His answer, Jesus distinguishes between the two events by the use of these two terms 'These things' and 'That day'. 'These things' refer to events that are about to come to pass. 'That day' has reference to the events of a future day. First, Jesus deals with their questions concerning the destruction of their great temple. These events were so near that they would find their fulfillment in 'this generation'. "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. (Mark 13:30); Mt. 24:34; Lk. 21:32. It is amazing that some people today have trouble in understanding what is meant by the expression 'this generation'. We have no trouble in understanding its meaning in other passages. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came

from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. “ (Mt. 12:41-42). It is clear that the expression ‘this generation’ is a term that pinpoints a very near event. The destruction of Jerusalem was at hand. The signs that were given for that generation cannot properly be applied to a distant event. For When Jesus refers to ‘that day’ he is turning in His discussion to events surrounding His second coming. The difference that He makes in ‘these things’ and ‘that day’ is that the first would have clear signs that they would be able to read. The second event would be without these clearly read signs. No one would know the time of the Lord’s second coming. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” (Mark 13:32); Mt. 24:36; Lk. 21:34.

The signs for the destruction of Jerusalem were most important for disciples of the Lord. The signs would enable them to escape Jerusalem and its destruction if they were read and followed carefully. The destruction that was to come is described by historians as perhaps the most terrible of human history. “For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.” (Mark 13:19-20). It would be a remarkable thing if anyone would be able to get out of the city unhurt. This could only occur if there were some foreknowledge that would be available to the elect. Jesus provided this in His great Olivet discourse. Jesus first describes the signs and then urges His disciples to flee the city at the proper time. History also tells us that this did occur and was the means of sparing the elect. The first warning Jesus gave was in regard to false Christs. “And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man

deceive you: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” (Mark 13:6). Jewish historians confirm that this did indeed occur. Next came warnings about conflict between nations, wars and rumors of wars. Upon seeing this occur they could be on the alert but needed to remember that this was not the end. There were to be signs in nature that they could observe. “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.” (Mark 13:8). It is amazing the number of people who refer to these statements and apply them to the coming of the Lord at the end of time. Every time an earthquake occurs or a tornado passes by a community, we begin to hear the local preachers using these things as a sign that the end of time is rapidly approaching. These signs were clearly for the destruction of Jerusalem and did not refer to the Lord’s second coming. Next the Lord makes known that the gospel would be preached to all nations before the destruction came. “And the gospel must first be published among all nations.” (Mark 13:10). This did indeed occur and took place before the great destruction of 70 A.D. Paul makes this assertion in regard to the commission given to the Apostles. “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.” (Col 1:23). These things having occurred they had yet one major thing to anticipate. A final alert was to be sounded. When this occurred they needed to immediately flee the city. This sign is referred to as ‘the abomination of desolation’. Note this warning recorded by Mark. “But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the

mountains:” (Mark 13:14). The reference to the statement of Daniel is found in Daniel 9. This is used by Jesus as a description of the thing that was to occur immediately before the destruction started. It is explained by Luke in a way that could not be misunderstood. “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.” (Luke 21:20). The ‘abomination of desolation’ which they were to look for was pictured as General Titus surrounding Jerusalem with his armies. When this occurred, the warning became urgent. They were no longer told, the end is not yet. They were warned to flee immediately. They must flee to the mountain top! If they were on their housetop they were not even to take the time to go down into the house. “And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:” (Mark 13:15). A speedy reaction was essential. If they were in the field, they must not turn back. “And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.” (Mark 13:16). Conditions for an immediate departure from Jerusalem would be much harder if one were the parent of a child. “But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!” (Mark 13:17). They were told to pray that their flight would not be in the Winter. Again this would add to the hardship of their immediate departure. “And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.” (Mark 13:18). Notice that these warnings are totally meaningless for the end of the world and the second coming of Christ. Where would we go if we were to flee at the second coming? What difference would be made if we went down into our house? Why would Winter be any worse than any other time, at the end of the world? It is a misunderstanding of the passage to force these signs into a concept of the Lord’s second coming. They are signs that enabled the children of God to flee the city of Jerusalem and the sure destruction that was coming. Added to the

signs given for the fall of Jerusalem is a very graphic description of the fall of a nation. In figurative language the Lord speaks using the stars of heaven to depict the overthrow of Israel. “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.” (Mark 13:24-27); Lk. 21:25-28; Mt. 24:31. The use of such language is also found in the overthrow of Babylon as in Isaiah 13. Note the language used in the destruction of Idumea in Isaiah 34 and of the destruction of Egypt in the book of Ezekiel 32. The reference to the coming of the Lord is in judgment against Israel and not the second coming. The Bible speaks of several comings of the Lord, sometimes in judgment as we have in this passage. Jesus promised that He would come quickly against the church in Ephesus and remove their candlestick unless they repented. “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” (Rev 2:5). The coming referred to in this passage is the Lord coming in the clouds with great power and glory as He brings judgment upon the corrupt nation of Israel. As the Lord concludes his teaching about this event He then teaches a parable of a fig tree which signals that Summer is near. Even so the signs that are given will signal that the time is at hand for the nation of Israel. These events would all take place in that generation. God’s word will surely come to pass. “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” (Mark 13:31).

At this point Jesus turns His attention to another day, the second coming of Christ. His disciples may have connected the two days because of their concept of the great destruction that the Lord had described in telling of the utter destruction of the temple. This day however, would be without prior signs to tell of its approach. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” (Mark 13:32). There would be signs that would spare some in the overthrow of Jerusalem but no signs for the second coming. An account is given of one who gives the keeping of his house to the care of another. He went on a far journey without leaving word of the time of his returning. He could possibly return at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning. The only way for his servants to rejoice at his return was for them to be ready at any time. The parallel account in the book of Matthew tells of the comparison to the days of Noah. Life was going on as usual. They were marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark. So shall the coming of the Son of man be. Two in the field, one taken and one left. “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Mt. 24:42). Next, reference is made to a thief who comes in the night. Did you ever hear of a thief who called ahead of time telling you the signs to watch for that would signal his coming? Neither would the Lord give signs telling of His return. Matthew 25 then tells of five wise and five foolish virgins. The difference between wise and foolish is preparedness. Five were ready for the marriage feast and the others were not. This teaching was given to warn the disciples that there would be no warning signs given for the Lord’s return. He wants us to be prepared at all times. “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” (Mt. 25:13).

Many have misused the signs that the Lord gave to help His disciples escape the terrible judgment of God on the nation of Israel. They are commonly applied to the return of the Lord a second time. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Heb 9:28). He will return but there will be no signs given. We must get ready and we must stay ready!

Biographical Sketch

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV a son of A. G. (Bus) and Garnet Higginbotham on February 21, 1933. He was graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville and from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. His first sermon was preached on June 8, 1952. He has done located with Columbia Street in Fairmont, Wellsburg, West Street in Weirton. He is currently in his 37th year of work with the Virginia Avenue congregation in Chester, WV. He is speaker on a daily radio program over WOHI in East Liverpool, OH that has been on the air for 52 years. He conducts several gospel meeting each year and appears on several lecture programs. He was married to Rose King in June of 1954. There were three children born to them. Donna (deceased), Janie (married to Brent Gallagher, preacher at Oakwood Road in Fairmont), and Steve (preacher at Glasgow, Ky). They have seven grandchildren.

Jesus Came Preaching

Terry Jones

Introduction

The Holy Bible is a vast warehouse of information. It contains lofty themes that challenge our mind, conform our life, charter our course, and change our eternal destiny. It presents a message simple enough for all to understand, yet its depth provides for a lifetime of joyous study. It provides knowledge for the unlearned, peace for the troubled, joy for the downtrodden, and hope for the lost. This world is filled with things that come and go, but the Bible continues to stand the test of time providing man with a message upon which to build a successful life.

The assigned subject for this study appears to be the centerpiece of the overall message of the Bible – “Jesus Came Preaching.” It is a subject containing only three simple words, yet compacted with a wealth of meaning. First of all, it begins with **Jesus**. Everything ought to begin with Jesus. We ought to think like Jesus (Phil. 2:5), talk like Jesus (1 Pet. 4:11), and act like Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21).

Secondly, our attention is called to the fact that Jesus **Came**. Think of the great significance of that. (1) It is significant because of *who* came – Jesus! He was no mere man, but the Son of God. Following Jesus’ baptism, “There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mk. 1:11). (2) It is significant because of *where* He came from – Heaven. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:1, 14). Jesus pre-existed eternally in Heaven with the Father. (3) It is significant because of *how* He came – born

of a virgin. “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Mt. 1:23). Jesus’ entrance into this world was a miraculous event. The angel of the Lord said to Joseph, “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Mt. 1:20). Jesus had an earthly mother and a Heavenly Father. (4) It is significant because of *why* He came – to bring salvation. “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21). Jesus, Himself, stated, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10). When we consider that we all have sinned and that all are in need of salvation, it is significant that Jesus came into this world to save us.

Thirdly, we are reminded that Jesus Came **Preaching**. He could have come into the world as a doctor, a lawyer, or any number of other things, but He came as a preacher. There was no greater work that He could have done. As a preacher He was able to change the lives of tax collectors, harlots, adulterers, and, basically, everyone with whom He came into contact. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). Every living creature ought to be eternally grateful to God that Jesus came preaching.

Now let us examine the topic *Jesus Came Preaching* from our text (Mk. 1:14-15). There we will notice Jesus’ mission and message.

JESUS’ MISSION

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). Jesus entered this world with a mission from the Father in Heaven. His early years were spent preparing for it. At the age of twelve when Joseph and Mary found

Jesus in the temple, following a three-day search, Jesus said to them, *“How is it that ye sought me? Know ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”* (Lk. 2:49). Then, at the close of His ministry, Jesus declared that He had successfully completed His mission. In John 17:4, He prayed, *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* In our text, Mark tells us about the beginning of Jesus’ ministry.

The Start. It appears that at least a year had lapsed between the temptation of Jesus (Mk. 1:12-13) and the imprisonment of John (Mk. 1:14). During that time, Jesus was teaching in Judea and baptizing more disciples than John (Jn. 4:1). Following John’s imprisonment, Jesus left Judea and traveled north into Galilee to preach where John had been for months preparing the way for Him. Although Jesus first taught in Judea, His ministry in Galilee was so much greater that it was spoken of as the official beginning of Jesus’ ministry. To those in the house of Cornelius, Peter said, *“That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached”* (Acts 10:37).

The Subject. That which Jesus preached was the gospel of the kingdom of God. The gospel was the good news of the setting up of an unending kingdom that should convert the world to righteousness and save the souls of men. Matthew 13 records for us a series of parables that the Lord preached concerning the kingdom.

The Scope. The kingdom of which Jesus preached was universal. At its establishment, the gates of the kingdom would be opened to welcome obedient believers from around the globe. The prophet Isaiah foretold that folks from every nation would enter the kingdom of God. *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all*

nations shall flow unto it" (Is. 2:2). The scope of the kingdom is universal.

Jesus' Message

In verse 15, Mark provides for us a summary of the message that Jesus preached. "*And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" In these words we find three essential elements to the message Jesus preached.

The Time Is Here. For hundreds of years the prophets had foretold of the eternal kingdom that the God of Heaven would set up. For example, Daniel prophesied, "*And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever*" (Dan. 2:44). The seventy weeks of Daniel (490 years) had been accomplished. Now, Jesus came to Galilee preaching that the waiting period was over and that the time had come for His kingdom to begin.

The Kingdom Is Near. This was a part of John's preparatory preaching. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:1-2). The preaching of Jesus reinforced that message as He informed the multitudes that the kingdom of God was at hand. The King had already come, but the kingdom in its organization was still only "at hand." That could not be accomplished until after the crucifixion of Christ, and the shedding of His blood for the purification of the entrants into the kingdom (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-18).

Obedience Is Clear. Jesus here revealed that there were certain requirements demanded by those who would enter the kingdom. He commanded, "*repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" Entrance into the kingdom demands obedience. Citizens of the kingdom must obey the King.

Jesus rebuked some, saying, “*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Lk. 6:46). Jesus commanded the multitudes to prepare for the kingdom by repenting of sin, and believing the good news that the kingdom was approaching.

Following the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the apostles began preaching the gospel throughout the world, inviting believers into the kingdom of God through repentance and baptism (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). The preaching of the gospel is God’s power to save lost souls. We must be eternally grateful that Jesus came preaching.

Biographical Sketch

Terry Jones was born in Parkersburg, WV and was raised in Toll Gate, WV. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They now have two sons: Austin and Quintin. He is a graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, TN. He received his BA Degree from Ohio Valley College in May 1996. He worked with the church in Mountain City, TN from 1986 to 1989. He then moved to Pennsboro, WV where he has been preaching to the present.

Inheriting Eternal Life

Matt Thomas

Introduction

Several years ago, shortly after the birth of our first son, Monica and I decided to go to a local attorney and prepare a “Last Will and Testament” for each of us. It was an eerie feeling to be thinking of death at such a young age, but we thought it was the responsible thing to do. Recently, I got it out to review and update, and to study over for an illustration for this lesson. Someone’s “Last Will and Testament” is also someone else’s inheritance.

My will begins, “I, Matthew Richard Thomas, of Athens Co., Ohio, publish and declare this as and for my Last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all prior wills.” I must keep my will updated as circumstances change in my life. My most recent will always nullifies the former one. It then continues, “I Matthew Richard Thomas, devise and bequeath to my Wife, Monica Sue Thomas, my entire estate, real and personal, provided she survives me for a period of 30 days. In the event my Wife, Monica Sue Thomas, predeceases me, I hereby devise and bequeath my entire estate, real and personal to my Son, Kolton Oakley Thomas.”

What a Last Will and Testament does is to make possible a smooth transition of possessions from one person to another, or from one generation to the next, usually from parents to children, by revealing the will of the possessor. The possessions are called an “inheritance,” the recipients are the “heirs,” and the act is called “inheriting.” It is this earthly custom that the Holy Spirit chose to illustrate to us the manner in which we shall receive the eternal riches of our Father in heaven. In this lecture we will discuss how we

may receive the inheritance of God. To do so, we shall examine the text of Mark 10:17-22.

Discussion

As Jesus was traveling through the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, a young man came running toward him and knelt before him and asked, “*Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life,*” (Mk. 10:17). This question is synonymous with the question, “What must I do to be saved.” To be saved *IS* to inherit eternal life. It is, in my opinion, the greatest question ever asked to the greatest person who ever lived. Jesus does answer the question, in two parts. It would be wise for us to pay careful attention to both the question and the answer given.

THE QUESTION “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” is properly stated by the young man. It is evident that he recognized at least three great truths. First, he asked the right person - Jesus Christ - the one to whom divine authority has been given to make such judgments. He did not rely on the instruction of the scribes and Pharisees, nor his parents nor friends to get the answer to such an important question. He seized the opportunity to hear it straight from the source, the giver of eternal life, Jesus Christ the Son of God. It is paramount that we today go to the right source when asking religious questions. Unless we learn to go to the right source with our spiritual inquiries, we run the risk of being misguided away from eternal life. The young ruler came to the right man!

The second great truth the young man recognized is that there is a *joint effort* involved with inheriting eternal life. The fact that he did not ask, “What must I do to *EARN* eternal life?” suggests that he knew something of the grace of God in saving mankind. He knew that it was not something to be earned, but to be freely given. He even used the term “inherit,” suggesting that he understood the concept of a spiritual family, God being the Father and

giver of the inheritance. This young man was no stranger to the Word of God. The absence of correction from Jesus also testifies that this man asked a very good question in a well thought-out fashion.

Third, it is evident from his question that he recognized the responsibility that God has placed upon man to obey His will in order to receive the inheritance. Inheriting eternal life is conditional! Though there is no way to earn this inheritance, there are certain conditions which men must meet. This is why he asked, “What shall I *DO* that I may inherit eternal life?”! Once again, we see the joint effort necessary in inheriting eternal life. God has a part, and man has a part! Without either one, there can be no salvation. So it is true that we are saved by the grace of God, and it is also true that we are to do something in response to the grace of God. What shall we do?

THE ANSWER Jesus gave to the young ruler’s question may be broken down into two parts. Since Jesus answered the question according to the requirements of the law of Moses (being prior to His death upon the cross), we must realize that we are looking for the principles laid down in His answer. There are two great principles given by our Lord that we must learn and apply today while we live under the law of Christ.

First, in response to the question, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus meets the young man on his terms, answering just what the young ruler wanted to hear . . . “*You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’*” (10:19a). You can almost hear the sigh of relief coming from the young man as he responded again, “*Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.*” Undoubtedly, Jesus was right in that keeping the commandments of God is an essential factor in inheriting eternal life. Consider these passages: “*If you love me, keep my commandments,*”

Jn. 14:15; *“He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him,”* Jn. 14:21; *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves,”* Jas. 1:22; *“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight”* 1 Jn. 3:22. These passages teach clearly that it is essential for a child of God today to concern himself with learning and keeping the commandments of God!

It is interesting to note, however, that Jesus quoted only from the second section of the decalogue (commandments #5-#10), which deals with relationships between fellow men. Jesus, who *“knew what was in man”* (Jn. 2:25), was making progression in His answer toward the real problem, the failure on the part of the young man to obey commandment #1, *“You shall have no other gods before me,”* and the greatest commandment according to Jesus, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,”* Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36-37. This leads us into the second part of the conversation.

There was another question (according to Matt. 19:20) that the young man asked Jesus to which the Lord directed the second part of His answer: *“What do I still lack?”* the young ruler asked. Perhaps he had recognized that just keeping the rules was not enough, for he seemed to have a yearning within that left him dissatisfied with his present service to God, and bringing him to his knees before the Lord. Whatever the case, Jesus here gave him the answer in full, *“One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me,”* (10:21). Why did Jesus require such a great sacrifice from this seemingly contrite young man. It is evident from the context that the reason Jesus required him to sell “all he

had” was that “all he had” was coming between him and God. The young ruler’s sadness coupled with his rejection to Jesus’ invitation shows that this second requirement was where the problem lied. God was at least 2nd on this man’s priority list. He was faced with the choice of following Jesus, or following after his riches. He chose riches.

This account shows just how serious God is when He asks us to put Him first. One can even go through the motions of religious service, and labor and toil for the name of Christ, and still not have God first in their heart. Many other examples have we of this very principle: *“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for my name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love,”* Rev. 2:2-4; *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone,”* Matt. 23:23. The story of the rich young ruler is a great illustration of the great truths taught by Jesus in Matt. 6:21, *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,”* and Matt.6:24b, *“You cannot serve both God and mammon.”*

Conclusion

Perhaps the inward yearning of the rich young ruler is the same yearning many have today who are discontented with their present commitment to God. For when we view God’s word as a “rule book,” and the summation of our service to God is based upon works of merit, we can become dissatisfied just like the young ruler.

Too often, I believe, children of God try to separate “commandment keeping” from “love” by considering one

to be more important than the other. Many will focus on loving God and their fellow man to the exclusion of adhering to the details of the Law of Christ. On the other hand, many focus so intently on the legalities of the Law of Christ that they forget their primary motivation, to love God and their neighbor from the heart! The fact of the matter is, “keeping the commandments” involves both external conduct and internal motivation! Children of God today must make a constant effort to strike a balance between the two. To love God and fellow man and to do good works are bound together in the Law of Christ. They are inseparable, and essential in inheriting eternal life.

So, what shall a man do today to inherit eternal life? He must become an heir of the Father by entering into the family of God. This is done through faith and obedience, believing with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37), repenting of sins with godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), confessing Him with the mouth, and being born into the family of God through baptism in water. This is doing just what Paul commended the Romans for, “*obeying from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered*” (Rom 6:17). Then God “adds” you to His family (Acts 2:47), and makes you an heir of salvation and of the riches of His kingdom. Then we may say:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,”
1 Peter 1:3-5.

Biographical Sketch

Matt Thomas lives in Nelsonville, Ohio with his wife Monica and three children: a son, Kolton (9), and two daughters, Taylor (6), and Emelia (3). Matt is originally from Wadsworth, Ohio, and now serves as a minister to the campuses of Ohio University and Hocking College, a ministry begun by the Blackburn Hill congregation in Athens, Ohio, in 1997. He began the work in July of 1997 upon graduation from the West Virginia School of Preaching.

New Wine In Old Wineskins

Charles Aebi

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this lectureship and to deal with the topic assigned to me, “New Wine in Old Wineskins.” I once visited a winery, and I once listened to a lecture by a bartender who was billed as “an expert in making and serving wines,” but neither experience told me anything about wineskins.

The topic is from that teaching of Jesus found in the parable of new wine in old wineskins in Matthew 9:17; Mark. 2:22; and Luke 5:37-39. Perhaps it will be profitable at this point to look at a format this writer developed some years ago in teaching a class on “The Parables of Jesus.” This format can be used to analyze any parable, though some of its points may not apply in any given case. The format is that part in bold type, and the application to this parable is in regular type, as follows:

I. Format For Parables

Parable: New Wine in Old Wineskins.

Text: Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39.

Subject: Fasting When Appropriate.

Central truth/lesson: It was as inappropriate for his disciples to fast during Jesus' personal ministry as it would be to put new wine into old wineskins.

Incidental truths/lessons: The principle of appropriateness could be applied to many things, but would need some other Scriptural evidence to substantiate the application.

Context:

>Topic(s) of larger context:

Before: Matt. 9:9-13; Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:27-32—Criticism for eating at Matthew's Levi's) house with publicans and sinners.

After: Matt. 9:18-34—Miracles: Jairus' daughter, bleeding woman, blind men, demon.
Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5—Controversy about plucking grain on the sabbath.

>Topic(s) of immediate context:

Matt. 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33—Question about why Jesus' disciples didn't fast.

Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19f; Luke 5:34f—Parable of friends of bridegroom: inappropriate to fast.

Matt. 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36—Parable of new patch on old garment: inappropriate to fast.

>Question that may have occasioned this parable:

Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?

>Key words/introductory formula used to introduce it: None.

The story itself:

>Summary: Don't put new wine (fresh grape juice) in old (hardened and inflexible) wineskins, or the skins will burst when the juice ferments, destroying both wine and skins. Use fresh wineskins for fresh wine, and old wineskins for old, fully fermented wine.

>Special customs/words to note: Wine: grape juice.
Wineskins: animal skins (usually from sheep or goats, tanned into leather bottles) used to hold grape juice, water, etc.

>Interpretation difficulties: Is this parable speaking only to the issue of the appropriateness of fasting as opposed to feasting at that time, or should it be understood to be contrasting the old and new laws, or of the law and tradition. The context is vital in determining this.

Historical (1st c.) application: It was appropriate to fast while mourning, but while Jesus was with his disciples—before the crucifixion and his being taken to heaven—was not a time for mourning, thus not of fasting. Fasting then was no more appropriate than to put new wine in old wineskins.

General application to life today: Fast when appropriate; fasting is not commanded on a regular basis in the New Testament. Incidental applications could be made to anything that is inappropriate, but would need some other Scriptural evidence to substantiate the application, because such applications are not what was originally meant. There is a rule in hermeneutics that a passage may not mean what it never meant.

Specific application(s) to my life: Same as the above general application.

II. Discussion Of The Parable

In Matthew 9, after being criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus was asked why his disciples did not fast like the disciples of John and the Pharisees. The wording of the text here is important [The American Standard Version will be used throughout this discussion unless otherwise specified]. In Luke the question is implied; in Matthew and Mark it is stated:

“Then come to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?” (Matthew 9:14).

“And John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?” (Mark 2:18).

“And they said unto him, The disciples of John fast often, and make supplications; likewise also the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink” (Luke 5:33).

A combining of the three accounts shows that John’s disciples and the Pharisees and their disciples made it a habit to fast (and pray) regularly, which they saw at odds with Jesus’ feasting with his disciples. Jesus had just attended a feast at Matthew’s house at a time when, Mark tells us, the Pharisees and John’s disciples were fasting. The Pharisees had already criticized Jesus for eating with many publicans and sinners, and he had answered them with both Scripture and logic. Now they are joined by John’s disciples in questioning why Jesus and his disciples did not fast at the traditional times. Although prayer is mentioned, the question is about fasting, and it, like the question about eating with tax collectors and sinners, and the later questions about sabbath observance, was about tradition or custom rather than about the law itself. The law specified fasting as required only on the day of atonement; their tradition was to fast on Mondays and Thursdays (Luke 18:12). The Pharisees regularly equated their traditions with law, and Jesus often challenged their traditions, sometimes declaring that their traditions were in violation of the law, nullifying the word of God by their tradition observance (Matthew 15:6). We cannot be sure exactly why John’s disciples here aligned themselves with the Pharisees in fasting and in criticizing Jesus for not fasting, but they did.

Jesus’ answer in three parables in Matthew 9:15-17, Mark 2:19-22, and Luke 5:34-39 was to the effect that fasting was inappropriate at that time. The first of the three parables, that of the friends of the bridegroom (Matthew 9:15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35) uses the figure of Jesus as the bridegroom [the church is the bride] and his disciples as his friends who keep him company before the wedding,

referring to the time of Jesus ministry on earth before the cross. It was not a time for mourning or bereavement then (Matthew 9:15 uses the term “mourn”); there would be time for mourning after the bride-groom (Jesus) was taken away (crucified and taken to heaven). Since fasting is often connected with mourning, fasting was not appropriate during Jesus' personal ministry; that would come later when Jesus was no longer on earth.

Without changing the subject, Jesus continued by showing that fasting at that time would be no more appropriate than putting a new patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment (which would make the tear in the old garment worse). The parable of new patches on old garments is the second of the three parables; the parables of wineskins and patches are very similar, and their meaning obviously the same. After the patches on garments parable, Jesus continued, still not changing the subject, with the third parable, that of the new wine in old wineskins, stated in these words:

Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins: else the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins perish: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and both are preserved (Matthew 9:17).

And no man putteth new wine into old wineskins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins (Mark 2:22).

37 And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the new wine will burst the skins, and itself will be spilled, and the skins will perish.
38 But new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins. 39 And no man having drunk old wine

desireth new; for he saith, The old is good (Luke 5:37-39).

The message is that fasting then would be no more appropriate than putting new wine into old wineskins. This would cause the old, hardened, inflexible wineskins to burst because when the fresh grape juice fermented it would expand beyond the ability of the old wineskins to stretch. Jesus is not arguing the case for or against drinking intoxicating wine. The intent of all three parables is to illustrate the truth that fasting was inappropriate for Jesus and His disciples at that time. Feasting was more appropriate, for, as he had just indicated in Mark 2:17, feasting gave him an opportunity to call sinners to repentance, as well as to instruct his disciples.

III. The Application Of The Wineskins Parable

How should this parable be applied today? Some ignore the context and apply it to the old versus new law, Old Testament versus New Testament, or old versus new traditions. If that had been Jesus' intent, consistency would seem to require him to contrast the old and new wine, not old wineskins and new wine, and to say that the new wine is better. But only in Luke (5:39) does he note the contrast of old and new wine, and there he represents the taster (which must represent the Jewish viewpoint) as saying that the old is better. Aside from Luke 5:39, there is nothing in the context suggesting that Jesus is contrasting laws, and Luke 5:39 does not refer to laws but to tradition. Even the sabbath controversies in the larger context of Mark and Luke (after the parable) do not deal with a contrast between the old and new laws, but with Jewish tradition regarding the law.

The message of these parables, when taken in context in each of the three Gospels where they are found, is Jesus'

answer to why they were not then fasting. It has nothing directly to do with the old law or the new law. Only in the sense that it is not appropriate to mix the old law with the new law could it be said that new wine refers to the new law and the old wineskins the old.

Passages like Colossians 2:14-17, Galatians 5:3-4, and Hebrews 1:1-2; 9:15-17 are clearly aimed at showing we are not under the law of Moses and should not mix it with the law of Christ today. Let's stick to just such passages to prove that we live under the new covenant rather than the old, for if we use passages with other meanings we weaken our case. It is always imperative to apply each passage in harmony with its context (or original setting); the wine-wineskins setting deals with fasting, not a change in legal system.

The same thing is true of the question about mixing modern religious practices with the ancient gospel: to do so is inappropriate. Some misuse the wineskins parable to try to justify changing the church to align with current religious ideas, or to say that modern people should not be made to adhere to the pattern of New Testament Christianity. This is a perversion of the parable. Just the opposite is true: Jesus was teaching against injecting current traditions into his ministry. But we have clearer references than the wineskins parable to condemn diluting the gospel with the prevailing winds of custom. Such passages as 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Galatians 1:6-9, 2 John 9-11, and Revelation 22:18-19 show that we are not to mix New Testament ideas with liberal theology or any other of this world's religious notions; let's use them, not wineskins.

The basic message of the parable of new wine in old wineskins is that it was inappropriate. By extension we can generalize the principle to show that many things are inappropriate in the customs of our day. How can a thing be shown to be inappropriate for the Christian, but by showing

that it is detrimental to the functioning of the Christian as defined by the New Testament? And how can anything be shown to be inappropriate for the church to do, but by showing that it is either unlawful or inexpedient by hindering the church from doing what her head commands in the New Testament?

Biographical Sketch

Charles J. Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the gospel in 1949 and began preaching in 1952. He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University.

He has served as minister for churches in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Texas, and has preached and held workshops in several states and in foreign countries. He taught Bible for 34 years at Ohio Valley College, where he served for 15 years as academic dean and for 6 years as chairman of the Bible Department. He retired from Ohio Valley College in 1998, and currently is serving as minister for the Rosemar Road Church of Christ in Parkersburg, WV, and speaks on lectureships and holds several workshops and meetings each year. He teaches at the West Virginia School of Preaching, and he writes for West Virginia Christian, Gospel Advocate, and other papers, and has authored seven books and chapters in several other books.

Charles and his wife Imogene have four children and twelve grandchildren. Among their children and their spouses they count four school teachers, two medical doctors, a preacher, a nurse, three deacons who all preach on occasion, and eight Bible class teachers.

Address: Rt. 1, Box 237, Vincent OH 45784

Phone: 740-678-2568

E-mail: cjandi@juno.com

Introduction, Source Criticism, Q, Date, Order

Owen Olbricht

Mark is the shortest of the four gospels. Even though its material is similar in many ways to that of Matthew and Luke, it differs in various ways. (1) Instead of telling of the birth of John and Jesus as does Luke, or just the birth of Jesus as does Matthew, Mark begins with a brief discussion of John's ministry and the baptism and temptation of Jesus. (2) It contains no genealogy. (3) Being mostly narrative, Mark includes very little of the teaching of Jesus. (4) The activities of Jesus are sometimes described in more graphic detail than in Matthew and Luke. (4) The chronology is usually very accurate. (5) Jesus is pictured as departing from the crowds to go to solitary places in order to be refreshed. (6) Only two of Jesus' kingdom parables are included, one of which is not found in the other gospels (Mark 4:26, 27). (7) Mark includes four parables in comparison to fifteen in Matthew and nineteen in Luke.

Authorship

As with the other gospels, Mark is anonymous. For this reason determining who wrote Mark is not easy. The most compelling information concerning its author is found in external evidence. A quotation by Clement of Rome, A.D. 95, (1 Clement 46:8) resembles a statement in Mark (Mark 9:42) but a direct quotation cannot be proved.

Eusebius quoted Papias (A.D. 140) as saying, "And John the Presbyter also said this, Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he wrote with great accuracy, but not however in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord, for he neither heard nor followed our Lord, but as before said, he was in company

with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary..." (*Eccl. Hist.* III. 39).

Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) in *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. cvi., attributed a quotation from Mark 3:17 to "Peter's Memoirs." The Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark (A.D. 150-180) stated that Mark was "stump-fingered," then added that he interpreted Peter and wrote his gospel in Italy after Peter's death.

Irenaeus (A.D. 180) is quoted by Eusebius as having written that Mark transcribed what Peter preached (*Eccl. Hist.* V. 8). Eusebius quoted that Clement of Alexander (A.D. 190) stated that by request Mark wrote what he could remember of Peter's preaching, which, when Peter heard read, being moved by the Spirit, delighted in the composition (*Ibid.* II.15). Tertullian (A.D. 200) wrote in *Against Marcion* (*Ibid.*, IV. 5) that Mark published the gospel told to him by Peter. Eusebius quoted from Origin (A.D. 230) that Mark composed his gospel as Peter explained it to him (*Ibid.*, VI. 25).

The weight of tradition points to Mark as the author. There is no good reason for us to think otherwise. Mark could have learned the teaching and life of Christ from Peter (1 Peter 5:13) who was an eyewitness to the life and teaching of Jesus and from Paul (Acts 13:5b). Having been with these apostles Mark most likely was given the gift of prophecy through the laying of on their hands, thus making him a NT prophet (Eph. 3:5) able to write by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Source

The early writers almost unanimously agree that Mark wrote what he learned from Peter. On the other hand, Augustine (A.D. 354-400) contended that Mark's gospel was a condensation of Matthew. If a late date is assigned to Mark, then Matthew, in order to write in his lifetime, would have been written first. Other views have arisen in the last

200 years concerning the sources Mark used: (1) Mark was written first from oral traditions and then copied by others. (2) Mark compiled his material from numerous written and oral traditions.

As with the book of Luke (Luke 1:1-4), Mark probably gathered information on which to base the book of Mark. This need not eliminate the help of the Holy Spirit in the collection and writing of the book or in the assembling, editing, and transcribing information gathered from Peter and Paul. Those who believe in the work of the Holy Spirit can accept the book of Mark as inspired of God and not simply as Peter's verbal memoirs put together along with other sources assembled by Mark who relied his own fallible memory and ability to assemble them. After all is said and done, the Holy Spirit is the one source on which the truths in the gospel of Mark are based.

Date

Because the book of Mark is considered by many scholars to have been the first of the four gospels to be written, the date is usually given as between A.D. 65 to 67. Clement of Alexander (*Eccl. Hist.* II. 15; VI. 14) wrote that Mark was written before Peter's death, but Papias (*Ibid.* III. 39) wrote that it was after his death. If he wrote after Peter's death, which is generally accepted, the above date would be assumed. This would mean that Mark wrote before Paul's arrival in Rome around A.D. 63 and departure after two years. If it was written before Peter's death, the date should be set at A.D. 52 to 60, after the council in Jerusalem but before Paul's arrival in Rome.

The later date is chosen because it assumed that Mark put prophetic words into Jesus' mouth after the Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70. "But when you see the abomination of the desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains." (Mark 12:14).

Mark's reference to persecution (Mark 8:34-38; 10:38-40; 13:9-13) has caused some to choose a late date which would place its origin after Christians began to suffer for their faith. These arguments do not take into account the prophetic ability of Jesus.

Assigning a date might also depend on who wrote first, Mark or Matthew. The dispute as to who wrote first probably will never be settled. According to Eusebius, Origin wrote concerning the four gospels, "The first is written according to Matthew... The second is according to Mark" (*Eccl. Hist.* VI. 25). The book of Matthew appearing first in order in the canon of the NT could indicate that it predated Mark. Matthew and Mark could have written about the same time without any knowledge of what the other wrote. Settling this question is only important if an effort is being made to determine if Mark condensed Matthew's gospel or if Matthew copied from Mark. Surely an apostle, an eyewitness, would not have copied from Mark who never met Jesus or heard Him speak.

The assumption is made that Mark was written after Paul wrote the book of Romans around A.D. 56 because Paul seemingly implies that no apostle, including Peter had as of yet visited Rome. This would mean that if Mark was with Peter and wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem, the date would be no earlier than A.D. 56 and no later than A.D. 70.

Place of Origin

Most early writers, maintained that Mark was written in Italy and perhaps Rome. These include, the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Mark fragment and those quoted by Eusebius--Irenaeus (*Eccl. Hist.*, V. 8), Clement of Alexander (*Ibid.*, II. 15), and Origin (*Ibid.*, VI. 25) . Both Clement of Rome and Shepherd of Hermes quote from Mark, which may be evidence that Mark's gospel was written in Rome. The exception, Chrysostom (*Prooem in*

Matt.) who suggested Mark was written in Egypt, is not taken seriously.

Destination

If it is concluded that Mark was written in Rome, it would seem natural that he would write for a Gentile audience and especially those of the Roman and Greek culture. Certain characteristics indicate that this might be true, as pointed out by William L. Lane:

In the language, Mark shows a distinct preference for Latin technical terms, particularly terms connected with the army (e.g. *legion*, Ch. 5:9; *praetorium* Ch. 15:16; *centurion*, Ch. 15:39), the courts (e.g. *speculator*, Ch. 6:27; *flagellare*, Ch. 15:15), the commerce (e.g. *denarius*, Ch. 12:15; *quadrans*, Ch. 12:42). ...twice common Greek expressions in the Gospel are explained by Latin ones (Ch. 12:42, “two copper coins [*lepta*], which make a *quadrans*”; Ch. 15:16, “the palace, that the *praetorium*”). The first of these examples is particularly instructive, for the *quadrans* was not in circulation in the east. (*The Gospel According to Mark*, Grand Rapids, Mich.,: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974, p. 24).

Instead of three watches of the night according to Jewish reckoning of time, Mark mentions four according to Roman usage. For Gentile readers he explains Palestinian customs (7:3; 14:12; 15:42) and translates Aramaic expressions (3:17; 7:11, 34; 9:43; 10:46; 15:22, 34) into Greek.

The evidence seems to indicate that the gospel of Mark was written with Gentile readers in mind.

Occasion and Purpose

Those who were eye witnesses and inspired teachers were passing from the scene. Mark fills the need to preserve and to circulate the message concerning the resurrected Lord, the Son of God (Mark 1:1; 15:39) who is to be followed with sacrificial dedication (Mark 8:34). If Mark was written for the Gentile world, then it was to show an active Jesus with power as the Messiah. The purpose seems to be to help those who read to understand who Jesus is and what discipleship requires.

Canonicity

Mark was quoted by many of the early writers, as noted above, and is included in the early lists of accepted scriptures. It is contained in the Muratorian Fragment list (A.D. 170 – 190). During the 2nd and 3rd centuries, it is appealed to as authoritative. Athanasius included it in the list of 27 books in his Easter letter A.D. 367. The council in Carthage (A.D. 397) made this list official.

Text

The Western manuscripts that contain many of the books of the Bible, among which are **B** (Codex Vaticanus, 4th century) and **S** or **Ⲕ** (Codex Sinaiticus, 4th century), are considered by most scholars to be superior to the Eastern manuscripts which includes **A** (Codex Alexandrinus, 5th century). The whole of Mark appears in these codices. The only exception is the longer ending (16:9-20) that does not appear in the two 4th century manuscripts. Mark does appear in earlier manuscripts and versions, a number of which contain the longer ending.

Content

The following is a brief outline of the contents of Mark:

- I. The events preceding Jesus' ministry (1:1-13).
- II. Jesus' Galilee ministry (1:14-9:50).
- III. Jesus' Perea ministry (10:1-52)
- IV. Jesus' Judean ministry (11:1-13:37)
- V. Events leading up to and including Jesus' crucifixion and burial (13:38-15:47)
- IV. Jesus' resurrection (16:1-20).

Synoptic Problem

Based on the similarities shared by Matthew, Mark and Luke, scholars have developed various theories concerning the development of these gospels. In recent years the two-source theory has been the most widely accepted for the synoptic gospels:

1 Mark, on whom Matthew and Luke depend for their narrative sections. **2** A source, the existence of which is inferred purely from the textual evidence, and which is called 'Q' (initial of the German word *Quelle*, source). From Q, both the first and third Gospels draw the 'Sayings' or discourses of Jesus *(*'Logia'*), which in Mark are barely represented. In spite of its simplicity, or rather because of it, this very widely accepted theory fails to resolve all problems. Neither Mark in its present form, nor Q as it is commonly reconstructed can suffice to play the part which is attributed to it. (*Jerusalem Bible*, p. 1600).

*("Logia" is used because Papias alluded to Matthew' inclusion of Jesus teaching as *logia*.)

Some serious problems with the two-source theory led Streeter to suggest another possibility that has not been widely accepted:

But Streeter conjectured that in addition the author of Matthew had and used a written collection of

the Gospel material, which may be called M. Our Matthew is thus a combination of Mark, Q, and M. ... Thus Streeter arrived at his Four-Document theory. Matthew and Luke had four written sources; behind Matthew were Mark, Q, and M; while behind Luke lay L and Q, combined to form Proto-Luke, into which large portions of Mark were later inserted to produce our

Gospel of Luke. (*The International Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised, 1982, vol. p. 535).

Other theories have arisen since Steeter. Donald Guthrie (*New Testament Introduction*, Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1970, p.144-146) discusses three others: one called "T," another "Sg," and another "K." These theories state that the gospels included a compilation of other sources along with Q. Perhaps a parody of Solomon's statement (Eccl. 12:12) would be, "Of the making of many synoptic theories there is no end."

Those who have sought to determine the sources of the various sections of the gospels have not reached unanimity concerning the sources, but they all seem confident that the synoptic gospels are based on numerous sources. The reason for this approach is the commonality that exists in the synoptic gospels:

Some 606 vv. out of Mark's total of 661 appear, although somewhat abridged, in Matthew, and 380 reappear in Luke. Only 31 vv. in Mark have no parallel in either Mathew or Luke. In addition, there are some 250 vv. common to Matthew and Luke that have no parallel in Mark. Obviously, this synoptic relationship can be viewed in different ways. Many olutions have been proposed, but none has won unanimous agreement. (*The Zondervan*

Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 2, p. 788.

Over the past two centuries the progression of scholarly approach to the synoptic problem has been: (1) source criticism, classifying of the origin of the various materials on which the gospels are built; (2) form criticism, classifying of the nature of the materials based on the way the units were put together; (3) redaction criticism, classifying the content according to the writers purpose; and more recently (4) literary criticism, which is not concerned with seeking sources, unit similarity, or the author's intention, but rather, feels that the goal should be each reader finding meaning in his encounter with the text. Even though each of these theories still has their adherents, there is a general attitude of "agnosticism" toward these various theories in the more conservative circles. Liberal scholars may hold either to the Q theory with differing modifications or to the literary criticism approach.

The reason there is no unanimity is that each of these approaches has their difficulties:

(1) Even though there are similarities in ideas in the synoptic gospels, there are subtle differences in the wording. An example of this is the inscription on the cross:

Matt. 27:37 This is Jesus the King of the Jews.

Mark 15:16 The King of the Jews.

Luke 23:38 This is the King of the Jews.

John 19:19 Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.

(2) There are similarities in incidents, but differences in details. An example is the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22). Matthew is more detailed than Mark.

(3) Words used as well as noun and verb forms, even though often similar, may differ. These are too numerous to list.

(4) Some incidents are similar, but are different in order: Consider the temptations of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11;

Luke 4:1-13). Mark does not give the details (Mark 1:12, 13).

(5) Parables may be similar but differ in order or in inclusion:

Matt. 13:23	hundredfold, sixty, thirty.
Mark 4:20	thirtyfold, sixty, hundred.
Luke 8:15	bear fruit.

Because the synoptic gospels do not follow a consistent model, most scholars have become skeptical of determining the sources of all the sections in the gospels. Various letters are now used to designate various sections instead of different sources. R. Alan Cole gives the following explanation:

This solution of the 'Synoptic Problem' is usually expressed quasi-algebraically by the use of 'Q' (for German *Quelle* or 'Source') to denote the non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke, with the 'L' for the material, often of medical or Gentile interest, peculiar to Luke, and 'M' for the material, often of Jewish interest, peculiar to Matthew. Of course, such algebraic or similar symbols may be multiplied *ad infinitum*, and we may have L₁ and L₂, etc. Yet it is well to remember that, having said all this, we have still only been attempting to describe the present position of each Gospel *vis a vis* the others; we have not explained how the Gospels came into being; still less have we proved that these algebraic symbols ever actually represented early written documents, or even complexities of oral traditions, that had any dependent existence. Sometimes the Christian Church, in its zeal for analysis, has forgotten this; and has assumed not only specific documents, but also specific literary dependence.

(*Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1983, p. 24)

We have to admit some human involvement in the collection of the materials contained in the gospels. Luke clearly stated that this was his approach. This does not, however, eliminate the Holy Spirit's help in the collecting and choosing of the material to be included in his gospel. Luke's two documents (Luke and Acts) are based on (1) eyewitnesses testimony, (2) oral and written material, and (3) his compilation of the information (Luke 1:1-4). None of this was left up to Luke's own ability. Instead, the Holy Spirit guided him in what he wrote. "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matt. 10:20).

It has been correctly stated concerning an effort to determine the sources of the synoptic gospels from a purely scholarly approach, "...the process through which the Gospels came into being was a complex one, so complex that *no* source-critical hypothesis, however detailed, can hope to provide a complete explanation of the situation." (D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, p. 38).

Conclusion

The best conclusion is that the synoptic gospels have the same source, the Holy Spirit who guided the writers to separately compile their material. The Holy Spirit gave them, not just the thoughts, but also the exact words to be used, "not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches" (1 Cor. 2:13).

Their similarities and differences are important as witnesses to the validity of their message. (1) If they all three included exactly the same material, worded in the very same way, all three would not be necessary. Their

authors would be accused of having copied from the same source or manuscript. Instead of three witnesses there would be only one. (2) If they contradicted each other, their witness would be invalid. (3) Three separate witnesses that include similar material, which is sometimes different, but not conflicting, add weight as testimony from three separate witnesses.

“By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established (2 Cor. 13:1b). This is the witness that Mark and the other three gospels have provided.

Biographical Sketch

Owen Olbricht was born and raised in Thayer, MO

Education: Graduated from Harding University with a B.A. in speech; M.A. and M.R.E. in Bible

Works: Leading campaigns in Northeast-Southeast since 1964.

Campaigned in 30 states and preached in 24 states.

Mission work in Canada, Scotland, England,

Jamaica, Haiti and Australia

Helped begin congregations in Russia, Ukraine,

Venezuela and Northeast USA.

Local work in Monticello, AR and Lamar, MO

Writings: Numerous tracts, workbooks articles and the following books – *Baptism, New Birth or Empty Ritual; An Act of Faith; Beyond Death’s Door; God Is The Audience; Light From God’s Word; Holy Spirit, Person and Work; Woman, A Biblical Request*

Taught at Northeast Christian Jr. College and Harding University.

The Alabaster Box

Albert Farley

The Bible account of the woman and the alabaster box is the inspired story of the anointing of Jesus for his burial. It is a beautiful story - both tender and powerful. It reveals, on the one hand, the height and richness of the adoration of a humble servant of God, but, on the other hand, it shows the depth of man's spiritual poverty - the meanness and critical attitudes that may exist even in the disciples of Christ. It is recorded in Mark 14:1-9. It is, however, not exclusive to Mark; it is also recorded by Matthew (26:1-13) and John (12:1-8). The accounts of Matthew and Mark are almost identical; John's account gives several additional facts. Let us study it with care - that we might set both Jesus and all of the other people of the story in their rightful places in our hearts and minds. The sequence of the people involved in this story provides important lessons that we all need to study and from which we all need to learn today.

This event of the alabaster box took place in Bethany, a village located on the Mount of Olives. Bethany was blessed with the presence of Jesus many times during his earthly ministry. Jesus was often at the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus in Bethany. It was at a cave near Bethany that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus began his triumphal entry into Jerusalem from Bethany. Later, it was from here that he ascended back into heaven.

The time of the story is the Passover season, the final few days of Jesus' life on earth. Mark says, in Mark 14:1, "After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: ..." 14:1. This agrees with Jesus' words of Matthew 26:2. McGarvey says that this places the event on what we now call Wednesday evening. (THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY, Vol. I - Matthew and Mark, p. 222,) John, however, in his gospel, places this

event six days before the Passover. John 12:1. After recording the anointing, John says, “On the next day...” Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a young ass. 12:12-14. Jesus entered Jerusalem on the first day of the week. Therefore, Johnson, in his *THE PEOPLE’S NEW TESTAMENT*, Vol. I, p. 277, states, “The supper at Bethany was Saturday evening before he was crucified.” In an effort to reconcile them, Morris states, “... it is to be borne in mind that neither Matthew nor Mark dates this incident with precision. They simply recount it in immediate juxtaposition to Judas’ betrayal. The place where they insert it may be due to a desire to draw a sharp contrast with the traitor rather than to put it in its correct chronological position.” (*THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN*, p. 573, footnote 4.) With these references and comments, I leave the determination of time to you. Let us briefly examine the narrative and the lessons thereof.

FIRST, SIMON’S HOSPITALITY. The supper was given in the house of “Simon the leper.” At some previous time, Simon apparently had had the dreaded disease of leprosy. Leprosy was such a deep-seated, destructive disease that, under the Law of Moses, God required all lepers to leave their homes and communities and to live alone until such time as they might be cured. See Leviticus 13:1-46. Now, however, Simon was living with others; therefore, he had been cured. Some commentators speculate that he may have been healed by Jesus. This is certainly possible, for Jesus showed great power over leprosy. Mark 1:40-45. If this be true, we can appreciate the gratitude of Simon

How grateful are we? We, too, have been wonderfully saved by Jesus Christ from the terrible leprosy of sin. Are we “given to hospitality?” Romans 12:10-13 Are we using our homes and our possessions to provide opportunities for others to “see Jesus” in our lives?

SECOND, MARTHA'S SERVICE. John said, "There *they* made him a supper." 12:1. Jerusalem and the surrounding area was no doubt very crowded with pilgrims from many countries because of the Passover feast. Simon had received many people into his house for this supper. John says Martha served. 12:2. This is so much like the Martha of Luke 10:38-42 who was cumbered with much serving when Jesus was at her house. Martha truly had the heart of a servant, albeit bent, perhaps, toward the physical more than toward the spiritual. However, the Lord's comments to her were tenderly spoken, indeed, and, at her brother Lazarus' death, just a very little while before this event, she had expressed her great faith in Jesus and revealed her spiritual strength. She said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." 11:21-22. Concerning her belief in the resurrection of the dead, she said, "I know that he (Lazarus) shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 11:24. And, concerning her faith in Jesus, she said, "Yea, Lord. I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." 11:27.

THIRD, LAZARUS' WITNESS. Lazarus, also, was there. John 12:2. He had been raised from the dead just a little while before this. John 11. He sat at the table – a living witness of the power and person of Jesus Christ! In fact, John tells us that many of the people who came to the supper came not only for Jesus' sake but also that they might see Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 12:9. Many of the Jews had become disciples of Christ because of Lazarus, and the chief priests consulted that they might put him to death. 12:10.

This surely reveals the blindness of a hardened heart. These conceded that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, but, instead of allowing this truth to make them disciples of Jesus, they planned how they might kill him!

Did they not see that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead as often as they might put him to death?

We cannot be a witness as was Lazarus. However, we can show the world what a wondrous change Jesus has wrought in our own lives. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:” Ephesians 2:5-6.

FOURTH, MARY’S GOOD WORK. Matthew and Mark do not identify her by name but John does. John says her name was Mary. John 12:3. In the context of Bethany, Martha, and Lazarus, the obvious conclusion is that this is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Of this there is little doubt.

Mary’s regard for Jesus was revealed in the account of Jesus’ coming into her home, and, instead of helping her sister Martha serve, she “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.” 10:39. Jesus had commended her then, saying, “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” 10:42. She, like her sister Martha, had great faith in Jesus as the Christ. Now – apparently more than any of all of the rest of Jesus’ disciples – she realized He was going to soon die.

Mary came, with great love and devotion, into the crowded room with a precious ointment of spikenard or pure nard. Nard was an Indian plant with long, spike-like blades growing upward; hence the name. John reveals that Mary had a pound of spikenard. All three accounts say the ointment was “very precious” or “very costly.” Judas said it might have been sold for three hundred pence. The disciples in Mark said it was worth *more than* three hundred pence. Mark 14:5, John 12:4.

The coin mentioned is the old Roman coin called the denarius. In order to help us to get a comparative value of it, we note that, in the account of Jesus feeding the five

thousand men – not counting the women and children – Philip said that two hundred denarii would not be sufficient to buy bread for them. John 6:7. This, in the original language of the New Testament, is the same coin. If it would require two hundred denarii to give some food to about five thousand people, we can see the greater value of more than three hundred denarii.

Another illustration can be gotten from Matthew 20:2. There, workers were hired to work in a vineyard for one denarius a day. If a denarius was a day's wages, then over three hundred of them would equal about one year's wages. This may help us to see the great value of Mary's gift.

Mary carried the ointment in a container made of alabaster. Alabaster was a variety of fine-grained, softer stone that was used by craftsmen in the ancient world to form into various shapes and sizes. It was often polished to a high sheen. The "box" ought to be understood as a vessel or container. It is variously translated as a cruse (AS), vase (Johnson), flask (NKJV), and jar (RSV). McGarvey says "The box was doubtless the small vase of alabaster, then in common use, which had a very small neck, intended to emit but a drop at a time of the very costly ointment ..." (THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY, Vol. I. – Matthew and Mark, p. 352)

Mary broke the alabaster box and poured the precious ointment upon the body of Jesus. Matthew and Mark record that Mary anointed the head of Jesus; John states that she anointed his feet and wiped them with her hair. Matthew 26:7; Mark 14:3; John 12:3. The simplest way to reconcile these is to combine them; Mary anointed both Jesus' head and feet.

Another account of an anointing of Jesus is recorded in Luke 7:36-50. Although the incidents are strikingly similar, I, after having read the accounts over and over am convinced – by the weight of the narratives themselves and by the arguments of several different respected

commentators of the scriptures – that the event recorded in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 12 is separate and apart from the event recorded in Luke 7:36-50. The event of Luke 7 is recorded as having happened much earlier in Jesus' ministry than the latter anointing. The Luke 7 event concerns an unnamed, sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears, kissed them, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with ointment from an alabaster box in the home of Simon, a Pharisee.

FIFTH, THE DISCIPLES' CRITICISM. Jesus said Mary had "wrought a good work on me." The word "good" means "beautiful, pleasing." Truly, this act of love, devotion, honor, and respect was beautiful and appropriate; it pleased the Lord very much. However, it did not please Jesus' disciples. They had indignation and thought that Mary was wasteful. They were angry and resentful. It is striking to note that Mary possessed a greater appreciation for the significant nature of this occasion than did Peter, Andrew, James, John – and all of the other disciples!

SIXTH, JUDAS' COVETOUSNESS. Matthew attributes the above sentiment to "his disciples." Mark says "... there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?" 14:4. However, John says, "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence (denarii) and given to the poor?" (12:4-5). John then added that Judas cared nothing for the poor but that he was a thief and was the treasurer for the disciples. He "had the bag, and bare what was put therein." He wanted to get his hands on this large amount of money – about three times greater than what he was going to receive for betraying Jesus.

JESUS' COMMENDATION. Jesus said, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me ... She hath done what she could: she is come

aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.” Mark 14:6-8. From these statements, it appears that Mary was able to hear the criticisms being said about her. Jesus commanded, “Let her alone...” These words from her Lord, no doubt, meant much more to her than any criticism aimed at her by the disciples. Jesus further said that this story shall be spoken of her as a memorial throughout the whole world, wheresoever the gospel is preached! With this lesson, we have tried to help fulfill this charge and prophecy.

Are you doing what you can do to honor and serve the Lord? The Lord will not expect more than this; he will not accept less. Today Mary is a great inspiration and encouragement to all who wish to please God. You may ask, “How can we do what Mary did? Jesus is no longer on the earth.” This is true. However, in Matthew 25, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if we appreciate what Jesus has done for us, may we never allow any criticism from others nor the cost of any worthwhile effort to dissuade us from spending and being spent that it may be accomplished. Today, we serve Jesus Christ by serving the spiritual and physical needs of one another. May we do so – and may we do so, like Mary, while we have the time and opportunity.

Biographical sketch

I was born in Crum, WV, April 26, 1942, the fifth son of William H. and Clista Spaulding Farley. After serving four years in the U.S. Navy as a radioman, I attended Ohio Valley College 1964-66. There I met and married Nancy Ann Brewer. We have four children: Scott, Clista (Heintzman), Rebecca (Ragle), and Elisabeth; and four grandchildren: Bethany and Darren Heintzman, and Aaron and Andrew Ragle. Scott presently preaches for the Seth

Church of Christ. I have been preaching full-time since 1966, working with the congregations at Belington, Chesapeake, Weston, Crum, Webster Springs, and Salem. We have lived at Salem since 1982. I am a graduate of Glenville State College with a BA in Elementary Education and taught the fifth grade at Crum. I spoke on the Gospel Minutes radio program on WHAW, Weston from 1972-76 and on the Bible Study Program 1980-82. I am the editor of *WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN*.

Humility & Service Of Jesus

Bob Eddy

I am grateful to the elders of the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ, to Bro. Emanuel Daugherty and the lectureship committee for the kind invitation to speak on this program. The West Virginia School of Preaching is an excellent school and doctrinally sound. There is no greater work this side of eternity than to commit the word to faithful men who will teach others also. My prayers are with you and I bid you God's speed.

INTRODUCTION:

The overall theme of this lectureship is **“The Book of Mark,”** a great study indeed. I have been assigned the subject: **HUMILITY AND SERVICE OF JESUS.**

The apostle Paul recorded these words in Philippians 2:5-8. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

I once heard the story about a Christian who was given a gold medal for being humble. Then, it was taken because he displayed it. It is not easy to be humble.

Humility is not a popular subject. Most people acquaint humility with weakness. Christ taught otherwise. In Luke 14:11 Christ said: “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

The opposite of humility is pride. James writes: “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” (James 4:6). This is clearly seen when Peter was so filled with

pride that he had difficulty with Christ washing his feet (John 13:1-17). Out of the seven things that God hates recorded Proverbs 6:17, pride was at the top of the list. The wise man Solomon warns us: “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). The apostle Peter tells us that Christ left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Therefore, a closer study of the Humility and Service of Jesus is worth our consideration.

CHRIST CHOSE A LIFESTYLE OF HUMILITY AND SERVICE.

The apostle Paul declares that Christ “...made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8). I am confident that Christ could have manifested Himself in many other ways than the manner in which he did. For He was before the foundations of the world (John 17:5). He was: “In the beginning...(*elohim*).” (Gen. 1:1). Paul also declares that He was the creator of all things (Col. 1:16). Yet he chose a lifestyle of humility. He was born in a manger, not a mansion, born of a peasant instead of a princess, He had no place He could call home, He had no wardrobe. He never wrote a book, held an office, owned a home, went to college, nor traveled more than 200 miles from the place where he was born. He never did one thing that usually accompanies greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He truly was a man of humility.

CHRIST LIVED A LIFESTYLE OF HUMILITY AND SERVICE.

Not only did Christ choose a lifestyle of humility and service before coming to earth, He lived a lifestyle of humility and service while here. Mark writes: “For even

the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

In John 4:46-64, we find Christ healing a young boy, the son of a Nobleman. The boy was at the point of death in the city of Capernaum and Christ was at Cana of Galilee. Christ commanded the boy be healed, and he was healed. This was the second miracle Christ performed in Cana of Galilee.

In Luke 5:12-15, we find Jesus cleansing a leper. He came to Jesus and fell on his face begging Him to cleanse him. Jesus touched him and said: “Be Thou Clean.” The leper was cleansed.

In Luke 5:18-25, we find a man who was paralyzed. Four men brought him to Christ to be healed. Unable to reach Christ through the door, they were forced to make an opening in the roof and lower the bed on which the paralytic was lying down through the opening where Christ was standing. Jesus saw their faith and told the Paralytic: “Arise, take up thy bed and go your way to your house.” The man was healed.

In Luke 7:11-18, we find Jesus and his disciples near the gate of a city called Nain. A young boy was being carried to his burial. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. They were filled with tears. Jesus said to her: “Weep not.” Then he touched the coffin in which the young boy lay. Jesus then said: “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” The young man set up and began to speak, and He delivered him to his mother.

In Mark 6:31-44, we find Jesus feeding a hungry crowd of 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes. Verses 42 and 43 states that they were all filled “And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.”

In John 9:1-41, we find the Jews at the Temple throwing stones at Jesus as he left. On his way out of town, he saw a man who was blind from birth. Jesus spat on the

ground and made clay out of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay. Then he told the young man, Go, and wash in the pool of Soloam. He did and came seeing.

In John 11:1-46, we find Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. In this chapter, we find the shortest verse in the Bible, verse 35. It reads: “Jesus wept.” Probably, because he had to call Lazarus back from Paradise. They led Christ to the tomb where Lazarus had been laid. Jesus instructed them to “Take away the stone.” After Jesus had prayed to the Father in Heaven, He said: “Lazarus, come forth.” Lazarus awakened from the sleep of death and came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Then Jesus said: “Loose him, and let him go.”

When the apostle Peter spoke to Cornelius and his household concerning Jesus of Nazareth in Acts 10:38, he said of Christ that He “...went about doing good.” Over and over again, we find that Jesus truly lived the lifestyle that he chose to live. He practiced what He preached.

CHRIST PREACHED A LIFESTYLE OF HUMILITY AND SERVICE.

First of all, Christ preached a lifestyle of humility. Matthew declares: “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and sat him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3-4).

The apostle Peter declares: “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your cares upon Him, for He careth for you.”

Secondly, Christ preached a lifestyle of service. Paul declares: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honor preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). Paul continues: “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Verse 15). In verse 17 he continues: “...provide things honest in the sight of all men.” In verse 20 he writes: “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink...” In Gal. 6:10 Paul writes: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are the household of faith.” Paul wrote: “Charity suffereth long, and is kind: charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own” (1 Cor. 13:4-5).

CHRIST ENCOURAGES US TO PRACTICE A LIFESTYLE OF HUMILITY AND SERVICE.

In the parable of Jesus recorded in Luke 18:9-14, we find that a Pharisee, a proud group of people and a publican, a more militant group, are a classic example of pride and humility. It is interesting to note that both had come to the Temple to pray. Both were Jews, both practiced Judaism and both were seeking God’s blessings. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican (tax collector). I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Let us note carefully the Lord’s assessment of this parable. He states in verse 14, concerning the publican, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 clearly indicates that God expects us to practice a lifestyle of humility and service. In verse 37 Jesus said: “Go and do thou likewise.”

Notice the words of Peter in 1 Peter 5:5-6. “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

CHRIST DIED A HUMBLED AND SERVING DEATH.

He refused to defend Himself against false testimony of his accusers. He died between two criminals. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. But in his humble death he was highly exalted. Paul writes: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

In His death, Christ provided the greatest service known to mankind. He provided a way that one can cleanse himself from all unrighteousness through His blood. John writes: “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

BECAUSE HIS LIFE WAS FILLED WITH HUMILITY AND SERVICE, HE WAS GREATLY REWARDED.

He has been given all authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18). He is now our mediator between God and us

(1 Tim. 2:5). He will execute judgment on the disobedient (2 Thess. 1:8), and he will reward the righteous (Rev. 22:12).

CONCLUSION:

It is time that we too dedicate our lives to a life of humility and service. And as our text indicates: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2:5).

Biographical Sketch

Bob has been preaching the gospel for more than 48 years and presently preaches for the Toledo Road church of Christ in Lorain, OH. He began his preaching career in 1953 while working at the Weirton Steel Co. in Weirton, WV. His first located work was at St. Joe, OH in 1957 and has been in located work since then. He is a graduate of St. Marys High School, St. Marys, WV. He attended night school at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg, WV in the late 60's, Blackhawk College in Moline, IL and Augustana College in Rock Island, IL in the early 70's. He took correspondences courses from the Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, TX and attended many lectureships in F-HU, ACC, Harding University and OVC. In the early 70's, he took extension courses in Pastoral Counseling from WVU in Morgantown, WV. He has written many articles which have been published in brotherhood papers including The West Virginia Christian. He has spoken on numerous lectureships and directed many lectureship programs. He has done extensive radio and television work, directed church camps and conducted many gospel meetings throughout his career. He has done mission work in Iowa and Kingston, Canada. He served on the board of Midwestern Children Home and on the advisory board of Shultz-Lewis Children Home. He holds a private Pilot license. He is married to Patty L. (Wetzel) Eddy. They have two children and seven grandchildren.

The Execution of John the Baptist

E. Claude Gardner

Mk.6:14-29; Mk. 9:11-13

John the Baptist's example shows what it means to have courage. He was willing and never flinched for suffering and dying for the truth. He exemplifies what Jesus admonished the Symrna church to "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). John gave his life which is a monument to integrity and righteousness.

John's Executioners

Herod Antipas who beheaded John was a son of Herod the Great who died in 4 B.C. When Herod the Great died his kingdom was divided between his sons. Archalaus ruled over Judea, Samaria and Idumea. Philip was given the northern region. Herod Antipas received Galilee and Perea. Since he ruled from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, Antipas ruled during the life of Jesus on earth.

Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great and a sister of King Agrippa I (A.D. 37- 44). She married Philip, half brother of Herod Antipas. She divorced him to marry Herod Antipas. He had divorced his wife who was a daughter of Aretas V, an Arabian king of Petrae.

Salome, the dancer, was the daughter of Herodias by her first husband, Herod Philip. She married her uncle Philip (Lk. 3:1) and then to her cousin, Aristobulus.

Imprisonment

John's preaching resulted in being cast into prison. He languished in prison for one year and four months before his decapitation. Since Herod had two residences it is not certain where John was a prisoner. Two places are cited--

Tiberius, on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee, or Macherous, east of the Dead Sea. The Jewish historian, Josephus said it was Macherous.

John was wrongfully imprisoned but Herod did it to satisfy a wicked woman, his wife. She hated him because he condemned their adultery. Mark states, “For John had said unto Herod It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not” (Mk. 6:18-19). See also, Mt. 14:3-4 and Lev. 20:21.

Execution

The gruesome murder of John is described in Mark 6:21-29. “And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, the head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath’s sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he could not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in the prison. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.”

The occasion was a state banquet attended by high dignitaries. For the entertainment Salome danced a sensual dance which impressed Herod and the guests. He then

made an open ended promise to her. After seeking the advice of her mother she asked for John's head on a platter. A famous painting of his head hangs in Thomas Jefferson's home at Monticello. The grief stricken disciples of John gave him an honorable burial. The comment Jesus made was that the enemies of John "have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him" (Mk. 9:13). He referred to his imprisonment and murder.

What John Teaches Us

Courageous preaching is an imperative. It can cost one's life. If people do not like the message they can kill the messenger, the preacher. Or at least he can be fired. John was not a "reed shaken in the wind" which means he was not weak and wishy--washy. "And as they departed Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Mt. 11:7-11).

The Old Testament prophet Micaiah also made a strong and brave declaration concerning the message he would give." As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak"(1 Kings 22:14).

Elijah, the Old Testament prophet, cried out against the wicked Jezebel and idolatry. As a result his life was threatened and he fled. "Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by

tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there” (1 Kings 19:2-3).

The martyrs of the persecution described in the book of Revelation should be our inspiration. They were victorious. “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that should rest for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev. 6:9-11). Again John records, “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”(Rev. 7:13-17).

One part of preaching the whole counsel of God is to teach what are Scriptural and unscriptural marriages. This is the example of Paul who said, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). Today many do not know and probably would not care if they did know that Jesus condemned marriages which are unscriptural. Jesus taught,

“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be on flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder....And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Mt.19:5-6,9}.

Herod made a rash vow of giving up to half of his kingdom. This was hyperbolic but it turned out to be a rash vow. He carried through his promise to Salome even though he knew that John was a godly man. He lacked the backbone to break his vow because he had a large number of people present at the banquet and he would have been embarrassed. One should make few vows or promises but if they are righteous they must be kept. Solomon warned, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth: therefore let thy words be few.... When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that shouldest vow and not pay”(Eccles. 5:2; 4-5).

Wicked mothers can give bad advice to their daughters as did Herodias. Good mothers have a law. Solomon urged, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Prov.1:8).

Consequences of salacious dances are condemned under the sin of lasciviousness which Paul lists as a work of the flesh in Galatians 5: 19. Today there is a popular dance known as “freak dancing.” Sigmund Freud, the famous psychologist is reported to have described the dance as being vertical in posture with horizontal thoughts.

Sandy Ditoro, wife of a gospel preacher (Paul) of Pinellas Park, Fl. gave this warning about the Prom in the church bulletin, the Informer on June 3, 2001: There are

parents who readily agree that the kind of dancing kids do at the prom might lead to other problems and will also hesitantly agree that it would be wrong for their son or daughter to engage in them. I have heard these same parents quickly add that they saw nothing wrong with their child going to the prom because ‘they didn’t plan to dance anyway’ They were just going to see and to be seen.

Either these parents are naive or they are being true to a consistent pattern of having no backbone when it comes to helping their children to make moral decisions. Apart from the evil DANCE, there is a whole attitude that is part of the package deal for that night that is sinful or that leads to sin. It is, in part, an unwritten law of what is expected of a young person that night. It is what the young person may be expecting. It is what is expected of a young person by their date. It is what their friends expect them to engage in. Sadly, for some, it is what their parents expect. For a Christian though, doesn’t the Bible say, ‘Flee fornication’ (1 Cor. 6:18)?

Sometimes it seems everyone but Christian parents know what is expected of their child that night. Ask any motel chain. Ask Planned Parenthood. Ask anyone from our own AGAPE programs.

Proof of this entire argument came in a fax to Dr. Laura last week. Dr. Laura checked the listener’s sources to verify that what she said was true. The listener said that Planned Parenthood was giving out ‘After Prom Kits’ to their high school students. The kits contained condoms, mints, and coupons for Planned Parenthood services (ABORTION) should the condom fail!”

Let us pray that more Christians will have the courage and honesty of John the Baptist in our teaching and practices.

Miracles of Jesus in Mark

Louis Rushmore

Before we can discuss the miracles of Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark, we must render a **biblical definition** for what we mean by *miracles*. *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, in part, says a miracle is “an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God, operating without the use of means capable of being discerned by the senses, and designed to authenticate the divine commission of a religious teacher and the truth of his message (John 2:18; Matt. 12:38).”¹ The first definition in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* likewise represents the biblical sense in which the word miracle is used: “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.”² Both of these definitions note that a miracle involves (1) divine intervention in the affairs of men, and (2) not the effect but the affect of the miracle is clearly discernible to mortal observers. Importantly, *Easton's* also (3) denotes that a miracle has a purpose, namely to: (a) bring forth new revelation from God and (b) validate that message and its messenger.

Incidentally, **miracles and providence differ** chiefly in that though they both derive from divine power and involve divine intervention, the former is designed to be observable whereas the latter is not open to inspection. The former may provide new revelation and proves something through its discernible evidence. The latter does not provide new revelation directly and because it is not

¹Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.

²*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated) 1993.

discernible, it is not designed to prove anything. The purpose of miracles is concisely stated in Mark 16:20, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following.” Miracles proved the Gospel message to be true. Anything else accomplished by miracles was incidental and a byproduct (e.g., healing) to the true purpose of miracles. Providence, on the other hand, has a different mission, chiefly (1) the answering of prayer by the children of God (Matthew 6:25-34) and (2) God’s behind the scenes manipulation of events (Daniel 2:21; John 19:11).

In passing, we need to clarify that by *miracle*, we **do not mean** any of the biblically inaccurate references often used by contemporary man. For instance, though the marvel of birth is awe-inspiring, that event, strictly speaking, is not a miracle. Women have been giving birth through natural means in keeping with natural law for thousands of years. Mankind made his debut on earth through supernatural means (i.e., Adam and Even were miraculously created), but everyone else, excepting Jesus Christ, owes his existence to wholly natural means (i.e., procreation). Further, healing from disease and injury that results from appeal to medicine and surgery is not miraculous but relates to non-miraculous application of natural law, and perhaps God’s providence in conjunction with natural law. Some of what is ascribed to God as miraculous intervention is a poor exhibit of a divine miracle and undercuts the omnipotence of God, which was truly demonstrated in Bible miracles (e.g., incomplete healing from accident or disease does not do justice to the miraculous vehicle and Deity that authored it). Some supposed miracles are frauds because nothing has been effected despite prayers and claims to the contrary (e.g., praying to God that poison ivy be cured and subsequently thanking God for the miracle, notwithstanding the afflicted goes home with the poison ivy with which he also came).

Finally, all modern miracles are bogus, since Scripture clearly teaches that miracles were temporary and ended when the purpose for which they were given was fulfilled (1 Corinthians 13:8-12; Ephesians 4:11-13). Miracles are confined to the biblical context long since completed and are not contemporary events. We must turn exclusively to the Bible to examine miracles.

Besides the English word *miracle*, additional, similar terms, translated from several Hebrew and Greek words describe what we categorically refer to as miracles in the Bible. These terms include: power, mighty works, signs and wonders.

In the New Testament these four Greek words are principally used to designate miracles: (1.)

Semeion, a “sign”, i.e., an evidence of a divine commission; an attestation of a divine message (Matt. 12:38, 39; 16:1, 4; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; 23:8; John 2:11, 18, 23; Acts 6:8 ... (2.) Terata, “wonders;” ... (3.) Dunameis, “might works;” works of superhuman power (Acts 2:22; Rom. 15:19; 2 Thess. 2:9) ... (4.) Erga, “works;”³

There are 18 miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospel according to Mark. Only one of them is unique to Mark. The other three Gospel records also contain miracles of Jesus not reported in other accounts, besides references to miracles that do appear in one or more other Gospel records. Matthew has 21 miracles of Jesus, two of which are unique to Matthew; Luke has 18 miracles of Jesus, five of which are unique to Luke; John has seven miracles of Jesus, five of which are unique to John. The miracles of Jesus recorded in Mark are:

1. The Man with an Unclean Spirit (1:23-26; cf. Luke 4:33-35)

³ Easton's Bible Dictionary.

2. Healing Simon's Mother-in-law (1:30-31; cf. Luke 4:38-39)
3. Healing a Leper (1:40-45; cf. Matthew 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-14)
4. Healing Palsy (2:1-12; cf. Matthew 9:2-8; Luke 5:17-26)
5. The Withered Hand (3:1-6; cf. Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11)
6. Stilling the Storm (4:35-41; cf. Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25)
7. The Gadarene Demoniac (5:1-20; cf. Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39)
8. The Daughter of Jairus (5:21-43; cf. Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56)
9. The Afflicted Woman (5:25-34; cf. Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48)
10. Feeding the Five Thousand (6:30-46; cf. Matthew 14:13-23; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15)
11. Jesus Walking on the Water (6:47-56; cf. Matthew 14:24-36; John 6:16-21)
12. Syrophenician Woman's Daughter (7:24-30; cf. Matthew 15:21-28)
13. Deaf and Dumb Man (7:31-37; cf. Matthew 15:29-31)
14. Feeding the Four Thousand (8:1-9; cf. Matthew 15:32-38)
- 15. The Blind Man Near Bethsaida (8:22-26, unique to Mark)**
16. The Demoniac Boy (9:14-29; cf. Matthew 17:14-20; Luke 9:37-43)
17. The Blind Men Near Jericho (10:46-52; cf. Matthew 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43)
18. The Withered Fig Tree (11:20-25; cf. Matthew 21:20-22)

The miracles of Jesus demonstrated his divine power over *disease, nature, the spirit world, material things* and

death. As such, then, the miracles that Jesus performed proved that he was from God.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:1-2).

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31).

Like the miracles, most of the verses in the Gospel According to Mark also appear in the companion Gospel accounts. “Out of a total of 662 verses, Mark has 406 in common with Matthew and Luke, 145 with Matthew, 60 with Luke, and at most 51 peculiar to itself.”⁴ However, what Mark recorded and the way in which he recorded it was fashioned especially for its intended audience, the Romans. Therefore, absent from Mark are the genealogies of Christ, the early life of John the Baptist and Jesus (the first 30 years), and he “...only twice quotes from the Old Testament...”⁵ Apparently, Mark ‘*cut to the chase*’ (at least as far as the book’s readers would be concerned) and as well relied more on **testimony** than the fulfillment of **prophecy**. Mark appealed to the portion of the body of evidence that was the most likely to persuade the auditors of his Gospel record concerning the Christ and his kingdom. Hence, we can expect Mark’s rendition of

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Christ's miracles recorded in his Gospel to be especially adaptable to his Roman audience.

Modern society more nearly mirrors the Romans than the Jews of 2,000 years ago. We, then, can expect the Gospel of Mark, inclusive of its record of Christ's miracles, to be particularly useful to contemporary man. The Gospel of Mark is well able to establish a healthy faith in Jesus Christ and his kingdom. Mark proceeded to do this through an emphasis on the miracles of Christ. "... much shorter than Matthew's, not giving so full an account of Christ's sermons as that did, but insisting chiefly on his miracles."⁶

The **first miracle** that Mark chose to record evidenced the supreme power of Jesus Christ over the **spirit world** (1:23-26, the man with an unclean spirit). Mark did not copy the incident from Matthew, as the critic might assert, since Matthew did not chronicle this particular miracle in his record. Each of the first three Gospel records have sometimes been arranged first, second or third place in the New Testament. However, generally the present order of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John commonly is thought to represent the chronological sequence in which they were published. "Each of the 3 Gospels has been put first, each second, and each third, and each in turn has been regarded as the source of the others."⁷

The **second miracle** that Mark recorded showed Jesus' power over **disease** (1:30-31, healing Peter's mother-in-law). Like the previous miracle, only Mark and Luke reported this particular miracle. While Luke noted the power of Jesus to speak the disease gone, Mark chronicled the compassion and personal activity of Jesus as he took the sick woman by the hand and lifted her to her feet. Both

⁶ *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.) 1991.

⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database (BibleSoft) 1996.

records mention that Jesus healed several others, too, on that occasion.

The **third miracle** appears in each of the three first Gospel records and also is a healing miracle (1:40-45, healing a leper). The **disease** from which this person was cured was an outwardly visible malady, perhaps even more so than the fever with which Peter's mother-in-law was afflicted. Yet, Jesus healed the leprous man instantly and completely. Consequently, his fame spread and other sick came to him for healing. The **fourth** (2:1-12, healing palsy) and **fifth** (3:1-6, healing a withered hand) miracles likewise were miracles over **disease** and appear in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Healing a withered hand is another rather obvious miracle and to learn the full account, each of the Gospel records in which it appears is essential.

The **sixth miracle** recorded by Mark demonstrated the power of Jesus over **nature** (4:35-41, stilling the storm). This miracle was done in the presence of the apostles of Christ in the midst of the Sea of Galilee and reinforced with them just with whom they were companion. The **seventh**, **eighth** and **ninth** miracles also appear in the first three Gospel records. Respectively, they show Jesus victorious over the **spirit world** (5:1-20, Gadarene possessed with unclean spirits), **disease** (5:25-34, the afflicted woman) and **death** (5:21-43, Jairus' daughter).

The **tenth** miracle appears in *all four Gospel records* (6:30-46, feeding the 5,000) and is a miracle over **nature**. The appearance of this miracle in each of the Gospel records is an indication that the miracles of Jesus were widely known and *amply documented* — thereby, undeniable *evidence*. Only Luke omits the **eleventh** miracle that Mark recorded, another victory for Jesus over **nature** (6:47-56, Jesus walking on water). Mark's **twelfth** miracle of Jesus was over the **spirit world** again (7:24-30, unclean spirit in the Syrophenician Woman's daughter). The miracles of Jesus became commonplace and represented

the multiplication of evidence regarding the Deity of Jesus. However, this miracle was unique in that the recipient of this miracle was not Jewish, but a Gentile. This was perhaps a subtle hint that ultimately the ministry of the Christ would affect all of humanity (cf., Genesis 12:1-2; Isaiah 62:2).

The **thirteenth** miracle of Jesus that Mark recorded exhibited Jesus' power over **disease** (7:31-37, deaf man with a speech impediment). The **fourteenth** miracle was over **nature** as Jesus fed 4,000 this time (8:1-9). We will skip for now the **fifteenth** miracle of Jesus that Mark recorded and treat it separately since it is the only miracle of Jesus that was recorded exclusively in the Gospel According to Mark.

Mark's **sixteenth** miracle of Jesus was over the **spirit world** (9:14-29, a boy with an unclean spirit). The **seventeenth** miracle recorded by Mark is over **disease** (10:46-52, blind man near Jericho). Mark's **eighteenth** miracle of Jesus demonstrated our Lord's supremacy over **nature** (11:20-25, withered fig tree).

The combined accounts of the Gospel records provide a full picture of the events that they chronicle, including the miracles of Jesus. However, the Gospel of Mark records one miracle that does not appear in any of the three other Gospel records. This is, by Mark's list, miracle number **fifteen**, the blind man near Bethsaida (8:22-26) and one of the many miracles of Jesus over **disease**. It reads:

“And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town” (Mark 8:22-26).

Bethsaida was at the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee. Several Galilean cities were on the shore of this important inland body of water in Palestine, including Chorazin, Capernaum and Tiberias.

This account contains some curious and mysterious elements (i.e., some things not explained in the context). For instance, why did Jesus lead the man out of the city before healing him? The verses immediately preceding this healing find the Pharisees seeking a sign from Jesus and desiring an opportunity to discredit him. While our Lord refused to lend himself to the disingenuous Pharisees who already had ample evidence regarding him, apparently, Jesus would not deny the blind man the miracle of healing that he needed to restore his sight. Hence, Jesus removed the blind man from the arena of the Pharisee’s gawking. The audience for this miracle of Jesus was an audience of one (other than his disciples, verses 10, 27), the blind man. Therefore, the miracle was for the benefit (spiritually) of the blind man and our Lord’s disciples, and the byproduct of the miracle, healing from blindness, was effected upon the intended pawn of the Pharisees (the blind man).

Also, one might ask, “Why did Jesus not heal the blind man immediately in this instance?” No doubt Jesus could as easily restored sight to this blind man as readily as he had healed countless other persons. The blind man was put forth by the Pharisees as a challenge to the miraculous powers of Jesus. For the sake of the blind man as well as the disciples of Christ, Jesus particularly emphasized his ability to perform a genuine miracle in what was put forth by his enemies as a *test case*. Consequently, Jesus enlisted the testimony of the blind man himself as to the progress of the successful application of the miracle. Doubtless, the dramatic restoration of sight emboldened the faith of the

blind man and the disciples in the Deity of Jesus. Jesus told the former blind man not to return to the city for the same reason for which our Lord led the man from the city before performing the miracle. Jesus did not intend for the Pharisees to have the sign they demanded. Again, they and all men in Palestine had ample evidence regarding the miracles of Jesus, etc. With dishonest hearts and spiritually derelict, they had fully demonstrated before their disdain for God and Jesus, too. Besides, it was not time yet for Jesus to be taken on trumped up charges and put to death for us, which further aggravation of the Pharisees just then may have precipitated prematurely.

Not only the Pharisees, but also the populace of Bethsaida itself was of the sort not worthy of further miraculous demonstrations. Jesus condemned Bethsaida for not being responsive to the signs he performed there. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matthew 11:21). The fact that no one followed Jesus as he led the blind man from the city may also indicate the general disinterest exhibited for spiritual matters by the citizens of that city. There is no indication that even the blind man had any interest or expectation regarding Jesus healing him from blindness. This may shed light on why our Lord performed this healing miracle in *stages*. The blind man’s interest was peaked following stage one when his vision began to be restored. Then, when quizzed by the Christ, the blind man articulated an interest in his own healing.

It is difficult not to resort to making homilies from the account of this miracle. There is a frightening similarity between the blind man and Bethsaida’s lack of interest in the ministry of Jesus then to the widespread lack of interest in spiritual matters today. Just as many were apathetic to the actual presence of Jesus Christ during his earthly

ministry, now countless souls are impervious to the saving ministry of Jesus Christ through the Gospel.

In summary, true miracles were episodes of immediate divine intervention into human affairs, which interventions were intentionally visible to humanity, the purpose of which was to deliver new revelation, while validating the revelation and the messenger. These miracles evidenced divine power over disease, nature, the spirit world, material things and death. About 18 of our Lord's miracles are recorded in the Gospel According to Mark. Only one of these miracles appears exclusively in Mark.

The Gospel of Mark was written to a Roman readership. Therefore, absent in Mark are most references to the Old Testament and the prophecies found therein, which were more meaningful to Jewish readers. Hence, Mark relies heavily on the miracles of Jesus to prove to that he is the Savior of the world. The miracles of Jesus that are recorded in Mark constitute sufficient evidence by which one can confidently develop faith in Jesus Christ. Whereas the miraculous age concluded when the purpose for which miracles were implemented was fulfilled, those miracles that appear in Mark are they to which men living now must appeal for their faith. Mark did not pen a *different* Gospel (Galatians 2:6-9), but selected from the body of evidence that part that was predictably the most persuasive to the Roman mind.

Contemporary society mirrors the old Roman world and, therefore, ought to benefit greatly from the Gospel According to Mark in establishing a confident faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior. God forbid that we should demonstrate the indifference to the Christ and his ministry for which Bethsaida, other cities and the religious leaders of the first century were justly condemned by our Lord.

Biographical Sketch

Louis Rushmore has been preaching since 1973 and has served congregations in both the southern and northern United States. Louis is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching and has completed courses at other colleges and through the United States Air Force. He holds a BA in Biblical Studies, a MA in Journalism in Society and Religion, and Ph.D. in Homiletics and Preaching (the latter three from Theological University of America). His ministry experience includes radio, television and print evangelism. Brother Rushmore's articles are published in several Gospel magazines, including: *Gospel Advocate*, *Christian Bible Teacher*, *Restorer*, *West Virginia Christian*, *Upon This Rock*, *Firm Foundation* and *Therefore Stand*. He also has written several books and publishes them in reproducible and paperback formats. Louis has hundreds of religious teaching articles on the internet and he edits a monthly, 20-page Internet religious magazine, the *Gospel Gazette Online*. Brother Rushmore enjoys teaching and counts his efforts at WVSOP as the highlight of his life. Louis is complemented in his labors by his wife Bonnie and their three children. Louis Rushmore may be contacted at 4325 Southeast Drive, Steubenville, OH 43953-3353 or toll free at (888) 725-7883 or by email at rushmore@gospelgazette.com.

Jesus' Transfiguration

J.D. Conley

Introduction:

Even though the apostle John would later write, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, and which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life” (1Jn.1: 1). Furthermore, even though the Twelve had logged many miles by His side, had heard hours of His peerless preaching, had been eye witnesses to His miracles and matchless compassion, and had already verbally attested to His deity, Jesus simply didn't square with the disciples expectations of what they thought the Messiah should be. This is evident in that whenever Jesus would bring up the subject of His inevitable death, the disciples would turn a deaf ear and even become hostile, cf. (Mt. 16:21,22). It is because of Peter's wholesale rejection of this truth that Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mk.8: 38). Then Mark records this promise of the Savior in the very next verse, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. (Mk.9: 1). It is obvious that Jesus wanted His disciples to know that He was going to be a “victor” not a “victim.” Six days following this stern rebuke of the impetuous Peter, God seems to go out of His way in Mark chapter nine, verses two through ten, to raise the disciple's low opinion of Christ. He accomplishes this, in measure, by the miraculous means employed in the transfiguration. For a moment, and for a select few, the garb of human flesh

receded allowing our Lord's divine nature to burst forth. The transfiguration scene demanded of those present and demands of us today, a supreme recognition. That recognition being complete surrender and allegiance to Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God.

Discussion Of The Text

Verse Two - "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them."

"And after six days". Faultfinders of the Scriptures immediately jump up and yell, "Contradiction, contradiction, Luke in his account says, "eight days after". See, you just can't trust the Bible!" First of all, Luke says in his account, "And it came about an eight days after these sayings" (Lk.9: 28). Emphasis needs to be placed on the word "about". In the second place, its completely within the line of reason for Luke to have spoken of all the days and parts of days involved, while Mark spoke only of complete days. Thus, six full days, or six full days and parts of two others. To the believer in the Scriptures this is no problem, much less a contradiction.

It was at this point Jesus takes with Him, Peter, James and John, the inner circle, cf. (Mt.26: 37; Mk.5: 37; Lk.8: 51), and leads them up the steep slopes of "an high mountain". What particular mountain the Bible does not say. Many say Mount Tabor, others contend it was Mount Hermon. But since Jesus was already in the region of Caesarea Phillippi, cf. (Mk.8: 27), it seems unlikely that He would travel the thirty-five miles south necessary to reach Mount Tabor. By comparison, Mount Hermon was just a few miles to the north of where Jesus and the disciples already were. Because of its soaring height and close proximity, it seems reasonable this was the location Jesus chose for His transfiguration. Regardless of which

mountain, the fact that it was “an high mountain”, indicates Jesus' desire for privacy.

“And he was transfigured before them.” While Peter, James, and John were on that undisclosed mountaintop, Jesus was transfigured, that is a metamorphosis took place. The Greek word from which “transfigured” is translated is “metamorphoo, meaning to “change into another form.” Once again the skeptics try to extract anything miraculous from this event. They purport, “The sun just happened to shine on the face and clothes of Jesus while he was on that summit.” They try to prove this from Matthew's account where he wrote, “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light” (Mt.17: 2). But, have you ever seen the sun shine at night? Luke's account of the transfiguration leads any right thinking person to believe that this event took place after dark. If it did, that would only add to the splendor and spectacle of the occasion. Consider Lk. 9:32, “But Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep.” Lk.9: 37 states, “And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the mountain, much people met them.” The phrases, “heavy with sleep”, and “on the next day”, allude to a “night”, not a “day”, transfiguration.

Notice that Mark attests, “He was transfigured before them.” That statement is significant. Mark says our Lord was physically altered, and the three that were with Him saw it! The transfiguration was not a subjective show that took place in the minds of the disciples. Neither is there any natural explanation for it, an explanation that the modernist craves. This was a miracle! Luke says, “the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment white and glistening” (Lk.9: 29). Let the modernist offer a natural explanation, wherein no harm is inflicted, where a person's facial features are distorted and his clothes are illuminated? He can't do it!

Verse Three - "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them."

Some translations render the word "fuller" as "launderer." Tide with bleach couldn't get clothes this white! Little wonder Peter could later write of this experience, "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2Pet.1: 1). John adds, "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (Jn.1: 14). We are promised that one day, we too, shall see His glory. "We shall see Him as He is" (1Jn.2: 3).

Verse Four - "And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus."

When you consider that Moses at this point had been dead fifteen hundred years, and Elias, or (Elijah, ASV), had been off the earth 900 years, it makes this event even more problematic for the modernist to explain. But for the believer it is once again no problem. The presence of Moses and Elijah only adds to the drama and intrigue of the event. If God could physically transfigure His Son, then He could physically bring into being these two ancients! Moses himself rhetorically asked, "Is there anything too hard for thee" (Gen.18: 14)? The physical presence of this couple dramatically sets the stage for some piercing teaching. Teaching that is going to be directed toward the disciples and especially Peter. We know that Moses was the representative of the Law, and Elijah the representative of the Prophets. With these two in place, heaven is about to make a crucial clarification. A contrast that even Peter will see.

The question always comes up, "How did Peter, James and John recognize Moses and Elijah?" Its safe to assume neither Moses or Elijah flashed their driver's license at these curious onlookers, (Elijah didn't need one anyway, he got an escort to heaven!) Brother Johnny Ramsey offers this studious observation, "They were wearing T-shirts with

their names on the front.” But seriously, we just don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. Perhaps Jesus called them by name. What we need to keep in mind is the fact that this entire ordeal from beginning to end was a case of miraculous revelation. So, the best explanation as to how the identities of Moses and Elijah were made known to the three disciples, is to accept the probability that the information was divinely given. The fact that the disciples did recognize Moses and Elijah is what is important. As witnesses, they both saw, and heard, the somber conversation that took place. A conversation Luke tells us pertained to Christ' crucifixion, (Lk.9: 30,31).

Verses Five and Six - “And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.”

What an impulsive and trite suggestion Peter makes! The intended impact of this conference has wholly gone over his head! Luke describes Peter's “off the cuff remark”, as “not knowing what he said” (Lk.9: 33). Sometimes we do that. We put our tongue in motion before our brain is in gear. Mark says, “they were sore afraid.” Given these same circumstances, and our own propensity to speak out of turn, perhaps we too would have suggested to pitch a few tents ourselves! Peter's fault was not that he said, “Master, it is good for us to be here.” Neither do I believe Peter was at fault for wanting to prolong the event by furnishing accommodations. Rather Peter made his ghastly mistake when he sought to put Moses and Elijah on an equality with Jesus! This is seen in that he wanted to erect three separate tabernacles, or as he so worded it, “one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Peter's idea smacks of commonality. It seeks to lower deity to the level of men. As great as Moses and Elijah were, on their best day they were still bags of dust. As the narrative goes on to tell us, Peter's

ignorance did not sit well with our Creator. Peter needed straightening out, as do all who seek to trivialize our Lord's deity.

Verse Seven - "And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him."

Amazing! God broke the silence of heaven to get Peter to understand the error of his way! God was sought to inform Peter that no longer would Moses and Elijah be heard, but Christ. "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (Lk.16: 16). No need for three tabernacles. No need for three esteemed recognition's, but only one: Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God! Heaven affirms that now we are to hear Him, (Heb.1: 1-3; Jn.14: 6).

Mark says that a "cloud overshadowed them." Out of the ninety-eight passages in the Bible that mention a cloud, God is in ninety-one of them. Clouds are slow moving objects, but not this cloud. It came on the scene suddenly. Matthew and Luke concur, "while Peter spake." O the Lord truly knows our thoughts before we articulate them, (Ps.139: 1-4). The word "overshadowed" means that this cloud enveloped them all. While in the midst of this cloud the voice of God the Father Himself is made audible. This voice is the same voice that echoed above the waters of Jordan at the baptism of Jesus, (Mk.1: 11). Once more the loving Father acknowledges Jesus as His Son. Then He issues forth the command to "Hear Him!" The word order in the Greek is "Him be hearing." I wonder what Moses was thinking at this point in time? Centuries earlier God told Moses, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.... and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever

will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Dt.18: 15, 18,19). Fifteen hundred years later, Moses was permitted to shake off the grave dust, and hear from God Himself the fulfillment of that Deuteromic prophecy! How enlightened Moses must have felt. Today, in this age of grace, God will require much of all those who heed not to the words of Jesus, (Jn.12: 48). Him be hearing stands to this very day. But how many of us spend more time reading the words of Max Lucado, and listening to tapes of James Dobson? We best be getting our ears pointed in the right direction!

Verse Eight - “And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.”

Mark, even though a writer known for detail is very brief here. Matthew says in his account that when the disciples heard the voice, “they fell on their face and were sore afraid” (Mt.17: 6). It was only until Jesus touched them did they arise. They saw Jesus only. The Law Giver and the Prophet had returned to the other realm, but the Lord remained. Who do we see today? On whom is our gaze fixed”, (Heb.2: 9)? The disciples saw Jesus only, but many today see everyone and everything but Jesus. They see a Jesus that isn't there. A Jesus that does not exist apart from the imagination. Many see saccharin saturated commercialized imitation. Many wear WWJD, (What Would Jesus Do?) bracelets and t-shirts, but they never turn to His word to see what He did do, and do for them! As a result myriad's fumble through life never seeing the real Jesus. What a shame.

Verse Nine - “And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.”

Can't you envision Peter and the other two having to bite their tongues? A lot of fascinating things had taken place on that mountaintop!

1. Christ had been transfigured before their very eyes.
2. Moses and Elijah made a live appearance.
3. A conversation took place.
4. A cloud suddenly enveloped them.
5. God spoke audibly.
6. Moses and Elijah vanished as quickly as they had appeared.

What an indelible impression this event must have made on the disciples. For Peter, the proverbial nickel had dropped. No more is he demanding the recognition of men alongside Christ. The transfiguration. What a faith building episode!

The prohibition to “tell no man”, included the rest of the Twelve we can be assured. This is why Jesus took only three; the rest were not to know yet. Remember that the others too had a dim conception of the Messiah. They too wanted to restrict Him to the earthy, and sensual. They were in anticipation of a fleshly political king who would sweep across Palestine and restore Jerusalem to her former glory and beyond. It only stands to reason if the story of the transfiguration had been broadcast; it would fan the flames of that misconception and caused great harm. Nonetheless, the time was fast approaching.

Verse Ten - “And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one another what the rising of the dead should mean.”

The disciples kept silent concerning what took place on that summit. However, they did not keep quiet with regards to “what a rising from the dead should mean.” Here Mark clues us in, at least partially, to what the subject of the conversation was that took place between the Lord, Moses and Elijah, viz. the resurrection. But the disciples questioned it; i.e. they disputed about its meaning. This

debate evidently took place as they were descending the mountain. Mark, though, lets us know that it was not the final or general resurrection they were debating, rather the resurrection of Christ Himself. The Jews, not counting the Sadducees, believed in the final resurrection from the dead. What the disciples were grappling with was if Jesus wanted to rise again, `(Mk.8: 31), why would he permit Himself to be killed? Maybe the disciples were debating whether or not Jesus was using figurative language or literal language. How could the Son of God be killed? If He could not be killed how could He rise from the dead? It was dilemma for them, as it still is for many today, although it needn't be. For one to believe in the transfiguration and doubt the resurrection is untenable.

Practical Lessons

One can philosophize the transfiguration, and many have. To many it's just a good read. To the modernist it's an enigma, brain food, something to be explained away. To the skeptic it's a joke, fodder for humor, just another Bible story to be ridiculed and mocked.

But we as children of God accept it by faith and must be concerned with its implications. Though our lives are far removed from the events on that mountaintop, the transfiguration provides us with several practical lessons. For example:

I. There Is Life After Death.

Remember the subject of the conversation between Jesus, Moses and Elijah was the resurrection. In addition, at the risk of stressing the obvious, Moses and Elijah were there, and they both were very much alive!

II. Men Do Not Cease To Exist.

Again the two ancients were there. This proves the doctrine of annihilation that the Seventh Day Adventists and others teach is false. Unlike the dead dog Rover, when you die you are not dead all over.

III. There Is Consciousness After Death. (Lk.16: 19-31)

Moses and Elijah knew they existed, and they knew who they were. They effectively communicated with Jesus. A feat impossible by the unconscious.

IV. Jesus Has All Authority

It is a mystery why some folks believe in God the Father, but refuse to believe Jesus is His Son. To believe in God the father is to believe in everything He has said. During the transfiguration the Father said with regards to Jesus, “this is my beloved Son.” We either believe God when He said that or we don't. He told us to “Hear Him”, a clear proclamation of His divine authority. We either believe God when He said that, or we don't. “Hearing Him” necessarily implies not hearing, i.e. listening or believing anyone else in religious matters. We either do that, or we don't. If Christ has all authority, (Mt.28: 18), then that doesn't leave any for the Pope, Joseph Smith, Ellen G, White, Charles Taze Russell, David Koresh, or any other latter day prophet! All the word “latter” means is too late! (Heb.1: 1-3; Jude 3; Gal.1: 6-9).

V. The Written Word Of God Is Made “More Sure.”

This is a point that Peter brings out in his recollection of the transfiguration in, (2Pet.1: 16-19). There he states by inspiration, “And this voice which came from heaven we

heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy..."

Many contend that if God would just break the silence of heaven and speak audibly with men today that they in turn would listen. They claim this way of communication would be much more effective than words on a page. But Peter is in a position to answer such a charge, and his answer is a resounding "No!" He says God speaking to men today would not be as effective because of what happened on the holy mount. What happened on that mount? God spoke audibly to men. This speaking, in turn, Peter tells us, made the word of prophecy "more sure." What God wants us to know has been permanently recorded. It has been made sure. Centuries of antagonism against the Scriptures prove their surety as well as their truth. The word of prophecy, i.e. the Scriptures have been made sure. In other words what Peter is saying is that the written word of God substantiates the spoken word of God, or the "written" underwrites the "spoken."

VI. The Transfiguration Restores Our Perspective.

At times we lose sight of the majesty and glory of Christ. The transfiguration reminds us of the wonderful Savior we serve. It reminds us that we do not serve a "Past Tense" Jesus.

It also clarifies our perspective by helping us see that Christianity should not be ritualistic, but exciting! Christianity is much more than church buildings, fellowship meals and lectureships. It's a way of life centered around the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

VII. The Transfiguration Reminds Us Of Our Own Spiritual Metamorphosis.

The Greek word for “transfigure”, “metamorphoo” occurs in only two other passages outside the gospel records, (Rom.12: 2; 2Cor.3: 18).

These passages remind us that though Christ's transfiguration was physical, ours is spiritual. For Christ it was an event, for us it is a life-long process. For Jesus it was the revealing of His innate glory. For us it is a reflection of the Lord's glory.

Conclusion:

Psalm 89:37 refers to the moon as “the faithful witness”. The Bible does so due to the fact that even at night, when the sun cannot be seen, we can know it is still shining because the light of the moon is its reflection. Can you say that you are a faithful witness of Christ? Are you reflecting His glory? Have you been transfigured into a child of God? If not meet Jesus on His terms now. “Hear ye Him.”

Biographical Sketch

J.D. Conley was born in El Paso, TX in 1959, the son, grandson, and son-in-law of faithful gospel preachers, Darrell Conley, F.F. Conley and Denver Cooper. He and his wife Denise, have 6 children. J.D. attended Freed-Hardeman University, majoring in Bible, and is a 1993 graduate of Brown Trail School of Preaching in Fort Worth, TX. He preached his first gospel sermon at the age of fifteen, has served as a deacon, song leader, Bible class teacher and assistant preacher in local congregations before beginning full-time work in Elkins, WV. Prior to that he spent 12 years working for fire sprinkler companies in New Orleans and San Antonio.

Crucifixion And Burial

Owen Olbricht

Mark gives a brief discussion of the crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:15-37), as also does Matthew (Matt. 27:35-50). Luke (Luke 23:26-33, 39-42) and John (John 19:25-27, 31-37) add some other information but neither account is very detailed. They all present Jesus' death in an abbreviated and matter-of-fact manner. None of them give a description of Jesus' mental, emotional, and physical reaction to the cross, as would most writers, especially present-day writers. A presentation of this nature would touch and stir human feelings and emotions, but such is not God's approach. His desire is for faith to be based on truth and not simply on emotions.

Innocence of Jesus

Jesus was condemned to death in spite of the fact that all who considered His case admitted that He was not guilty of wrongdoing. As prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 53:8), Jesus' correct judgment of innocent "was taken away" (Acts 8:33). Those who admitted He was not guilty included:

- (1) Jewish leaders – They used inconsistent false witnesses (Mark 14:56-59).
- (2) Judas – "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4).
- (3) Pilot's wife – "Have nothing to do with this just man" (Matt. 27:19).
- (4) Pilate – "I found no fault in this Man" (Luke 23:14; see also Matt. 27:24).
- (5) Herod – "No, neither did Herod" (Luke 23:15, 22).
- (6) Thief on the cross – "This Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).

(7) Centurion – “Certainly this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47).

Even though He was innocent, He was guilty, not because He had sinned, but because He took our sins upon Himself. “And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jerusalem to Golgotha

After Jesus was condemned to be crucified, the Roman soldiers in derision stripped Him (Matt. 27:28), dressed Him in a purple robe, and pressed a crown of thorns on his head. They mocked Him, hit Him in the head with a reed, spit on Him, and knelt in mock worship saying, “Hail King of the Jews” (Mark 15:15-19; Matt. 27:27-30). They then stripped off the robe and put His own clothing back on Him (Mark 15:20).

He went out from Pilate’s judgment hall carrying His own cross (John 19:17). The scourging (Mark 15:15) and the lack of sleep, food, and water would have weakened Jesus. He had been up all night with nothing to eat or drink. The Roman scourging involved a rod on which were tied straps of leather that were weighed down on the ends with metal and bones to make the blows more effective. Some victims did not live through this form of punishment. Others were crippled for life. Their backs were badly cut and bruised. Blood flowed from the wounds. Most scholars believe that the scourging so weakened Jesus that His cross was transferred to Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry (Mark 15:21).

As they proceeded outside the city (John 19:20), a procession of women followed Him weeping. He turned to them and told them not to weep for Him but to weep for themselves because of what was coming upon them (Luke 23:26-31).

The Crucifixion

About the 3rd hour of the day (9 o'clock) they arrived at Golgotha (Calvary, place of the skull). The exact location is unknown. They sought to give Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, which He refused (Mark 15:22, 23, 25). The sedating effect of myrrh, which acted as a narcotic, would have lessened the pain of the cross. The soldiers stripped off all His clothing, gambled for it (Psa. 22:18), then crucified Him between two criminals (Mark 15:24-27). The pure Son of God was going to die in the manner of and in association with the corrupt, criminal element of mankind.

Josephus described crucifixion as “the most wretched of all ways of dying” (*War VII. v. 4*). Jesus was to endure one of man’s cruelest deaths. It involved not only physical pain but also the humiliation and shame of a naked public spectacle. Even the law stated, “He who is hanged is accursed of God” (Deut. 21:23b; see also Gal. 3:13).

Recent finds have revealed that the heels were nailed together by the same nail with the knees overlapping each other. Nails were driven through the hands or forearms.

While being nailed to the cross, Jesus did not react as most men did who were being crucified. “Crucifixions were marked by screams of rage and pain, wild curses and the shouts of indescribable despair by the unfortunate victim.” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark, The New International Commentary of the New Testament*, general ed., F.F. Bruce, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974, p. 572).

While writhing in pain from nails being driven into His hands and feet, Jesus uttered His first words from the cross, “Father forgiven them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Above Him was placed the inscription, “THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Mark 15:26). This statement contained

the verdict that condemned Him to death. The Jews objected to this title but Pilate let it stand (John 19:19-21).

First Three Hours on the Cross

While Jesus was hanging on the cross in pain, shamed and naked, those who came to watch taunted and ridiculed Him. The height of the cross would have placed him high for people to get a clear view of Him.

The passersby blasphemed Him and said, “Aha, You who destroy the temple and build it is in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross” (Mark 15:29, 30).

The chief priests and scribes mocked and said, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe” (Mark 15:31, 32). “He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” (Matt. 27:43; see Psa. 22:8). They seemed to be finding great satisfaction in realizing their long time desire to destroy Jesus (Mark 3:6; 11:18; 12:12; 14:1).

The soldiers offered him sour wine saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself” (Luke 23:37).

At first the two criminals, one on either side, also reproached Him (Mark 15:32b). Afterward one of them hurled at Him, “‘If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’

“Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’” (Luke 23:39b-42).

Jesus spoke His second words from the cross, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Jesus then turned His attention to His mother Mary to provide care for her. He said to her, “Woman, behold your son.” Then he said to John, “Behold your mother” (John 19:26, 27). John then accepted her into his care. Jesus showed more concern for His broken-hearted mother (Luke 1:35) than for Himself by speaking His third words from the cross

Second Three Hours on the Cross

From the sixth hour (12:00 p.m.) unto the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) there was darkness over all the land (Mark 15:33). Darkness came at the time of the day when the sun should been its brightest.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out His fourth words, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabaththani?” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34, 35; Psa. 22:1). He uttered these words with difficulty because hanging on the cross restricted His breathing. Perhaps this is why some who were present thought He was calling for Elijah.

The physical agony of the cross was great, but Jesus’ mental anguish may have been greater suffering than the physical pain. Jesus knew through experience the joy of fellowship with the Father (John 1:18). Surely the breaking of this fellowship greatly magnified the agony of the cross.

Sin separates from God (Isa. 59:1, 2; Eph. 2:12, 13). Jesus became separated from the Father because He took our sins upon Himself (Isa. 53:6). He experienced our pain and punishment for us and instead of us.

Following this Jesus uttered His fifth words, “I Thirst.” He had received nothing that would quench His thirst since the night before. Also His body would have lost liquid because He had lost blood from the scourging. His throat and tongue would have been dry. One ran to give him sour

wine, which He drank (Mark 15:36; John 19:28-30; Psalm 69:21).

Then He exclaimed with a loud voice (Mark 15:37) His sixth words, “It is finished” (John 19:30). His suffering ended; His life ended; and His work of redemption for mankind was completed (Heb. 5:8).

He followed this statement with His seventh and last words, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit” (Luke 23:46). At this moment His spirit departed from His body, which caused the death of His body (James 2:26). His soul entered Hades where it remained until it returned to His body, effecting His resurrection (Acts 2:31).

Events After the Cross

The temple veil was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38) and saints came from the grave (Matt. 27:51). No longer would mankind go through the veil of the temple to approach God. Jesus would be the veil for the new approach to God (Heb. 10:19, 20).

Even though the centurion must have seen the death of others, Jesus’ death was different. When he saw the events surrounding Jesus death and the dignity with which He died, he remarked, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). The distressed multitude beat their breasts as they returned to their homes (Luke 23:48).

Because of the approaching Jewish Sabbath, the soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals in order to hasten their death John 19:31. They did not break Jesus’ legs. He was already dead. In order to make sure Jesus was dead, a soldier took a spear and pierced His side from which came blood and water (John 19:31-34), evidence of His death.

Meaning of the Cross to Jesus

- (1) Rejection and abandonment – Isa. 53:3
- (2) Affliction and grief – Isa. 53:7, 10

- (3) Anguish – Isa. 53:11; Matt. 26:39
- (4) Humiliation – Acts 8:33; Phil. 2:8
- (5) Obedience – Heb. 5:8, 9; Phil. 2:8
- (6) Joy – Heb. 12:2
- (7) Shame – Heb. 12:2
- (8) Agony and suffering – 1 Pet. 2:23

Meaning of Jesus' Cross To Us

- (1) Forgiveness – Matt. 26:28
- (2) Demonstration of God's love and care (Rom. 8:32)
- (3) The power and wisdom of God – 1 Cor. 1:24
- (4) Salvation from sins – 1 Cor. 15:1-3
- (5) Victory – 1 Cor. 15:57
- (6) Righteousness – 2 Cor. 5:21
- (7) Death to the world – Gal. 2:20; 6:14
- (8) Satan rendered powerless – Heb. 2:14

What the Cross Reveals About God

- (7) His unchanging will – Matt. 26:39
- (3) Love – John 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 9
- (4) Justice – Rom. 3:23-26
- (2) Wrath and hatred of sin – Rom. 5:9
- (8) Tender care – Rom. 8:32
- (5) Mercy and grace – Rom. 11:32; 1 Tim. 3:16
- (6) Demand of obedience – Heb. 5:8, 9; Phil. 2:8
- (1) Foreknowledge and planning – 1 Peter 1:17-20;
Rom. 3:23-25

Conclusion

In His death Jesus completed God's plan to save us. God had determined this before the world was created (1 Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8). Jesus' payment for sin and salvation was great (Heb. 2:3), even as the sins of the world are great (John 1:29; Rom. 3:23). We are made acceptable to God through the blood of Jesus' cross (Col. 1:20-22).

Jesus has done His part. He allowed others to nail Him to the cross so that we can be forgiven. We must obey Him (Heb.5:9) and allow others to bury and raise us with Him in baptism because we believe in His death, are dedicating our lives to Him, and have confessed Him before others (Rom. 2:4; 6:4, 10:10). If we have faith in His blood when we are being baptized (Rom. 3:25), we will be forgiven (Acts 2:38; Col. 2:12, 13), have our sins washed away (Acts 22:16), and will be saved (Mark 16:15, 16; 1 Pet. 3:21).

The climax of the book of Mark is the crucifixion of Jesus. Mark told about the crucifixion of Jesus, but did not give the meaning of His death. Others tell the meaning. We are indebted to Mark for reinforcing the report made in the other gospels of the greatest sacrifice ever offered for mankind. Through his account we are pointed to Jesus to whom we owe our lives in response to His death for us that we might have eternal life.

Is Mark 16:9-20 Fraudulent or Genuine?

W. Terry Varner

We are assigned the question as “*Is Mark 16:9-20 Fraudulent or Genuine?*” Few are the many translations of the New Testament (henceforth, NT) which do not reject or cast doubt on the authenticity of the last twelve verses of the second Gospel. This section of Scripture has caused more puzzlement and consternation among Bible students than most any other variant reading in the Greek NT.

The question of the text being either *fraudulent* or *genuine* is much too broad to be adequately covered in the space allotted for this lecture. “*Fraudulent*” means “containing fraud; founded on fraud; proceeding from fraud” (Webster, 729). “*Genuineness*” means “the quality of being genuine; i.e. of the original stock, actually coming from the alleged source or origin; true; authentic; not counterfeit” (Webster, 765); otherwise, not fraudulent.

Our study will discuss, ever so briefly, the following: (1) The Problem Outlined, (2) The Problem Resolved: A Defense of Mark 16:9-20, and (3) Conclusion. We have developed several Endnotes pertinent to the paper.

The Problem Outlined

Through the centuries the whole of Christendom has always accepted Mark 16:9-20 as being from the pen of Mark exactly as given in the *Textus Receptus*, the Greek text underlying the King James Version (hereafter KJV), except for two definable periods.

The *first* period in which Mark 16:9-20 was rejected cannot be dated with exactness. However, from about the middle of the ministry of Origen (ca. A.D.185-254) until the end of Jerome’s scholarly work and the acceptance of

the Latin Vulgate in the western churches (A.D. 342-420), there was a small group of Christians who doubted the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20. Their views were never of great.

The *second* period of rejection can be dated with little effort and it continues to be ever with us. J. S. Semler (1725-1791), Professor of Theology at Halle University, is known as the father of Religious Radicalism (see **Endnote #1**). Semler sowed, among his students, the seed of rejection and scorn for the historical Christian faith by removing as much of the supernatural doctrine from the Bible as possible.

Among his students at Halle was J. J. Griesbach (1745-1812), who in 1775 became the Professor of the New Testament at Jena University. Griesbach has a passion for NT Textual Criticism. His edition of the Greek NT (1806) laid the foundation for all subsequent work in this field, highly influencing the Westcott-Hort Greek Text (1881), as well as, the more recent textual criticism studies and modern translations.

Griesbach was greatly influenced by Semler, his teacher at Halle, and was ripe for the destructive effect of the rising tide of Rationalism that was sweeping Europe and especially his home country of Germany. Rejecting the *Textus Receptus*, the Greek text underlying the KJV, he reconstructed a new Greek NT text. Griesbach became strongly opposed to historical Christianity. As proof, Scrivener quotes one of the textual canons from Griesbach's introduction *Libri Historici Novi Testamenti*, I:lxvi as "Among the several readings of one place, that must deservedly be regarded as suspect, which more than the others manifestly favours the dogmas of the orthodox" (*A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 497). In other words, Griesbach was so influenced and damaged in his thinking by Rationalism that any variant in a manuscript (henceforth MS and MSS for

plural) that weakened or lessened a foundational historic Christian doctrine, that variant takes precedent over all others. Griesbach insisted Mark 16:9-20 was spurious. After over 1400 years of textual confidence in these verses, the old controversy was reopened and the battle has been waged for over 200 years influencing almost every new translation of the NT.

Griesbach believed that sometime before the end of the second century Mark 16:9-20 was added by an unknown writer because there were other Greek MSS which ended Mark's Gospel with the words: "For they were afraid." Griesbach argued that these MSS formed an individual family and served as the authentic text of the Gospel of Mark. Griesbach's teaching did not go unchallenged. Other Greek scholars, Hug and Scholz wrote their defense of the genuineness of these verses in 1809 and 1830, respectively.

In 1819, Papal authorities gave textual scholars permission to study the Codex *Vaticanus*. This MS concludes with Mark 16:8, "for they were afraid." Many scholars affirmed that its copier could not have known the verses that appear in the Authorized Version. It is true that the *Vaticanus* MS ends with verse 8, but it is incorrect to state the transcriber could not have known the verses that appear in the KJV (see **Endnote #2**).

Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) replaced Griesbach at Jena. Despising the *Textus Receptus*, Lachmann produced a new Greek NT (1831) in which he considered Mark 16:9-20 as spurious. Lachmann was followed by Dr. Constantine Tischendorf (1815-1874), the famous discover of Codex *Sinaiticus* in the St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai (see **Endnote #3**). Tischendorf, influenced by Griesbach and Lachmann, produced his edition of the Greek NT, the Codex *Sinaiticus*, as *Novum Testamentum Sinaiticus* (1863) and considered Mark 16:9-20 as spurious.

Within only a few years copies of the two oldest MSS, *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*, were circulated for study and use

amongst the various world theological universities. “Tischendorf did not believe that Mark was the most important Gospel writer” (James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai: The Story of Finding the World’s Oldest Bible—Codex Sinaiticus*, 139), because Mark was not an “eyewitness” (139), but only “copied” (141) the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. Furthermore, Tischendorf believed that contested verses of Mark 16:9-20 “were not written by Mark admits of satisfactory proof” that Mark was not the author of the entire Gospel of mark (D. A. Thompson, “The Controversy Concerning the Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel of Mark,” *The Bible League Quarterly*, 2).

The resultant study and use of the two codices, as well as the works and influence of Griesbach, Lachmann, and Tischendorf and other scholars; i.e. Tregelles (1813-1875), B. Weiss (1827-1914), Dean Alford (1810-1871), H. A. W. Meyer (1800-1873), A. Norton (1786-1853), B. F. Westcott (1825-1901), F. J. A. Hort (1828-1892), etc., to conclude the Greek text of Mark 16:9-20 was spurious. Scholars today continue to identify themselves with this contention and textual aberration.

There is a need to examine ever so briefly the role and influence of Westcott-Hort critical theory (hereafter W-H) on the question of the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20. In late 1851, at the age of 53, Hort wrote to a friend:

I had no idea till the last few weeks of the importance of texts **having read so little Greek Testament**, and dragged on with the **villainous Textus Receptus**. . . .Think of that **vile Textus Receptus** leaning entirely on late MSS.; it is a blessing there are such early ones (Bold print, WTV.) (A. F. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, I:211).

In 1853, W-H began work on a revision of the Greek Testament (Hort, 240). Hort projected that it would take a

“little more than a year” (264) to complete; however, it took 28 years. In the above quote, one can see the obvious personal animosity towards the *Textus Receptus* or the underlying Greek textual family of the KJV. The animosity stems from Hort’s belief that the KJV is based on late MSS. In addition, the quote makes it clear that: (1) Hort lacked familiarity with the Greek Testament and (2) Hort was schooled in *Classical Greek*, as it was yet unknown that the Greek Testament was written in *koine* (the colloquial language of the people) Greek (see **Endnote Four**). Therefore, many scholars considered the Greek Scriptures as being written in “shabby” Greek, in that the Greek did not adhere to the syntactical and other rules of the Greek Classics. Combined with the influence from Rationalism, many scholars did not accept the Greek Scriptures as inspired or God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:13).

W-H were able to influence the textual critics working of the Revised Version (1881) in accepting their new Greek text, which with few modifications became the basis for the Greek text of the American Standard Version (1901). If one wonders how this occurred, Wilbur N. Pickering, in part, tells us:

It would appear that the composition of the Greek text used by the English Revisers—and consequently for the RSV, NASB, etc.—was determined in large measure by Hort’s cleverness and pertinacity, inspired by his devotion to a single Greek manuscript (*The Identity Of The New Testament Text*, 85).

Ernest C. Colwell confirms in even clearer terms Hort’s cleverness: “Hort organized his entire argument to depose the Textus Receptus” (“Hort Redivivus: A Plea and a Program,” *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament*). Pickering writes that Hort “deliberately set out to construct a theory that would

vindicate his preconceived animosity for the Received Text [*Textus Receptus*, WTV]" (32).

While W-H has had and continues to have a lasting impact on textual criticism, for over a century, and their textual theory has been (see **Endnote Five**) and continues to be questioned by some textual critics. Consider:

The vast majority of important textual critics. . . have abandoned Hort's optimistic view that B [Codex Vaticanus, WTV] contains the original text unchanged except for slips of the pen (Alfred Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction*, 139).

The textual history of that the Westcott-Hort text represents is no longer tenable in the light of newer discoveries and fuller textual analysis (K. W. Clark, "Today's Problems With the Critical Text of the New Testament," *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship*, 161).

Evidence before us indicates that Hort's history never was tenable (Pickering, 92).

Although the reasoning of WH seemed sound at the time they wrote, discoveries since then have undermined the confident appraisal that characteristically Syrian readings are necessarily late. Beginning with the second edition of Hort's introductory volume in 1896, various writers have called attention to Byzantine readings which have found support in early witnesses discovered since the time of WH (Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, 55).

The resurgence of support in recent years for a return to the TR [*Textus Receptus*, WTV] is

significant (J. Keith Elliott, "Thoroughgoing Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism," *The Text of the New Testament In Contemporary Research*, Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (eds.), 332).

Textual scholars have made clear the obvious prejudicial nature of the W-H critical textual theory. Consider the following quote:

Westcott and Hort wrote with two things constantly in mind; that of the *Textus Receptus* and the *Codex Vaticanus*. But they did not hold them in mind with that passive objectivity which romanticists ascribe to the scientific mind (Ernest Cadman Colwell, "Genealogical Method: Its Achievements And Its Limitations," 109-133).

It is evident that W-H devised a textual critical theory to accommodate their personal and predisposed prejudices against the KJV and its Greek text. It is also evident from careful study that the W-H textual critical theory from the beginning as well as, to the very present has had opposition by those scholars who accept the Scriptures as God's inspired Word. W-H almost venerated *Codices Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* while disregarding the abundant MS evidence of thousands of MSS. Consequently, they set-aside the abundant textual evidence for the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20. The impact of their theory has permeated the world of textual criticism and translation to where almost every English translation and revision, since the Revised Version (1881), has either bracketed, separated or omitted the text of Mark 16:9-20; thereby, questioning its genuineness. Some translations include brackets around the text and discreetly avoid commenting.

The Problem Resolved: A Defense Of Mark 16:9-20

While the men listed above, as well as many others, reject Mark 16:9-20 as genuine, a brief, but serious, examination will show that these verses were penned by Mark and therefore were part of the Gospel of Mark and the canon of NT Scripture from the beginning. We do not possess the *autographs* (original Greek text) of the writers of the Greek NT. We have *apographs* (copies of the original Greek NT). The study of textual criticism is the ascertainment of the Greek text of the NT as originally written by its authors. The study involves Greek MSS, ancient translations or versions, the writings of the early Church Fathers and others early Christians, and the lectionaries. Consider ever so briefly the abundant evidence for the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20, and thus a defense for its genuineness.

(1) *Testimony of the Greek Manuscripts*: Roberts writes: “The most immediate and important source of various readings, . . . for comparative criticism, is, . . . that found in still-existing MSS of the New Testament” (*Companion to the Revised Version of the New Testament*, 16). These MSS are divided into two classes: (a) *Uncials*; i.e. all capitals and date prior to the 9th century. At the present time there are over 276 Uncial or majuscule MSS and fragments. Between 85-90% belong to the Byzantine textual family which W-H claimed are “inferior.” (2) *Cursives* or minuscule MSS; i.e. “flowing hand” or script style are dated after the 9th century. At the present time there are over 2,795 Cursive MSS and fragments. Between 85-90% belong to the Byzantine textual family which W-H claimed are “inferior.” Consider this lengthy quote:

(1) Of the Uncial Manuscripts. The two oldest, namely, the Sinaitic and the Vatican, omit the whole passage, but under different conditions. The

Sinaitic omits the passage absolutely. The Vatican omits it, but with a space left blank between the eighth verse of Mark xvi., and the beginning of St. Luke, just sufficient for its insertion; as though the writer of the manuscript, hesitating whether to omit or to insert the verses thought it safest to leave a space for them.

But there is another and much later Uncial Manuscript (L), of about the eighth century. Of this manuscript it may be said that, although some four centuries later, it bears a strong family resemblance to the Sinaitic and the Vatican. This manuscript does not omit the passage, but it interpolates between it and the eighth verse an apocryphal addition, and then goes on with verse 9. This addition is given at p. 538, second edition, of Dr. Scrivener's admirable work on the 'Criticism of the New Testament.'

It should be added here that there is a strong resemblance between the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts, so that practically the evidential value of these three manuscripts amounts to little more than one authority.

With these three exceptions, all the Uncial Manuscripts maintain the twelve verses in their integrity.

(2) The Cursive Manuscripts. The evidence of the Cursives is unanimous in favour of the disputed verses. It is true that some mark the passage as one of which the genuineness has been disputed. But against this there has to be set the fact that the verses are retained in all but two old manuscripts, and those two in all probability not independent. It

has been clearly shown by Dean Burgon that these verses were read in the public services of the Church in the fourth century, and probably much earlier, as shown by the ancient Evangelisteria (“The Gospel According to St. Mark,” *The Pulpit Commentary*, XVI:viii).

Both the Codices *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* are dated in the early fourth century. Both are defective MSS and exhibit a highly mutilated and untrustworthy texts at this point, as well as in various other places. However, these two MSS provide the main basis of criticism against the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20. In a very recent work on the MSS of the gospels, the editor, Reuben Swanson, notes: “Omit B and Aleph [*Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*, WTV]” (*New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings arranged in Horizontal Lines Against Codex Vaticanus: Mark*, 1995, 268).

Consider the following observations: (1) The two MSS do not provide similar evidence. The *Sinaiticus* MS omits the passage, whereas, the *Vaticanus* MS leaves sufficient room for its inclusion. No space like this kind is left anywhere else in the *Vaticanus* MS.

In Codex *Sinaiticus*, the page containing the ending of Mark and the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, has slightly increased “the size of the letters and spaces” so that

“the writer was able to extend his shortened version to the top of the column preceding Luke 1. He filled in the remainder of his last line with an ornamental flourish to make sure that no addition could be made without being immediately evident. Tischendorf, the discoverer of the Sinai copy, alleged that these pages were written by the copyist of the Vatican manuscript. This evidence does no more than indicate that a few early manuscripts terminated in this way, but that the

copyists themselves were conscious of the omission (*The Authenticity of the Last twelve Verses of the Gospel According to Mark*, 4).

(If one does not own a copy of Codex Sinaiticus, then any facsimile of Mark 16:8 will shown this is true [see, Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*, in the front of the book]).

With the absence of Mark 16:9-20 in Codices *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*, scholars began entering footnotes with varying comments concerning their genuineness. (1) Leaving a space between verse 8 and verse 9 and followed by the comment: “The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities omit from ver. 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel” (*The Revised New Testament*, 1881, *The American Standard Version*, 1901). (2) *The Revised Standard Version* (1946) ends the Gospel of Mark with verse 8 and inserts the comment “Other texts and versions add 16:9-20,” which follows in italics and with the comment “Other ancient authorities add after verse 8” what is called the “*shorter version*.” (3) *The New International Version* (1973) becomes more brazen in their comments ending Mark’s Gospel with verse 8 with the bracketed statement: “The most reliable early MSS omit Mark 16:9-20.” (4) *The Message* (1993), while including verses 9-20 in brackets, at the end contains the note: “Mark 16:9-20 [the portion in brackets] is contained only in later manuscripts.”

The Codices *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus* are *supposedly* the earliest MSS, yet they are the most corrupted and have been proven so time and again. The Codex *Vaticanus* omits 1,491 words and clauses in the Gospels with many of these found in the Gospel of Mark. The Codex *Sinaiticus* abounds in textual errors so that one writer states: “These two documents exhibit signs of a common origin in an earlier defective copy” (*The Authenticity of the Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel of According to Mark*, 4). It is these

two Codices that serves as the basis of the Westcott and Hort Greek NT and underlies the majority of the translations since 1881! (See **Endnote Six**).

In the phrase “some other authorities omit from ver. 9 to the end,” the “other authorities” are Codices Number 23, 34, 39, 41 which some scholars claim contain a note by Servius of Antioch that the “more accurate copies end at verse 8.” Apparently, scholars blindly followed one another without ever so much as checking the evidence. The truth is Codices 23, 34 and 39 has no such note. Codice 41 states that the more accurate copies contain Mark 16:9-20.

Since our study is limited by title to the ending of Mark 16:9-20, we defer from discussing the “different endings” following Mark 16:8, referred to above. I refer the reader to “The Six Endings of Mark,” Albert J. Edmunds, *The Monist*, 1919, XXIX, 520-525 and “A Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark,” John Christopher Thomas, *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, December 1983, 407-420. In these two articles, as well as various other scholarly works, the six different endings to the Gospel of Mark are discussed fully.

There are abundant Codices containing the text of Mark 16:9-20, we list but a few of them. *Codex Alexandrus* an early 5th century MS. *Codex Ephraemi* a 5th century MS. *Codex Bezae* a Greek-Latin MS. with the languages facing one another and the Greek on the left. A 5th century MS. *Codex Babilensis* an 8th century MS. in the University of Basle. *Codex Purpureus Petropolitanus* a 6th century MS. *Codex Sangallensis* a 9th century Greek-Latin MS. *Codex Rossanensis* a 6th century MS. *Codex Berantinus* a 6th century MS. *Codex Laurensis* an 8th or 9th century MS. which has the shorter ending of Mark preceding the longer ending. *Codex Regus* an 8th century MS. (Many other MSS. could be listed; however, in our limited space we refer the reader to lists found in various works: James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, III:250; Alexander Souter, *Novvm*

Testamentvm Graece; Phillip Schaff, *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, I:273; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 126-128; Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martin, and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Greek New Testament*, UBS Fourth Revised Edition 1993, 190-192; Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*. Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible*. Thomas B. Warren, *Is Mark 16:9-20 Inspired?* Frederic H. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, Jay P. Green, Sr., *Unholy Hands On the Bible*, I-II).

(2) ***Testimony of the Ancient Versions***: It is the case in studying most ancient books that the evidence for determining the original text is exhausted when MSS in the original language are studied. However, with the Bible, the case is different for not too long following the close of the NT canon, the Greek NT was translated into various languages. Various versions resulted in Syriac, Latin, Gothic, Egyptian, Armenian and other languages. It is important to remember that the versions of the Greek NT predate the earliest Greek MSS now in our possession. Also, these early versions were made from Greek MSS earlier than any Greek MSS we now possess. The evidence of the text from these versions is of great importance in helping to determine whether various readings are genuine or spurious.

The Syriac Versions. Syriac or Aramaic was the language spoken in Palestine and some surrounding areas during our Lord's lifetime. Kenyon states that Syriac "was naturally the first language into which a translation of the New Testament was required" (*Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 147).

The *Diatessaron* is a Harmony of the Gospel by Tatian, an Assyrian, compiled in A.D. 170 contains Mark 16:9-20 as genuine (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, X:128-129).

The *Old Syriac* or *Curetonian* Version was discovered in 1842 by William Cureton in the Nitron Desert in Egypt and dates to about A. D. 200. Interestingly, this Version lacks the Gospel of Mark except for the last four verse (17-20) of Mark 16:9-20.

The *Peshito Syriac* Version is thought to be the work of Rabbula, bishop of Edessa. There are 243 MSS with 178 MSS of the Gospels (Kenyon, 160). This Version is believed to date back to “within a century of the death of the Apostles” (Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 308). The *Peshito* Version contains Mark 16:9-20 in its entirety.

The *Coptic* or *Memphitic* Version represents the Egyptian language of Lower Egypt. This language resulted from the Egyptian language, in the second century, being modified by the Greek language. It was written in Greek characters with addition of six letters representing demotic alphabet to represent special Egyptian sounds (Kenyon, 177). The Coptic Version recognizes Mark 16:9-20 as genuine.

The *Old Latin* and the *Latin Vulgate* Versions. The *Old Latin* Version probably originated in Africa in the middle of the second century (Kenyon, 199). The *Old Latin* Version favors the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20, without exception. The *Old Latin* Version was superceded by Jerome’s *Latin Vulgate*. Jerome’s revision of the Gospels was completed in A. D. 383 (Kenyon, 217). The *Latin Vulgate* was a revision of the *Old Latin* Version and contained Mark 16:9-20. The *Latin Vulgate*, of which over 8,000 MSS exist, remained the standard Latin Version for over 1000 years.

In addition to these Versions listed above, we can add that the following Versions contain the disputed text of Mark 16:9-20. (1) *Thebaic* or *Sahidic* Version of Upper Egypt the third century; (2) *Italic* Version of the second century, (3) *Hharklensian* or *Philoxenian* Version a fifth

century translation, (4) *Gothic* Version of bishop Ulphilas dates A.D. 350, (5) Ethiopic Version dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries, (6) Georgian Version dating from around the sixth century, as well (Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*, 110-115).

The Syriac and Coptic Versions supply testimony to the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20 in the Eastern churches. The Latin Versions supply testimony to the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20 in the Western churches. Most of the ancient translations preceded the *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* Codices. The Greek copies used to translate the Versions contained Mark 16:9-20; whereas, the Greek copies used to make the *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* Codices were either incomplete or intentionally changed by the copyists.

3. *Testimony of the Early Church Writers*. There are comparatively few MSS of the Greek NT from A. D. 300-600; on the other hand, we have over 200 early Christian writers prior to A. D. 300-600. This Patristic evidence, while not inspired, give us quotes (some loosely), allusions and references from memory from MSS, then in existence, but which have not survived the various elements that destroy such fragile works. Their quotes, allusions and references serve as testimony that the ancient writers were (1) familiar with various biblical texts and (2) the biblical texts existed in the early Greek manuscripts from which they studied prior to A. D. 300. Consider the following evidence from Patristic writings.

(1) Papias of Hierapolis (wrote ca. A. D. 110) **alludes** Mark 16:18 (Burgon, 101). This makes the ending of Mark 16:9-20 known within just a decade or so of the close of the NT canon.

(2) Justin Martyr (ca. A. D. 100-167) of Neapolis **quotes** Mark 16:19-20 (“The Gospel According to St. Mark,” *Pulpit Commentary*, ix). This testimony is within 50 or 60 years of the death of the apostle John.

(3) Irenaeus (A. D. 120-202) of Lyons **quotes** Mark 16:19 in *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter 10, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I:426. Irenaeus wrote this work in A. D. 180. We have both MS and Patristic testimony to the genuineness of Mark 16:19 within about 115 years of the writing of the Gospel of Mark!

(4) Hippolytus (A. D. 160-235) of Portus near the city of Rome **quotes** Mark 16:17-18 in one of his extant fragments and **alludes** to Mark 16:19 in his writing against the heresy of Noetus (Burgon, 102-103).

(5) *The Gospel of Nicodemus* or *Acts of Pilate* assigned by Tischendorf to the third century **contains** Mark 16:15-18 (Burgon, 103).

(6) *The Apostolic Constitutions* (late 4th century) **quotes** Mark 16:9, 14, 16-18 (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII:445, 457, 479).

(7) Jacobus Nisibenus a Syria bishop, also known Aphraates the Persian Sage, and was present at the Council of Nicaea (A. D. 325), **quotes** Mark 16:16-18. The quotations are not from either the Curetonain Syriac or the Peshito Versions but rather an entirely independent witness (Burgon, 105). This is coeval with the dates of the Codices *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*.

(8) Ambrose (A. D. 340-397) of Milan quotes Mark 16:15 three times and Mark 16:17-18 twice (*Of the Holy Spirit*, Chapter 13 and *Of the Christian Faith*, Chapter 14, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 10:133, 134, 216).

(9) John Chrysostom (A. D. 347-407) of Antioch argues that Luke describes the ascension, Matthew and John did not speak of it, and Mark records the event. "Then he quotes verses 19, 20. 'This' (he adds) 'is the end of the Gospel. Mark makes no extended mention of the Ascension'" (Burgon, 105). In his *Homilies on First Corinthians XXXVIII*, Chrysostom makes a clear reference to his knowledge of Mark 16:9 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, 12:229).

(10) Jerome (A. D. 347-420) was endowed with tremendous Biblical learning and editor of the Latin Vulgate a revision of the Old Latin Version. He left Mark 16:9-20 in his revision of the Old Latin Version in his Latin Vulgate. Convinced of the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20, Jerome **quotes** Mark 16:14 in his work, *Against the Pelagians*, Book II (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, 6:468; Burgon, 106, 145).

(11) Augustine (A. D. 354-430) **quotes** Mark 16:16, (“Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament,” Sermon XXI, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, 6:323).

(12) To the above evidence, we can also add the testimony of Nestorius, an early fifth century heretic, who **quotes** Mark 16:20 and Cyril of Alexandria’s (A. D. 376-444) response by accepting the quotation and then adding his own comments. Severus of Antioch, Victor of Antioch, Eusebius, and Hesychius of Jerusalem used all or various verses of Mark 16:9-20 in their writings (Burgon, 107, 135-147).

Consider the combined testimony and witness from the above early writers, to which we could have added and expanded more fully on their use of Mark 16:9-20 if we had had more space. These men do not belong to any one particular age (with the exception that many of these writers predate the Codices *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*), any one particular school of religious thought, or any one country. They come from every part of the world of Christendom in the ancient church. They bear evidence that Mark 16:9-20 is genuine.

4. ***The Testimony from the Lectionaries.*** Some of the early churches had created lectionaries to read from the New Testament in the worship services. It is believed that this probably began with the Syrian churches. The Greek Scriptures were copied and recopied for use from the pulpit each Lord’s Day. A schema or schedule was developed

wherein the entire New Testament, and especially from the Gospels, would be publicly read at worship. To make such schedules demanded MSS.

This evidence **must not** be overlooked in the study of textual criticism. The testimony of the lectionaries is not that of a single man or MS. or family of MSS., though many of these MSS are from the Byzantine family of texts. The lectionaries present evidence that the Scriptures were read in the worship of the early churches. They serve as *evidence* for the existence of verses from various MSS, many which have long perished. Burgon has an entire chapter titled, "The Testimony of the Lectionaries Shewn to be Absolutely Decisive as to the Genuineness of These Verses" [Mark 16:9-20, WTV] in his unanswered and unanswerable work, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*, 271-291). We refer the reader to this invaluable work on Mark 16:9-20, as well as, Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*; Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 163-171; Ernest C. Colwell, "Method in the Study of Gospel Lectionaries," *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism*, 84-95).

5. The Testimony From Mark's Style and Vocabulary. Many textual critics, who reject the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20, appeal to difference in *style* and *vocabulary* by arguing from internal evidence against the genuineness of the text. It is the case that it is no argument in their favor, but rather when seriously and carefully studied is a strong argument for the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20. Their argument is that the *style* and *vocabulary* in 16:9-20 is greatly different from that found in Mark 1:1-16:8. Note carefully, H. A. W. Meyer's comment:

with ver. 9 there suddenly sets in a process of excerpt-making in contrast with the previous character of the narration, while the entire section

in general contains none of Mark's peculiarities (no *euthus*, no *palin*, etc.,--and what brevity, devoid of vividness and clearness on the part of the compiler!); in individual expressions it is quite at variance with the sharply defined manner throughout Mark. . .it does not, moreover, presuppose what has been previously related. . .and has even apocryphal disfigurements (ver. 18: *opheis*. . .*bliipse* (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospels of Mark and Luke*, 197).

Henry Alford writes that "the *internal evidence*, which is discussed in the notes, will be found to preponderate vastly against the authorship of Mark" (*The Greek Testament*, I:434). B. F. Westcott, who with Hort developed the Greek text which rejects the genuineness of Mark 16:9-20, writes that these verses "seem" to be canonical, "though they cannot be regarded as part of the original narrative of St. Mark" (*Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, 330, fn5). This attitude challenges the inspiration of the Bible!

One of the most careful examinations of the *style* of Mark in 16:9-20 was researched by John A. Broadus and titled the "Style of Mark xvi.9-20, as bearing upon the question of genuineness," *Baptist Quarterly*, 1869, III:354-362; see also, James Keith Elliott, "The Text and Language of the Endings to Mark's Gospel," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 1971, 4:255-262; Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*, 216-270).

CONCLUSION

It is our firm belief from the evidence gathered from the (1) Testimony of the Greek MSS, (2) Testimony of the Ancient Versions, (3) Testimony of the Early Church Writers, and (4) Testimony From Mark's Style and Vocabulary that Mark 16:9-20 is genuine!

ENDNOTES

ENDNOTE ONE

When the doctrines of inerrancy, authority, infallibility, trustworthiness, genuineness, inspiration and revelation of the Bible are surrendered, then each man can use his own “pen knife” to dissect and interpret the Bible as he sees fit. For those desiring to understand the rise and horrible effect religious Rationalism and Semler’s influence, we suggest reading: John Urquhart, *The Inspiration And Accuracy Of The Holy Scripture* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1895), 93-272; John Flectcher Hurst, *History Of Rationalism* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1865); Canon Henry Kewis, *Modern Rationalism: As Seen At Work In Its Biographies* (London: SPCK, 1913); Adam Story Farrar, *A Critical History Of Free Thought In Reference To The Christian Religion* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1887); John Cairns, *Unbelief In The Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1881); Arthur Cushman, *Protestant Thought Before Kant* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1911).

ENDNOTE TWO

One of my copies of the Codex *Vaticanus* has an (*) at the end of verse 8 but also contains the disputed verses 16:9-20 with the following footnote “(*) codice vat. 1209, *imittitus*,” i.e. the Codex *Vaticanus* omits the disputed text, 16:9-20 (Cardinal Angelus Maius, *Codex Vaticanus Novum Testamentum Graece* [London: D. Nutt Et Williams & Norgate, 1869], 104). The *Vaticanus* Codex leaves a blank column after 16:8 with sufficient space to have written the omitted text of Mark 16:9-20. Various reasons and arguments are conjectured as to *why*. The abrupt ending of the *Sinaiticus* Codex has created a totally different set of conjectures (see, Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible And The Ancient MSS* [London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958] 52-53,

197, 204, 214-215, 217, 236-237; Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Witness Of Matthew And Mark To Christ* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958], 86-118).

Evidence that the Roman Catholic Church has always held to the genuineness of 16:9-20 is seen in the following quote: “The section commencing with v. 9, and ending with the chapter, as it is well known, does not occur in the Vatican codex. Cardinal Mai observes that it is fully ascertained that this section [16:9-20, WTV] is, however, ‘undoubtedly to be retained, because the testimonies of other codices, and many other arguments of sacred criticism.’ He has supplied it out of the *Codex Vaticano-Palatinus*, 22, which he assigns to about the tenth century (Robert Ormsby, *The Greek Testament From Cardinal Mai’s Edition Of The Vatican Bible With Notes; Chiefly Philological and Exegetical* [Dublin: James Duffy, 1860], 123).

ENDNOTE THREE

In A. D. 331, Emperor Constantine the Great (A. D. 272 or 274-337) ordered Eusebius of Caesarea to arrange production of fifty MSS of the Bible. Eusebius, who operated a Scriptorium at Constantinople, responded. It has been argued, but not convincingly so, that the *Codices Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*, which both lack Mark 16:9-20, were produced by Eusebius. Constantine Tischendorf, the discoverer of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, believed that the same scribe worked on both mss. For an interesting reading of the discovery of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, we suggest: Dr. Constantine Tischendorf, *Codex Sinaiticus* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1934) and James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai: The Story of Finding The World’s Oldest Bible—Codex Sinaiticus* (London: Orbis, 1985).

ENDNOTE FOUR

Scholars had not yet determined that the Greek Testament was written in *koine* (colloquial language of the people) Greek when W-H began their work on their Greek

text. Hort was schooled in Classical (Attic) Gree. It was “good Greek, although some classical forms are lacking, and it does not always conform to strict classical rules. It is neither ‘tired’ Greek, nor ‘bad’ Greek, nor ‘Jewish’ Greek, nor ‘Biblical’ Greek, nor “New Testament’ Greek, nor ‘Holy Ghost’ Greek, but common Greek of the day” (H. S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, 163). It was not until toward the end of the 19th century when scholars realized that the Greek Testament was written in *koine* Greek. Once this was realized, men began to write showing the basis of the Greek Testament from the *koine* Greek. Some of the early writers were: James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Prolegomena*, I, 1906; Adolph Deismann, *Bible Studies*, 1901; *Light From the Ancient East*, 1910; Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1958; and others).

ENDNOTE FIVE

Almost from the beginning of the work of W-H and the Revised Version (1881), other scholars were critical and not without just cause. Several worthwhile volumes, pamphlets and journal articles were written defending the Greek text behind the KJV and criticizing the Revised Version (1881). Some of those men and their writings are: Thomas R. Birks, *Essay on the Right Estimation of Manuscript Evidence in the Text of the New Testament*, 1878; John W. Burgon, *The Causes and the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels*, 1896; *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*, 1871; *The Revision Revised*, 1885, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established*, 1896; F. C. Cook, *The Revised Version of the First Three Gospels*, 1882; H. C. Hoskier, *Codex B and Its Allies*, 1914; Edward Miller, *A Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 1886; *The Oxford Debate on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 1897; Frederick Nolan, *An*

Inquiry Into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate, or Received Text of the New Testament, 1815; G. W. Samson, *The English-Greek Revisers' Greek Text*, 1882; S. W. Whitney, *The Revisers' Greek Text*, 1892.

ENDNOTE SIX

The corruption and mutilation of these Codices is seen in the following information. In the *Codex Vaticanus* “all is lost after Heb. ix, 14, including the Pastoral Epistles and Apocalypse” (Frederic Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible*, 85). *Codex Sinaiticus* contains the *Epistle of Barnabas* and parts of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. If, as it is argued, these two MSS are both the earliest and most reliable and Mark 16:9-20 is not genuine, then what of the missing sections in the Vaticanus MS and why do W-H, and other scholars, not omit that which is not found in the Vaticanus MS and include the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas from the Sinaiticus MS? After all, Kenyon states these two MSS are considered by many as “the most authentic text of the N.T.” (81).

Biographical Sketch

W. Terry Varner is retired from full-time located work. Presently preaches for various congregations, holds meetings, speaks on lectureships, and teaches at West Virginia School of Preaching. He is currently involved in a “Writing Ministry.” He own and edits *Therefore Stand*, an eight page monthly religious paper which is in its 17th year.

Terry is married to the former Lillie L. Garrison and they have four children and 11 grandchildren.

Great Commission Baptism

D. Gene West

It would seem if there is any Bible subject that members of the churches of Christ would know and understand it would be the subject of baptism. To the most of us baptism into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins would belong to that category of biblical subject matter that we would call “the milk of the Word of God.” To the most of us the matter is so simple, and so simply put in the New Testament that there is no question about the meaning of the word “baptize,” the action the word requires, or the result of having submitted in faith to baptism. For several generations, in this country, we have understood that baptism is immersion in water of a penitent believer for the remission of his sins, with the result being he is saved from sin and added, by Christ himself, to his body which is the church. The reason we have this understanding is that this is exactly what the Bible teaches with a clarity that does not surprise any of us.

However, over the years arguments have raged among us as to whether or not anyone who is simply immersed in water because he wants to serve God has been scripturally baptized into Christ. Many, if not most of us, have accepted the position that a person who is truly baptized into Christ must understand that he is being baptized for the remission of his sins, and that those who do not believe that, though they may have been immersed in water to please God, have not been baptized into Christ, especially if they believe that they were in a covenant relationship with God before that baptism took place. Consequently, most of us have accepted as valid the baptism for the remission of sins which is practiced by other religious bodies, and have rejected the baptism of such bodies as the various Baptist churches because they baptize to get into the church once

one is already saved by grace alone. We have done that on the basis of there being one baptism for the remission of sins and those who have not experienced that have not been baptized at all. (Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:1-7)

However, even in our brotherhood today we have men, such as brother Jimmy Allen, who take the position that if one has been baptized because he wanted to please God, whether he believes that he was already saved before baptism or not, has been scripturally baptized. Allen said, speaking of what he calls the “churches in the center,” of which he considers himself a part:

The churches in the center believe and teach that people have experienced the new birth who believe in the Christ, repent of sins, and are immersed in his name, although they may lack an understanding of the precise time when the Lord remits sins. The important thing, they maintain, is that a person must obey the Lord’s commands which bring one to Christ and the church. (Eph. Mine, DGW) However, beyond the initial saving experience, they contend that the biblical practices which make the local church uniquely undenominational must be taught. Some of these practices are the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, a cappella singing, elders and deacons in fully organized churches, and withdrawal of fellowship from the ungodly and the immoral. These people are perfectly willing to give up anything and everything that is simply cultural or traditional in the interest of unity. However, they believe the practices above are biblical rather than traditional or cultural. . . . *Rebaptism?* Attempts to define the parameters of the church. It does not attempt to solve the fellowship question. In a word, I cannot personally work and worship with those who do not hold to the items set out above. .

. . I refuse to be judgmental of fellow Christians who have not yet gained the insight into these matters I have.¹

In light of the fact that there is some confusion over the matter of baptism in modern churches of Christ, including some who are teaching that it comes after one is saved by repeating the sinner's prayer, we thought it would be of some value to once again study the matter, particularly as it is set out in the great commission as presented by Mark.

There is no better way of beginning a study of this great passage of Scripture than to simply quote it. Mark recorded that Jesus said, ***Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*** Before going into a discussion of this magnificent passage we should point out that there are those in the religious world, and probably in the church, who would take the position that the passage is not found in some of the more modern Greek texts of the New Testament, and therefore, should not be discussed at all. The last twelve verses of Mark do appear in the *Textus Receptus* version of the Greek New Testament. It is this text that underlies the King James, and New King James versions of the New Testament. However, some more recent manuscript evidence has led many scholars to conclude that this was a later addition to Mark's Gospel and therefore, should not be considered as a part of the inspired canon. Without trying to resolve the textual issue, because that has been assigned to other speakers on this lectureship, we shall proceed on the assumption that this passage of Scripture is, indeed, canonical and is deserving of our special consideration. (Regarding the word

1. Allen, Jimmy, **Re-baptism? What One Must Know To Be Born Again**, Howard Publishing Co., West Monroe, Louisiana, 1991, pp. x - xi.

“assumption” in the above statement, I do not mean to imply that I am *assuming* that this passage belongs in the Greek text because I believe I can prove that it does. But because this theme belongs to someone else in this lectureship, we are going to proceed without stopping to prove that point here.)

There are four things that stand out in this passage which deserve out special consideration. They are: (1) Preaching the Gospel, which has as its foundational principles the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). (2) Believing in the Christ of that Gospel. (3) Salvation that comes as a result of baptism. (4) Looking at baptism as a promise. These are the four features of this passage that we desire to consider.

Let us begin with the preaching of the Gospel. Mark, by the inspiration of the divine Holy Spirit, said that Jesus commanded his Apostles to ***Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*** In our English translations this sentence is in the imperative, which means that it was a command given. That is the case in the Greek language as well, although the wording is a bit different, and would read as follows: ***When you go into all the world proclaim the gospel to all creation.*** Jesus made this statement as if it had been assumed by God in his great plan of salvation that the Apostles, and others, would be going into all the world for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel to the creation. That indeed was the case, for God had planned before the foundation of the world that the redeeming message of his Son would be preached to the human inhabitants of the earth. (See: Ephesians 1:4 & 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:20) The prophets of the Old Testament made this abundantly clear when they prophesied that the time would come when God would save, through the death of his Son, both the Jews and the Gentiles.

The purpose of the “going” of the Apostles into all the world was to preach (keruxate - publish, proclaim, openly

announce) the Gospel of Christ. The word “Gospel” in this passage comes from a Greek word (euaggelion) which means “good, or joyful news,” or “glad tidings.” In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Paul said this good news is rooted in the facts that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. Any thing the Gospel tells me that will save me from eternal death is good news, even if it involves telling me I must give up my sinful ways of life. One who proclaims the good news is a “gospelist,” or an evangelist.

The targeted audience of this good news is the human creation. It would be senseless to preach the Gospel, or anything else, to the birds as did St. Francis of Assisi, so tradition says, because the birds, while beautiful, are not discerning creatures who are able to reason about eternal souls, which they do not have. So, when the Apostles were told to preach the Gospel to the whole creation, they understood that Christ was commanding them to preach it to the highest of God’s earthly creation, namely, mankind.

Included in the proclamation of the good news is God’s view of baptism for remission of sins, and without the proclamation of this part of the Gospel we have not declared all the Gospel, or the whole counsel of God. Wherever the Gospel is preached in its ancient simplicity, a part of that preaching is on the subject of baptism. This is easily demonstrated by an appeal to cases of conversion which are recorded in the Book of Acts, and particularly in the preaching of “Jesus” to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter eight. If baptism is not preached, then the whole Gospel is not preached, and if baptism is not experienced then the Gospel has not been obeyed, and faith has not been allowed to have her perfect work.

Let us now look at the matter of faith in the Christ who is proclaimed in the Gospel. Jesus, in our passage said, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. It is a universally accepted fact that faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is an essential condition of salvation. Even most “liberals” today will not take the position that one can look upon the Gautama Buddha as the Son of Yahweh and hope to find a right relationship with God the Father. But the striking thing about this passage of Scripture is that the faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God which results from the preaching of the Gospel is so intimately connected to baptism. If anything else were going to be put into such a relationship with faith, or belief, we would not be so surprised. For example: if the Lord had said, “He who believes and calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;” or if he had said, “He who believes and repents of his sins shall be saved;” or if he had said, “He who believes and confesses his faith in Christ will be saved,” neither those of us in the church, or those in the rest of the religious world would be surprised. Why? Because all these other matters are found in other passages of the New Testament, and they are connected directly with faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. (Acts 2:21, 38; Romans 10:9-10) But because baptism seems to be a different kind of act, that is a physical act that can be seen as opposed to internal acts of the heart or mind, it seems strange to the human mind that Jesus would connect such an act to faith.

For this reason, we need to notice the close conjunction of belief and baptism in this passage. And taking notice of that should cause us (religious people in general) to take a deeper look at the matter and examine our perceptions regarding baptism and realize that because it is a physical act showing submission to the will of Christ, it is no less an act of the heart than repentance, or confession. In Colossians 2:11-12, Paul pointed out that baptism is the submissive act that causes God to circumcise the heart of the person and add him to the chosen of God.

And in Galatians 3:26-29, Paul declared that it is the act of baptism that causes us to become one in Christ and the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise that God made to him in Genesis 12:3. In addition to all this, it must be pointed out that baptism has a natural connection with faith because, according to Paul in Romans 6:3-5, it is in baptism that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are re-enacted so that the sinner dies to sin, is buried, and resurrects to a new life, as was the case with Christ. So, in reality baptism becomes a kind of visualization of the faith of the person who calls upon God for salvation; it shows that the faith is really there. So, we must notice that the connection between faith and baptism is that the latter, properly understood, demonstrates the former.

Now we must turn to the matter of baptism and salvation. Jesus said, ***He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*** There is something very unequivocal and definite about this statement. ***He who believes and is baptized will be saved...*** If one attempts to remove either one of these conditions his salvation from past sin will be thwarted. It is not possible to omit either belief or baptism and receive the promised salvation, and whatever the necessity is that is connected with believing, so far as salvation is concerned, that same necessity is connected with baptism. The truthfulness of what we have just said is reinforced by such passages as Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Acts 2:38, and a host of others.

However, sometimes it is objected that baptism is not really essential to salvation because Jesus did not say, "He who believes not and is baptized not will be condemned," he merely said, ***...but he who does not believe will be condemned.*** The reason Jesus did not make such a statement is because baptism without faith does not save! If one is a nonbeliever you could immerse him until you wash the flesh from his bones and he still would not be saved

because he is still a nonbeliever. Reject Christ as the Son of God and one is lost no matter what else he may do in this life. Have you ever heard of a nonbeliever demanding baptism? Why would someone who is totally disinterested in God, Christ, or things Holy be even remotely interested in baptism? Two things are necessary to be saved. These are: faith and baptism. One thing is necessary to be condemned. To refuse to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. (John 8:24) One should not bank on what the Lord did not say as having the power to save him for Jesus said that we are his disciples if we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not hard to keep. (1 John 5:1-3) Since the efficacy of baptism always presupposes faith, and is meaningless without faith, why would the Lord make a statement like the one we have looked at above?

The thief on the cross is often introduced as an example of salvation without baptism. It has been my habit to ask, down through the years, “Do you wish to be crucified in order to be saved?” I would rather be baptized than crucified, wouldn’t you? The simple answer to this objection is that the thief lived, and died three days before Jesus ever gave this command, so he was not subject to it.

But now let us look at baptism as a promise. Many people have a great deal of difficulty accepting the close relationship between faith, baptism, and salvation because of the widespread acceptance of the notion that baptism is just one of the many commands that one obeys in order to do good works. As a consequence, we even have brethren today, who look upon baptism as a mere work, and they agree with the Calvinists that we are not saved by works, so they have given up on the idea of baptism for the remission of sins, although they still accept it as a good work, or as a mere command to be obeyed at some juncture in life.

However, a proper understanding of baptism shows that it takes on more of the nature of a promise than of a mere commandment to be obeyed as a good work. The

promises of God are wonderful things to study because in a study of them is involved a careful look at the history of what God has done for the salvation of mankind, and what he will do **if** man will respond to his desires. In the matter of baptism God is not merely commanding us to do something, but he is promising to do something for us **if** we meet the conditions of the promise. Another example of this is found in Acts 2:38 in which God said in effect, I will give you the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the remission of your sins **if** you will repent and be baptized.

(Incidentally, we are not denying the imperative nature of either of these passages, but merely trying to show that they go beyond a mere command.) In the passage under consideration Jesus told his Apostles to tell the sinners of the world if they would believe in him as the Son of God, and if they would be baptized to re-enact his death, burial, and resurrection, he would grant them salvation from sin. Hence, we see the promissory nature of the great commission as recorded by Mark. The sinner, then is complying with the will of God in order that he might receive that which God has promised, namely, salvation. So, there is more than just obeying a mere command, there is the compliance with the will of God in order to receive that which God has promised to those who will comply with his will. Overlooking this will reduce the beautiful ceremony of baptism to a mere act that has no deeper significance than being a mere act. There is a deeper significance than merely going through the motions to avoid the heat for not obeying the orders from the boss.

Illustration: If a man is drowning in a stream, and he hears the words “grab this rope, and I’ll pull you to safety,” what does he think of? Does he think of this as a mere command, or does he think of this as a promise of safety if he will grab the rope? It would seem to me that the latter is the case! By the same token, here is person desperately fighting in the overwhelming waters of sin, and Jesus says,

“Believe and be baptized, and I will save you;” is the person looking more at the conditions or at the promise? In my humble opinion, he is, or should be, looking more at the promise, and simply not quibble about the command, or request, if you please.

Those of us who have been Christians for many years should look back upon our baptism as a joyful compliance to a promise that brought the great blessing of salvation from sin, and made us free from the debt of sin, and slaves of righteousness, that is, of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

What then, have we learned from Mark 16:15-16. We have learned: (1) the joyful news of salvation through Christ is to be preached to every human creature who will stand and listen. (2) Those creatures who will be influenced by that Gospel to believe that Jesus Christ as the Son of God can be rescued from their perishing condition when they believe and accept that promise of salvation from all past sins. The most beautiful promise on earth is: ***He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*** The most frightening promise on earth is: ***He that believeth not shall be condemned.*** God of our fathers, help us to believe and obey.

Biographical Sketch

Education

Hancock County, WV Public Schools
Freed-Hardeman (College) University, Henderson,
Tennessee - A.A. Religious Education.
West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia -
A.B. (Liberal Arts) Philosophy, Religion, Spanish, Speech.
Fairmont State College, Fairmont, West Virginia - B.S.
Community Psychology.

Work History

2001 - Hillview Terrace church of Christ, Moundsville,
West Virginia.

1990 - 2001 - Steelton church of Christ, 69 East Thistle Drive, New Martinsville, West Virginia.

1977 - 1990 - Oakwood Road church of Christ, Fairmont, West Virginia.

1973 - 1977 - Grand Central Avenue church of Christ, Vienna, West Virginia.

1966 - 1973 - Hillview Terrace church of Christ, Moundsville, West Virginia.

1961 - 1966 - Church of Christ, Kissimmee, Florida.

1959 - 1961 - Church of Christ, Martins Ferry, Ohio.

1956 - 1959 - Church of Christ, Hundred, West Virginia.

Personal

Born: Chester, West Virginia May 27, 1936.

Baptized into Christ by brother Jess W. Nutter, Chester, West Virginia, April 11, 1950.

Married Shirley Ann Bissett West, August 5, 1957. We are the parents of three children, Kandi Davis of Canal Winchester, Ohio, Mary Amy Kessinger of St. Marys, West Virginia, and Todd C. West of Morgantown, West Virginia. We have six grandchildren, Nathan, Jacob, Rebekah, and Aaron Davis, and Daniel James (D.J.) and Thomas Kessinger.

Other Work Experience

Taught five years at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg, West Virginia, and presently teach and have taught for seven years at the West Virginia School of Preaching, Moundsville, West Virginia. Former owner and editor of *BIBLE HERALD* a gospel journal in West Virginia.

Confirming the Word With Signs Following

Charles Pugh, III

INTRODUCTION

“...And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen” (Mark 16:17-20).

The above verses have been a textual and doctrinal battleground for centuries. Set in the context of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (Mark 16:1-13), i.e. “after he was risen” (Mark 16:14), and connected with the assignment of the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-16), it should come as no surprise that the authenticity of this crucial text has often been challenged. In this lecture, the authenticity of this text, as a part of the sacred canon, is assumed. However, that these verses, and the others which compose the so-called “long ending” of Mark’s gospel account, are genuine, has been unequivocally proved to be the case. See the following: Varner, W. Terry, “Is Mark 16:9-20 Fraudulent or Genuine?”, 2001 West Virginia School Of Preaching Lectureship; Burgon, John W., The Last Twelve Verses Of The Gospel According To St. Mark, Reprint: Faith and Facts Press, n.d.; Warren-Ballard Debate

On The Plan Of Salvation, Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 3rd Printing 1979.

The conclusion of the erudite Bible scholar, J.W. McGarvey, is that with which we concur:

“Our final conclusion is, that the passage in question is authentic in all its details, and that there is no reason to doubt that it was written by the same hand which indited the proceeding parts of this narrative. The objections which have been raised against it are better calculated to shake our confidence in Biblical Criticism than in the genuineness of this inestimable portion of the word of God. (McGarvey, J.W., The New Testament Commentary, Vol. I-Matthew And Mark, St. Louis. Christian Publishing Company, 1875, 382).

Jesus was the speaker of the words that compose verses seventeen and eighteen. However, there is no identification of the place where these words were spoken. It may be the case that these words (verses 17-18) were spoken during a post-resurrection appearance in Galilee (cf. Matt. 26:32; 28:7,16-20; Mark 14:28; 16:7, 14-18). They may parallel the Great Commission account of Matthew, but it is not certain that such is the case. In fact, a case can be made that these words of Jesus recorded by Mark (16:17-18) were spoken on a different occasion than that referred to in Matthew 28:16-20 since the Matthew account identifies the place as “the mountain” in Galilee (Matt. 28:16), and Mark’s account refers to when “they sat at meat” (Mark 16:14).

In addition to the occasion when the words of verses seventeen and eighteen were spoken, this text also involves the occasion of the ascension (verse 19; cf. Acts 1:8-11) which took place on Mount Olivet (Acts 1:12). The text states: “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto

them (i.e. after he had spoken to them for forty days following the resurrection- Acts 1:3), was received up into heaven...” (Mark 16:19). Verse nineteen begins a new paragraph in the English Bible. The occasion with which verse nineteen is concerned is to be distinguished from that of verse eighteen. Therefore, the following conclusions may be drawn with regard to the context of Mark 16:17-20:

1. Verses seventeen and eighteen were spoken during a specific post-resurrection appearance.
2. The former part of verse nineteen may be a reference to the entire forty day period when Jesus had spoken to the apostles (Acts 1:3).
3. The latter part of verse nineteen is a reference to the ascension which occurred on Mount Olivet on the final day of the above mentioned forty day period (Acts 1:8-12).
4. The passage concludes with a kind of summation of the Acts of the Apostles which shows how “they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed” (Mark 16:20).

AFFIRMATION OF THE TEXT

The basic affirmation of this text is: “And these signs shall accompany them that believe...” (Mark 16:17). Literally, “these are the signs which shall follow.” *Signs* (*semeia*, nom. acc. pl. of *semeion*) was used to refer to “the sign or distinguishing mark by which something is known” (Arndt, William F. and Gingrich, F. Wilbur, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, The University of Chicago Press, 1957, 14th Printing 1973, 755). Paul used the term to refer to “the token in every epistle” he wrote to mark its genuineness (2 Thess. 3:17) and the “wonders or miracles” (Arndt-Gingrich, 755) performed by a true apostle to

identify him as such (2 Cor. 12:12). The word occurs twice in the text before us (verses 17, 20). It refers here to "...a wonder or miracle, an event that is contrary to the usual course of nature...miracle of divine origin, performed by God himself..." (Arndt-Gingrich, 755). *Semeion* (sign) appears seventy-seven times in the New Testament (Gospels: 48 times; Acts: 13 times; Epistles of Paul: 8 times; Hebrews: 1 time; Revelation: 7 times). A few passages for consideration in which the word is found include John 2:23; 3:2; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22, 43; Heb. 2:4. Ancient Papyri have been cited which establish the idea of "proof" as a meaning of *semeion* (Moulton, James Hope and Milligan, George, The Vocabulary Of The Greek New Testament, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1930, reprinted 1976, 573). The term involves the "things which God did to accredit the preaching which began with the proclamation of the Lord" (Rengstorf, K.H., Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament, ed. Gerhard, Friedrich, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971, rep. 1978, Vol. VII, 260. [NOTE: The reader is referred to an in depth study of *semeion* in the preceding source, pp. 200-269]. "The basic meaning of *semeion* is a sign...by which one recognizes a particular person or thing, a confirmatory, corroborative, authenticating mark or token" (Hofius, O., The New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology, Gen. Ed. Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, Vol. 2, 626). These signs are *evidences* to prove that the gospel of Christ and the claims therein are true. The implication of this text is that Christianity honors the law of rationality which states that one ought to draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence. The Christian faith is rational. It sustains the truth of its claims through the framework of sufficient evidence (Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31; Acts 26:25; Rom. 1:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:15, et al).

The Charismatic movement, and other subjective religious movements such as latter-day revelation claimants (Mormons, etc.), often run to Mark 16:17-20 in an attempt to defend their claims of present day tongue speaking, miraculous healings, etc. However, when the passage is exegeted accurately, and understood, it is not seen as a place of refuge for subjective religious viewpoints and practices which deny the law of rationality. Rather, this text makes a great affirmation of how Christian faith is rational, i.e. it establishes its claims by adequate evidence. Thus, it addresses one of the great needs in religion, viz. the recognition of the essentiality of reasoning correctly in order to arrive at the truth. One must gather the evidence, reason correctly with regard to that evidence, and draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence (cf. John 3:2; John 20:30-31). However, as one writer has shown in a recent article, so much in religion today fails at this point:

“Lamentably, irrationalism has greatly affected the visible church. The Charismatic movement is just one example of this. The primacy of the intellect and of truth has been replaced with emotionalism, ecstatic utterances, incoherent experiences, and anti-doctrinal statements (e.g. ‘give me Jesus, not exegesis’). Faith has nothing to do with thought, let alone logic. All too frequently we encounter what Ronald Nash referred to as ‘the religious revolt against logic.’ “ (Crampton, W. Gary, “A Call For Christian Rationality,” The Trinity Review, June 2001, 2-3).

The affirmation of Mark 16:17-20 is that these signs would accompany (*parakoloutheo*), follow closely, characterize (The Analytical Greek Lexicon, London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, Rep. 1967, 304), “...attend those who have come to believe” (Arndt-Gingrich, 624), or

“follow along the side” (Rienecker, Fritz, A Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament, ed. Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. Grand Rapids:Zondervan,1976,135). The signs would follow “them that believe” (*tauta pisteusasin*). The signs would follow (accompany, follow closely, follow along the side) **them** (plural) that believe. Believe is an aorist participle. The “having believed” ones would have the signs follow along the side of them. McGarvey explained it in the following: “The promise is, not that these signs shall follow for any specified time, NOR THAT THEY SHOULD FOLLOW EACH INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER, but merely that THEY SHALL FOLLOW AND FOLLOW “THE BELIEVERS” TAKEN AS A BODY. They did follow the believers during the apostolic age-not every individual believer, but all, or nearly all, the organized bodies of the believers. This was a complete fulfillment of what was promised. He who claims that the promise included more than this, presses the words of the promise beyond what is necessary to a full realization of their meaning...” (The New Testament Commentary, Matthew and Mark, 375, caps mine, CCP).

CLASSIFICATION OF THE SIGNS

The signs (evidence, proof) which would accompany (follow along side) them that believe are as follows: “...in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover” (verse 17-18). Jesus promised five signs that would accompany the body of believers:

1. The power to expel demons.
2. The ability to speak in new tongues.
3. The ability to pick up serpents, that is, to pick up venomous snakes without being physically harmed.

4. The gift of being able to drink deadly poison without being hurt.
5. The power to lay hands on the sick who will then recover.

Each of these five signs can be classified in one of the areas of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit that Paul set forth (1Cor. 12:8-11). These signs can be classified as follows:

1. The power to expel demons is a manifestation of the gift of “working of miracles” (1 Cor. 12:10).
2. The ability to speak in new tongues is equivalent to the gift of “diverse kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:10).
3. The ability to pick up serpents without being harmed and or drinking deadly poison without being hurt are also manifestations of the gift of “workings of miracles” (1 Cor. 12:10).
4. The power to lay hands on the sick so that they then recover is a manifestation of “gifts of healings” (1 Cor. 12:9).

These miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted to believers in the first century church through “the laying on of the apostles’ hands” (Acts 8:14-19). There were signs (*semeia*) which followed along side the apostles as evidence that they were genuine, and to prove that what they were preaching was the true revelation of God (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:43). However, it is also the case that those upon whom the apostles laid their hands, in order to impart the Holy Spirit in a miraculous measure, were also able to perform various signs as evidence to confirm the word they preached (cf. Acts 8:4-7,14-21).

Jesus said, “In my name...” (en to onomati mou). To do something “in the name of” another can mean “to do a thing, i.e. by one’s command and authority, acting on his behalf, promoting his cause” (Thayer, Joseph Henry,

Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 12th printing 1973, 447). It can mean “in the power of...in acknowledgment or confession of...in recognition of the authority of (sometimes combined with the thought of relying or resting on) [Vine’s Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words, 1952, Vol. 3, 100].

“Shall cast out demons” (verse 17) is from *daimonia ekbalousin*. It means to drive out, or expel, demons or evil spirits (cf. Mark 1:34, 39, 43; 3:15, 23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 28; 16:9).

“They shall speak with new tongues” (verse 17) is translated from *glossais* (tongues) *lalesousin* (they shall speak) and *kainais* (new). *Glossa* is a language (Arndt and Gingrich, 161). It refers to “a tongue, i.e. the language used by a particular people is distinction from that of other nations” (Thayer, 118).

The second chapter of Acts provides divine commentary on what is meant by “new tongues”. As Vine has affirmed: “ ‘The new tongues’, *kainos*, of Mark 16:17 are the ‘other tongues’, *heteros*, of Acts 2:4. These languages, however, were ‘new’ and ‘different’, not in the sense that they had never been heard before, or that they were new to the hearers, for it is plain from v.8 that this is not the case; they were new languages to the speaker, different from those in which they were accustomed to speak” (Vine, Vol. 3, 109).

“They shall speak with new tongues” consisted of speaking real, intelligible languages; the miracle being that those who spoke in these “new tongues” had never learned (studied) these languages prior to fluently speaking them.

“They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it will not hurt them...” (verse 18) consists of two statements conjoined by *kan* (and if). *Arousin* (take up) can mean to “take up, lift, raise, bear, carry, take away, remove, destroy, kill” (Bagster, 9) or “pick up” (Arndt and Gingrich, 23). Jesus sent seventy disciples by twos into

every city and place where he was about to come (Luke 10:1), and he gave them “authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions...so that nothing shall in any wise hurt you” (Luke 10:19). Paul was unharmed by a serpent at Melita (Acts 28:3ff). This incident may, or may not be a direct illustration of Mark 16:18. However, it surely belongs to this class of *semeia* (signs).

On December 6-9, 1976, Alan E. Highers debated Mr. Raymond G. Bishop at Ripley, Mississippi. Mr. Bishop represented the Pentecostal Oneness doctrine advocated by such denominations as the United Pentecostal Church. He contended that all five of the miraculous gifts of Mark 16:17-18 are still in effect. On the third night of the debate brother Highers affirmed: “The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit baptism with the signs and miracles ceased by the time the complete will of God was revealed and confirmed or by the end of the apostolic age.” He made the argument that the miracles of the first century cannot be duplicated today, and they ceased when the New Testament was fully delivered and sufficiently confirmed. It was on this third night of the debate that brother Highers delivered one of his most devastating blows against Pentecostal doctrinal error. He presented a western diamond-back rattlesnake, approximately four feet long, in full possession of his venom. As the rattling of this venomous creature was heard throughout all parts of the large auditorium a quiet hush came over the audience. Both Mr. Bishop and his moderator were “visibly shaken” by the snake. Even a child could see that Mr. Bishop dared not “take up serpents” as per his contention on Mark 16:17-18 (“A Review Of The Highers-Bishop Debate”, The Spiritual Sword, Vol. 12, No. 3, April 1981, 26-27).

“...And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them (verse 18). The word translated *deadly* is *thanasimon*. It means “fatal” (Bagster, 195). *Hurt*, or *harm*, is from *blaphei* (*fut. active ind. Of blapto*) and means to

weaken, hurt, harm, or injure (Bagster, 70). We have no example of this specific sign in the New Testament. However, tradition reports that the apostle John drank poison without harm (Lenski, R.C.H., The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964 printing, 769). Some presume to know that what is said here about venomous serpents and poisonous drink is a journey “into the twilight of apocryphal story.” To this presumption Lenski has responded with the following:

“...Is it really a small thing, something fanciful and apocryphal to escape sudden death by venom or poisonous drink? Is healing the sick like Peter's mother-in-law from a fever so much greater as a sign, so much less apocryphal than to escape mortal dangers? The exegete should always keep his balance. To prefer the charge of being apocryphal against this section of Mark's Gospel is ineffective because it could be launched only against the serpents and the drink. The demons, tongues, and sick appear too often and at too great length to be included in such a charge. Must all these verses from nine to twenty come from a late writer because of these two points? The contrary seems reasonable, namely that no man would have added a word about serpents or poisonous drink if he had undertaken to write a conclusion to Mark's Gospel; only the original writer, Mark himself, dared to add items that are not presented elsewhere. Mark had received them from Peter, and finding fault with them is not good... We have no compilation here, the text, v. 17, 18, stands undisputed, the support for the five items is the same. Therewith let us be content (Lenski, 770).

“...They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover” (verse 18). Literally, “upon the infirmed they shall lay hands and well they shall be.” See instances of this in the Acts of the Apostles (3:6-7, 15, et al).

PREPARATION FOR THE SIGNS

“So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (verse 19). Contained in this brief statement is what can be termed a period of preparation for the signs through (1) the instruction of Jesus (2) the ascension of Jesus and (3) the exaltation of Jesus. The phrase “after he had spoken unto them” is inclusive of the forty-day period when Jesus, following his death and resurrection, presented various proofs to the apostles to show that he was actually alive and also appeared to them for the purpose of instructing them regarding “the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:2-3).

This preparation for the coming confirmatory signs also included the ascension. He “was received up into heaven.” “Received up” is from *aneleiphthei* which is an aorist participle having reference to the one time historical fact of the ascension of the Christ (cf. Luke 9:51). The ascension is given no distinct report by Matthew and John. Mark and Luke are the only two who mention it directly in the Gospel accounts. However, it is given additional attention in several great statements in the Acts of the Apostles. Early on, the ascension was preached by the apostles (Acts 2:34). Peter preached “Jesus: whom the heaven must receive” (Acts 3:21). Paul gave a marvelous summation of the “mystery of godliness” which included, “He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY” (1 Tim. 3:16, CAPS MINE, C.C.P.). Peter wrote that “baptism doth also now save us (...the answer of a good conscience toward

God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Pet. 3:21-22). The writer of The Epistle to the Hebrews stated: “Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God...” (Heb. 4:14). The ascension is crucially linked to the fulfillment of the promise that the miraculous signs of confirmation would follow along side the revealed word as it was preached. Paul showed this link when he wrote, “When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men (...He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teacher...” (Eph. 4:8-11). The ascension was “the designed, understood, and fitting sequel to” the resurrection (Jamieson, Robert, and Fausset, A.R, and Brown, David, A Commentary Critical, Experimental, and Practical On The Old And New Testaments, Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961, Vol. VI, 4).

The preparation for the signs also included the fact that, as Jesus ascended, “...he sat down at the right hand of God” (verse 19). He was received up into heaven (ascension of Jesus) AND sat down at the right hand of God (exaltation of Jesus). “The right hand of God” is an anthropomorphic phrase (i.e. ascribing human characteristics to non-human personages or things). God as a Spirit, has no right or left, literally, nor do the Scriptures ever speak of God’s left. The right hand of God in the Scriptures is a synonym for God’s majestic omnipotence. Lenski observed, “The right hand of God is his omnipotent majesty...To sit at his right is to exercise that majestic omnipotence most fully” (Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel, 778). Cf. Deut. 33:2; Heb. 1:3; Mark 12:36; 14:62, et al. When Jesus left the earth he assumed the place of

supreme majesty, power, and dominion. And there is a most comforting doctrine in Scripture, viz. that Jesus is at the right hand of God. In days of turmoil, suffering, perplexity, anxiety, and, ultimately, death, we need to see Jesus at the right hand of God! He has won the victory over death and is on the throne (Heb. 10:12-13)! When Stephen received the hateful gnashing of his enemies' teeth, and the brutal stoning of his physical body, he, undaunted and unmoved from an unflinching loyalty to Jesus, "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). He said, "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). When the stress and strain, doubt and depression, of life threaten to paralyze our energies, oh, how we need, by faith, to see Him there at the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb. 1:3) where He is to plead our case (Rom. 8:34-39; Heb. 7:25, 8:1; 1 John 2:1)!

REVELATION--THE NEED FOR THE SIGNS

"And they went forth and preached everywhere...." They (the apostles) having gone forth preached (3rd person, pl. aorist active indicative of *kerusso*- to herald) preached everywhere (*pantachou*- "in all places"- cf. Acts 24:3). Jesus had told them during the forty-day period that they "shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). They preached by revelation (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; Gal. 1:11-12). Paul wrote, "...You have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you- ward; how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby when you read you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit...Unto me

who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..." (Eph. 3:2-5,8).

Where there is new revelation these must be confirmation of that new revelation. Herein lies one of the keys in answering the question of the duration of the confirmatory signs. How long did these signs last? Just as long as the process of new revelation lasted. If there is new revelation today then there are confirmatory signs today (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4). However, it is false that new revelation is being given today (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 13:8-10; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). Therefore, it is false that there are confirmatory signs (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4) today. Those who argue that the miraculous gifts of the Holy spirit are available today must affirm, by implication, that additional revelation is needed today (and thus, if this view is true, the Bible is insufficient with regard to the information man needs to know in order to be saved and remain saved). However, it is false that the Bible is insufficient with regard to providing man all of the information he needs to know that pertains to salvation (cf. John 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Therefore, it is false that additional revelation is needed today, and thus is false that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are available today. Hendricksen has argued this in the following:

“In connection with such special gifts (i.e. the gifts which enabled one to perform the signs of Mark 16:17-18, C.P.)...B.B. Warfield states, ‘These gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents in founding the Church...They necessarily passed away with it.’ That with the passing away of the apostolic age these gifts ceased is also the testimony of Chrysostom and Augustine. It was also the view of Jonathan Edwards: ‘These extra gifts were given in order to the founding and establishing of

the church in the world, But since the canon of scripture has been completed, and the church fully founded and established, these extraordinary gifts have ceased.’ Among others who expressed similar views are Matthew Henry, George Whitefield, Charles H. Spurgeon, Robert L. Dabney, Abraham Kuyper, Sr., and W.G.T. Shedd” (Hendricksen, William, New Testament Commetary Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark, Grand Rapids: Baker “Book House, 1975, ninth printing 1990, 690).

CONFIRMATION BY THE SIGNS

The apostles, having gone forth, preaching everywhere “the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed.” This final phrase in the text includes two present participles (i.e. *sunergountos*-working, and *bebaiountos*- confirming). Note there are two things attributed to the Lord (working with them and confirming the word). The former does not necessarily include the miraculous. However, the latter must. “Working with them” is from *sunergountos*. The Lord was working with them through the miraculous, but He also worked with them through the non- miraculous (i.e. His general providential care and through prayer (c.f. Matt. 28:20; Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 1:8-11; Phil. 1:12-13, 19, et al.)). He does not work with us today through the miraculous, but surely he will work with, and in, us today, not separate and apart from the word, but in conjunction with the word. Paul wrote, “So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).

In his comments on these two present participles Lenski has written the following: “Note the durative force

of *sunergountos*, likewise of the next present participle *bebaiountos*. Confirming the Word was done in addition to working with the disciples” (The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel, 774). This Greek term (*bebaiountos*) which is translated with our English word, **confirming**, means”to prove its truth and divinity” (Thayer, 99). Arndt and Gingrich say “the saving message was guaranteed to us” (Greek-English Lexicon, 138). Bagster says that here it means: “to strengthen or establish by arguments or proofs, ratify” (Analytical Greek Lexicon, 68). It was “the word” which the Lord was confirming. Having gone forth, this is the word they preached (verse 20). And the Lord was confirming this word by “the signs following upon it” (*epakoloutheo*- to follow after, close upon, Vine, Vol. II, 111). See 1 Tim. 5:10, 24; 1 Pet. 2:21 for additional usage of this term **follow** (*epakoloutheo*). “The signs did not merely follow, they acted as a kind of authenticating signature to the word” (Moulton and Milligan, 228). That the term here translated, **follow**, entails the idea of “authenticating” the word is cited by Arndt and Gingrich in evidence from The Tebtunis Papyri and the Elephantine Papyri (Greek-English Lexicon, 282).

In conclusion, we affirm that powerfully, and sufficiently, the Lord confirmed the word. “And a thing once confirmed is forever confirmed. If the court proves a man innocent of a charge, does it have to convene and reaffirm the man’s innocence every year? Certainly not! One merely has to check the written record. Does Moses have to come back and again call forth the plagues on Egypt for us to believe that they were done? Does Jesus have to come back and again perform miracles for us to believe that He is the Son of God? We now have the written record to make believers (John 20:30-31). If one cannot be convinced by the Bible, he would not be convinced if one should rise from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).” (The Spiritual Sword, April 1974, Vol. 5, No. 3, 12).

Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will(Heb. 2:1-4)

Biographical Sketch

Charles C. Pugh III was born in Marietta, Ohio, and raised in the Parkersburg / Vienna, West Virginia, area where he graduated from Parkersburg High School. He received his higher education from Ohio Valley College, Harding University, and Harding Graduate School Religion with graduate studies concentrated in the fields of the Philosophy of Religion and Christian Apologetics under the teaching of the late Thomas B. Warren. He has been preaching for thirty-four years and has served as preacher for churches in Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia. For the past fourteen years he has worked with the Bridge Street Church of Christ in New Martinsville, WV, where he did the pulpit preaching for thirteen years. However, due to a voice disease, he resigned from this work in 2000 but continues to work with this congregation in the areas of teaching, hospital visitation, and writing. His articles appear in several journals and church bulletins. He presently spends considerable time in a writing ministry. He also preaches in several gospel meetings yearly and on a number of lectureships. Charles has served as an instructor at Ohio Valley College, and was a member of the original faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching where he

continues to teach three Christian Evidences courses as well as several other courses.

Charles and his wife, Sharron, have three children: Mrs. Ben Brewster (Mendy) whose husband is a minister with the church in Bosier City, Louisiana; Chip, who is a student at WVSOP and lives with his wife, Nicole, in Marietta, Ohio, where he works as an evangelist with the Sixth and Washington congregation, and Nicole who is a freshman at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. They have two grandchildren.

Other Disciples

Robert Johnson

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this lectureship and pray that all that is said and done will be pleasing to the Lord and will further the truth of God's Word. I am pretty sure that my passage in Mark was chosen, as much for how the verse is misused as for the great teaching actually present there. Assuming that to be the case we will briefly note what this passage does not teach. Once we remove the veil of confusion and delete this passage as a proof text for liberal thinkers, we will discover truth which is vital to every soul who is involved in leading others in the service of the Lord.

THE CONTEXT:

In the verses preceding our text, we find Jesus confronting His chosen disciples over a dispute they had been having privately among themselves about who should be the greatest or most important among them. They were infatuated with the important positions and work which Jesus had given them. He taught them that the greatest or first among them would be the last or most humble servant of all. They still did not understand that greatest in Christ's kingdom was not about position or authority, it was about humility and service. A place of significance in God's eyes belongs only to those who never meet a person who is below them and who consider themselves to be servants of all. A great disciple is one who never meets an insignificant person, but one who always seeks the good of others over their own good. The Apostle Paul conveys this same principle of servanthood to the church: **“Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*....*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* 4**

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:” (1 Cor 10:24; Phil 2:3-5). Peter also gives the formula for greatness in the Lord’s service when he says, “...**Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:” (1 Pet 5:5-6).**

Then Jesus takes a little child into His arms and challenges their thinking about who they considered to be significant. While the disciples debated their own importance, Jesus taught them that they should be thinking about the importance of every living soul, even the very young. The lesson did not sink in right away for in chapter ten, the disciples displeased the Lord by trying to prevent people from bringing little children to Jesus (Mark 10:13,14).

THE TEXT:

Let us now read the main text for this lecture: **Mark 9:38-40.** Having apparently missed the point about how greatness comes from devoting ourselves to the good of others, John jumps into the discussion with what he seems to think is a worthy deed. He had rebuked a man who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. The reason John gave for stopping the man from helping others was that he was not one of the group of disciples that Jesus was preparing for His work. Jesus told him not to hinder (forbid) him.

WHAT THE TEXT DOES NOT TEACH:

It is here that we will stop and consider some misappropriations of this passage. Some say that it suggests that there is more than one way to get to God. “All roads, if we pursue them long enough and far enough, lead to God. It is a fearful thing for any man or any church to think that

he or it has a monopoly of salvation” (Barclay, Commentary on Mark, p. 226). Mr. Barclay goes on to suggest that intolerance of other religions is a sign of “arrogance and ignorance” for “it is a sign that a man believes that there is no truth beyond the truth he sees” (Ibid.). Sounds a bit like agnosticism to me. We can be sure that we cannot know anything for sure! Sadly, some of our own brethren are walking down this dark road of false humility. Some have written about how they have felt isolated from the mainstream religious world for too long and that we have more in common with the denominations than we have differences. They are eager to make this passage support their desire to receive and fellowship those in denominational religions who call on the name of Christ. They tell us that Jesus does not want us to forbid these “other” disciples, but to receive them, even if they are in error. One brother contends that since none of us are perfect, we are all “brothers in error.” His reasoning is, how can brothers in error not receive other brothers in error? The intended application for us is that members of the New Testament church of Christ should open our circle of fellowship to include anyone who professes to be a follower of Jesus. They even use poetry in an effort to belittle the faithful as unloving and to justify their compromises:

He drew a circle to keep me out; heretic, rebel, a
thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win;
We drew a circle and took him in. (Church in
Transition, Woodroof, p. 128).

JUST THE FACTS:

By considering the plain facts revealed in this passage, we will see that it in no way endorses a compromise and fellowship with false teachers. The first fact is that this disciple was doing the exact same thing that the Apostles were doing. He was casting out demons in the name or by

the authority of Jesus Christ. Surely, Jesus was right to rebuke John for trying to hinder the work of a disciple who was preaching and practicing the same things Jesus had taught them. To refuse to accept one who is teaching and practicing the truth would make one guilty of the same sin as Diotrophes (“**who loved to have the preeminence**” 3 John 9). Diotrophes was guilty of not receiving those who walked “**in the truth**” and even forbidding others to receive “**helpers to the truth**” (3 John 4,8,10).

Another significant fact which Jesus brought to John’s attention was that the work of this disciple was confirmed by the power of God. He was not just attempting to cast out demons, he was truly performing miracles in the name of Jesus. The fact that this man had an acceptable faith in Jesus Christ is without question. It is interesting to note that the demons recognized this disciple as one empowered by God for they obeyed his command to depart, but John did not see the connection. He was the real McCoy, not part of some Jewish exorcism group like the seven sons of Seva in Acts 19:13-16. When they attempted to use the phrase, “**in the name of the Lord Jesus**” as a incantation to cast out evil spirits, the demons did not recognize them and worked them over good.

If this passage is teaching us to receive those who call on the name of the Lord, even though they are disobedient to His will, then it is asking us to do something that God Himself will not do, for Jesus said, “**Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity**” (Matt 7:21-23).

If this passage is twisted to suggest fellowship or close associations with those who are false teachers, even those who deny God's plan of salvation, then it stands in contradiction to the entire idea of contending for the truth and standing against error. How can we, **“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3)**, if we must receive and fellowship those who deny the original faith? How can we reconcile the idea that we are to receive those in error when John tells us to test the spirits and not to receive or bid God speed to anyone who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ for they do not have God (2 John 1:9-11)? How can we ever be at peace with those who refuse to submit themselves to God's Word when we are charged to: **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:2-4)? “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).**

John tells us that only those who “walk in the light” have true fellowship with God and one another. **“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:6-7).** The facts do not support the idea that Jesus is teaching us to receive false teachers or those who refuse to obey the truth and accept God's plan of salvation.

THE REAL LESSON OF THE “OTHER DISCIPLE”:

I believe that the most important lesson of this passage has to do with the attitude or disposition of a true disciple toward others who are teaching and practicing the truth.

First of all, truth is truth and should be recognized as such no matter who is practicing it. We must encourage and support (not hinder) all who are working to promote the truth of Jesus to others, even if we think their methods are less than idea. There are too many people dying unprepared for us to hinder any effort that might save some. Paul was even thankful for those who preached for the wrong motives as long as the Gospel was being preached (Phil. 1:18). We must be careful to speak evil of no one, especially those who are trying to spread the truth to the lost. We must not have a “if it cannot be done my way, it cannot be done” attitude.

We learn that a great disciple is one who never meets an insignificant soul or one that he is not bound to serve and consider better than himself. The disciples considered little children to be insignificant in their great work, but Jesus taught them that a “**great**” disciple recognizes the significance of even the “**little ones**” and considers himself a “**servant of all.**” I find it interesting that James’ description of “**pure religion**” includes the care of widows and orphans (James 1:27). Paul had this same attitude of selfless concern and service to those who were new to the faith and was very careful not to put any stumbling blocks before them, even if it meant personal sacrifice (1 Corinthians 8:10-13).

John learned that the work of the kingdom can be accomplished by individual efforts as well as organized means. The next time you hear someone complaining that the church is not getting the message to the lost, ask them who makes up the church. Then remind them of the disciples in Acts who were scattered abroad and “**went everywhere preaching the word**” (Acts 8:4). We must remember that every member of the body has a place of significance in the Work of God and get busy doing our work. (See 1 Corinthians 12).

I think that there is also a lesson here about getting carried away with one's own importance. True disciples are not looking for credit for their work. They are content if necessary to remain out of the limelight, getting the job done. I have always heard that the job of a preacher is not to make himself indispensable, but to prepare those who hear him to teach the Gospel to others. His goal should be to work his way out of a job. **“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim 2:2)**

Let us learn from this lesson to be careful not to hinder the work of Christ, but to receive and encourage any and all who are striving to preach the truth whether they are a part of our organized effort or not. I have heard it said that wars are not won by the generals, but by the ill prepared men who are struggling in the trenches, determined to win the cause for which they are fighting. But, in the battle for souls we should not think of ourselves as ill prepared for we are promised God's presence and help and the confidence that His Word will accomplish that for which He intends for it to accomplish.

Phil 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Heb 13:5-6: “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*”

Isa 55:11: “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I

**please, and it shall prosper *in the thing whereto*
I sent it.”**

Biographical Sketch

Robert and His wife Cathy have six children: Darren, Robert, Hannah, Rachel, Seth and Caleb. Robert and Cathy both attended Ohio Valley College and Harding University. They have been serving with the Tarentum church of Christ in Tarentum, PA for the past twenty years. Robert has been working with Camp Concern for the past 20 years, serving as a director for sixteen years. He has also served as editor of Life Resources, a gospel paper used in local evangelism, for fifteen years.

Marriage and Divorce in Mark

Owen Olbricht

The main concern of this lesson is Mark 10:1-12. In order to gain a fuller understanding of New Testament teaching, other scriptures will also be considered in this study. The teaching of Jesus concerning divorce and remarriage is found in Matthew 5:32; 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18. By adding together the statements in these verses, much of God's truth can be learned concerning divorce and remarriage.

The Setting

The context of Mark 10:1-12 is important in understanding Jesus teaching. The Pharisees came to Jesus to "test" (Gk. *peirazo* can also be translated "tempt") Him. They had their own interpretation of divorce that the Law permitted. They probably reasoned that Jesus might answer in a way that would turn the Jews and perhaps His followers against Him.

They asked Him, "Is it right for a man to divorce his wife?" We assume they wanted Jesus to explain under what circumstances divorce is acceptable? The question as stated did not include remarriage. The Jewish rabbi, Shamai, took a strict viewpoint, allowing divorce only because of sexual unfaithfulness, while Hillel's lenient attitude permitted divorce for the most frivolous reasons. The Jews might have wanted to know with which of these Jesus agreed.

Jesus responded with a question. "What did Moses command you?"

The Pharisees were familiar with the Law and knew the answer. "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." Their response was probably based on Deut. 24:1-4.

Jesus responded that divorce was never in God's plan. He permitted divorce because of Israel's "hardness" of heart, a stubbornness and unwillingness to do God's will. From the beginning God intended for those who married to be bound together for life. Only two exceptions were to be allowed: (1) sexual immorality (Matt. 19:9), and (2) death of one's partner (Rom. 7:1-3). This is true because God is the one who joins a man and woman together in marriage. What God joins together, man is "not to separate."

Who Has God Joined?

A marriage ceremony is not described in either the Old or the New Testaments. What constitutes a marriage must be arrived at by implication. Paul taught that Christians are to be subject to the "governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1) and Peter told Christians, "...submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Pet. 3:12). A couple that fulfills the marriage requirements of the law of the country in which they live are joined together by God.

Once they are married, the laws of the land no longer govern the binding nature of the marriage. Only the law of Christ applies to divorce and remarriage for we are under law to Jesus (1 Cor. 9:21).

Mark 10:11

Jesus' answer in Mark 10:11 is very to the point. "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her." The following questions are usually raised concerning this statement: (1) Is this ruling only for those under the Law of Moses? (2) Does "whoever" include only God's covenant people? (3) What is adultery and fornication? (4) Is "commits adultery" only a onetime act or a continuing condition? (5) Against which woman is adultery being committed? What does "against her" mean?

(1) Under the Law

If this ruling is for those under the Law, it does not apply to Christians. We are not under the Law (Rom. 6:14, 15) and will not be judged by the Law (Rom. 2:12). Jesus is not restating the teaching of the Law. Seemingly the Law permitted divorce for almost any reason. In the Law, God temporarily relaxed His law concerning divorce. Jesus confirmed God's original plan for all mankind, a plan that does not allow the leniencies permitted by the Law.

The Law did not state adultery was grounds for divorce. Instead of being grounds for divorce under the Law, adultery was to be punished by death (Lev. 20:10). Jesus abrogated the death penalty for adultery. He made fornication the only grounds for divorce (Matt. 19:9). In doing this He set aside the ruling concerning divorce in Deut. 24:1-4. Jesus was not giving this ruling for those under the Law.

(2) Whoever

By saying "whoever," Jesus applied this His ruling to a wider application than to just those under the Law. "Whoever" (Gk. *os an*) encompasses, not just those under the Law, but anyone who violates this injunction as is indicated by the usage of *os an*:

Matt. 5:21b "*Whoever* murders will be in danger of the judgment." 10:33 "But *whoever* denies me before men." 12:32 "*Anyone* who speaks a word against the Son of man." "*whoever* speaks against the Holy Spirit." 12:50 "For *whoever* does the will of My Father in heaven." 16:25 "For *whoever* desires to save his life will lose it, and *whoever* loses his life for My sake will find it."

"Whosoever" clearly means anyone. Those are wrong who assume that "whoever" can be restricted to include only God's covenant people.

Being forgiven in becoming a Christian does not change a sinful relationship. If receiving forgiveness as a

non-Christian makes a sinful relationship right, then why doesn't the same principle apply to Christians who are forgiven of a sinful relationship?

By way of illustration, what about a Christian or non-Christian man who leaves his wife and children to begin living with a single woman? After five years they have three children. If he responds to God's will to be forgiven, can he continue to live with the woman? If he leaves her, he will break up the home and leave the children fatherless. What must he do to be forgiven? If he continues living with her, his sexual relationship with her is adultery. He has no right to the woman. He is still bound to his wife. His being baptized as a non-Christian or his repenting and praying as a Christian will not change his adulterous relationship with the woman who is not his wife.

The same is true of the man who divorces his faithful wife and marries another. Being forgiven would not change his relationship with the second woman. He would need to discontinue his relationship with her, for to continue a relationship would be to continue to commit adultery. If there are children, he could support them, but he cannot continue a sexual relationship with their mother. Such a separation may seem hard but is not foreign to God's teaching. Israel had to put away their foreign wives (Ezra 10:10, 11) and a Hebrew slave whose master gave him a wife must leave his wife and children with his master, if he decided to terminate his service to his master (Exo. 21:4).

(3) Adultery and Fornication

After talking to the Pharisees Jesus entered a house. He presented to his disciples the general rule concerning divorce and remarriage (Mark 10:9-12). Mark does not mention the exception which appears in Matt. 19:9, allowing remarriage for fornication.

Because of the English meaning of fornication (Matt. 19:9), some have concluded that Jesus was talking about sexual immorality before marriage. The NKJB translates

porneia “sexual immorality” (KJV, “fornication”), which is defined “every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse” by Frederick W. Danker and F. Wilbur Gingrich, (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 693). Fornication includes all kinds of sexual immorality such as unlawful sexual acts of men with women whether married or not, men with men, women with women, and even sex with beasts. It is a broad enough word to include adultery (Gk. n. *moicheia*, v. *moichao*), which has the narrower meaning of sexual intercourse of a married person with someone who is not his or her married partner.

(4) Commits Adultery

The expression “commits adultery” (Gk. *moichatai*, indicative, present, middle, third person), is present tense, which contains the meaning of continuing action at the time of reference without indicating the duration of the action, which could be momentary or long lasting. Various grammars mention an “aoristic present” usually based on Burton’s appraisal of Acts 16:18; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:23. All grammars are not in agreement with this conclusion. The present tense in the cases presented by Burton indicate action going on at the present time, even though brief in nature, without indicating how long. The duration of a present tense is as long as implied by the context. In Mark 10:11, 12 “commits” is present, not the aorist. The aorist is a unit of completed action that does not take into account the amount of time taken to complete the action.

Divorcing ones wife, the marrying another woman is what constitutes “committing of adultery.” The present tense in this passage should be construed to mean that a man by becoming sexually involved with another woman by marrying her is committing adultery against his wife. Adultery, not divorce, is a sexual act. His continuing to be sexual involvement with another woman, other than his

rightful wife, is adultery. The reason it is adultery is she is not his wife.

John Murray correctly observed:

“The only reason for which this remarriage can be considered adulterous is that the first marriage is still in God’s sight regarded as inviolate. The divorce has not dissolved it. ...They are still in reality bound to one another in the bonds of matrimony and a marital relation or any exercise of the privileges and rights of the marital relations with any other is adultery. Whatever the law of man may enact, this is the law of Christ’s kingdom and to it the laws of men should conform (*Divorce*, Philadelphia, Pa.: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972, p. 25).

(5) Against Her

Notice how “against” is used in the Bible. It does not mean to act “with another,” but means to violate the rights “of another.” Israel made a golden calf and worshipped it instead of God and in so doing sinned against God (Ex. 32:33; Deut. 9:16). Moses told Israel not to sin against God by becoming involved in idolatrous practices (Deut. 20:18). God was Israel’s God. Showing devotion to idols, a devotion that belonged to God, would be sin against God.

A man who becomes sexually involved with a woman other than his wife is committing adultery against his wife. The reason is that he is bound to his legitimate wife and has no right to another woman. By his giving another woman the sexual attention that should be reserved for his wife, he is committing adultery against his wife to whom he is bound.

“For a woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives” (Romans 7:3).

“A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she may be married to whom she wishes...” (1 Cor. 7:39).

These passages state that a marriage is binding as long as the husband and wife live. They do not contain an exception, but there is one exception.

The Exception

In Mark, Jesus presented the general rule concerning divorce and remarriage. In Matt. 19:9, He gives an exception. The one exception to the binding nature of marriage is fornication. If fornication is grounds for dissolving the marriage bond, then remarriage is allowed for the innocent party. Jesus is not commanding divorce and remarriage, but presenting the basis on which such can be permitted.

Anyone who marries the guilty person who is divorced commits adultery, which must mean that the guilty person commits adultery by entering into a sexual relation through remarriage. Remarriage is not allowed for the divorced guilty party, not because the marriage bond still continues, but because such is God's penalty for "sexual immorality." The man who divorces his wife who has not committed fornication is not free to remarry any more than is the wife who has been divorced because of fornication. The exception clause is parenthetical and for this reason does not modify the main thought of the verse. Without the parenthesis the verse would read, "Whoever divorces his wife...and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9).

The exception clause gives a man the right to put away a sexually immoral wife and remarry without incurring the guilt of adultery on his part.

The fact that Mark and Luke do not include the exception clause does not negate its validity. If the inclusion of the statement in Matthew is not binding, because it is not mentioned in the other gospels, then Jesus' praying while being baptized (Luke 3:21) and many other incidents and statements need to be excluded also.

Mark 10:12

Unless taught in 1 Cor. 7:10, 11, Mark records the only ruling in the Bible that allows a wife to divorce her husband. In this passage (Mark 10:12), Jesus indicates that the same rules that govern the husband apply to the wife as well. The husband does not have privileges and restrictions that do not apply to the wife. A woman has the right to initiate divorce proceedings as well as does the husband.

1 Cor. 7:12-15

Paul's statement "not under bondage" has been construed to mean that remarriage is permitted if a non-Christian should leave a believer. In order to understand Paul's argument, his approach in this chapter (1 Cor. 7) must be understood. In each case under consideration, Paul first presented the general rules that govern each situation and then presented conditions under which exceptions are allowed. The general rule is that Christians are to remain in the state described in each ruling. Under certain conditions exceptions are allowed. In such cases Christians are not "bound" by the general ruling.

The general rule is that the believer is not to leave the unbeliever. A separation is not to be initiated or conducted by the believer. If the unbeliever decides to leave, an exception is allowed, the believer is not "bound" by the general ruling that married people are to remain together.

Two believers are obligated to keep their marriage together. The exception allowed for them is that if they should separate for a while, they are to remain unmarried, but then they are to come back together (1 Cor. 7:10, 11). In the case of a marriage with an unbeliever, the believer is not bound to keep a marriage together or to seek to be reconciled with an unbeliever who wants to depart.

"Not under bondage" is the critical phrase in Paul's ruling. Bondage means "enslaved" (Gk. *douloulotai*, indicative, perfect, passive, third person, plural). It never means marriage in the NT (Acts 7:6; Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Cor.

7:15; 9:19; Gal. 4:3; Tit. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:19). In this passage it means, “to be bound (as a slave),” (Danker, p. 206). If Paul had meant the marriage bond, why did he not use *deo*, the word he used twice in this chapter to refer to the marriage bond (1 Cor. 7:27, 39; see also Rom. 7:2)?

“Bondage” is perfect tense with “not”, the Greek negative *ou*. The perfect tense is a combination of the aorist, “completed action,” and present, “continuing effect,” i.e., “...continuance of a completed action” (Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Literature*, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 175). The negative negates the action and the continuing effect, which is to say, a condition does not continue in the present because no action took place in the past to produce the condition, i.e., a condition does not now exist because it never did exist.

A few examples from the many times this construction is found in the New Testament can illustrate this usage. “There has not arisen a greater prophet than John” (Matt. 11:11). There is not a greater prophet than John because there never was a greater prophet. “From the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:8). It is not so now because it never was so. “The word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:9). It is not now bound because it never was bound.

In 1 Cor. 7:15, Paul’s usage of the negative with the perfect means that the believer is not now under bondage because he/she was never in bondage. If “bondage” has reference to marriage, then the believer and unbeliever are not now married because they never were married. However, they are married because God has sanctioned the marriage, otherwise their children would be “unclean” (1 Cor. 7:14), i.e., illegitimate.

Paul is *not* saying the believer is no longer bound in marriage, but that the believer is not under bondage to seek to continue to live with an unbelieving partner who wants to depart. If the unbeliever wants to leave, the believer is

not bound to try to remain with the unbeliever, because the believer never was bound “in such cases” to try to remain with an unbeliever who wants to leave (1 Cor. 7:15). The separation is allowable without remorse. In this verse Paul does not address whether or not remarriage is permissible. The ruling for remarriage is found elsewhere in the Bible. Remarriage is only allowed if ones partner dies (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor.7:39) or commits fornication (Matt. 19:9). These are the only circumstances given that allow remarriage.

Conclusion

In Mark, Jesus presented the general rule that men and women who divorce and remarriage are committing adultery against their partners. In Mathew, He gave an exception to this rule. Paul dealt with another marriage issue (1 Cor. 7:13-15), not addressed by Jesus, permitting a believer to willingly, physically, and emotionally let an unbelieving partner depart.

In some cases all of God’s truth is not found in just one verse, but is found in a collection of all God has revealed on a specific topic. The combination of all that God has said on a topic contains all of God’s truth on that topic.

Traditions of Men vs The Word of God

Denver Cooper

“And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashen, hands. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the TRADITION of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the TRADITION of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the command of God, that ye may keep your own TRADITION. FOR Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be

profited by me; he shall be free, And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your TRADITION, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.” (MARK 7: 1 - 13)

TRADITION Defined: An inherited, established or customary pattern of thought or action. The handing down of beliefs and customs by word of mouth or by example without written instructions. Also: a belief or action thus handed down. To hand over or on. (Vine) The Greek word paradosis, “a giving over which is done by word of mouth or in writing.

The Pharisees and scribes, like many today, yea, men of all ages, could not or did not distinguish between TRADITION of MEN and TRADITION of GOD. From generation to generation they passed on their customs as if they were from God. In this case they believed ceremonial washing of hands was more important than what God said. In fact, some had come a great distance from Jerusalem just to find fault with Jesus. Enemies were watching him. Still true today is the fact fact that some folks will go further and put forth greater energy to harm someone than to help. As a matter of fact, a few years ago extreme “anti” brethren travelled many miles in an effort to take over a church which was a cooperative group of brethren. Sure enough the Pharisees caught faithful disciples of the Lord eating bread without washing their hands. Indeed, there is nothing wrong with one washing his hands before he eats. I usually wash my hands for health reasons before dining. They had reference to ceremonial cleansing. Human TRADITION ONLY. They were extremists and radicals in their views.

Homes of the Jews kept water pots for ceremonial purposes. The jars Jesus used at the marriage feast in John 2:6 were of that sort. Customarily they drew water amounting to one and a half egg shell and poured it over

the hands as they held them over a basin. The hands were lifted so the water would run to the wrist. The water thus could not return over the cleansed hands, and thus defile them again.

If the hand had contacted anything which ceremonially defiled them they washed twice; once to remove the “defilement” and once to wash away the water that had contacted the defilement. (Buden and Hastings, *The Local Colour of the Bible*, Vol. 3, Page 761).

The Jews in mingling with other people in the market place considered themselves unclean and must bathe themselves all over before eating. We wash cups, saucers, pots and other vessels to get them clean. We have a wrong idea if we think that was their purpose. The original word is the same used to translate baptize. They ceremonially dipped their vessels, not because they were dirty but to keep the TRADITION of man’s making.

The question asked the disciples was not “why do not thy disciples walk by God’s word, but why do thy disciples not walk by the TRADITIONS of the ELDERS?” It is reported that a rabbi was imprisoned and had inadequate drinking water, but used what he had to ceremonially cleanse himself.

TRADITIONS are many. Family TRADITIONS such as reunions, birthdays and anniversaries, the exchange of giftes at holidays, etc. sare just a few. Businesses have traditional sale days.

TRADITIONS are also quite common among the people of God. When I was a boy it was the TRADITION for three or four men to make talks before the congregation. It was not considered a method from God. Mutual Edification was the name of the method.

I never knew of a church serving communion at the beginning of the service till long after I began preaching. Sunday A. M., Sunday P. M. and Wednesday P. M. are

long established TRADITIONS of men for the hours of service. Two gospel meetings must be conducted every year. When one church decided to have 3 series of meetings per year, one was heard to say, “what do they think they are doing? We always have only 2 meetings every year.”

The Bible clearly uses the word TRADITION in two different ways.

1. It is used to equate the Word of God. Paul used it this way in 2 Thess. 2:15.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

Can one ignore the warnings regarding improper use of TRADITIONS?

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the TRADITION of MEN, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col. 2:8).

How do we determine how TRADITION is used in the Bible? First, we must determine, does the TRADITION of human origin make void God’s Word? It did that with the Pharisees.

They were so determined to observe the ceremonial cleansing that they would violate God’s law, which said, honor thy father and thy mother.” Just say “Corban” and legally excuse yourself from the care and respect demanded and due your parents.

False teaching has often caused men to be in a bad light as far as God is concerned. Job’s three friends, as well as he, were condemned when God asked, “who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 42: 3,6). Job said, “Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in

sackcloth and ashes.” Would to God many following the TRADITIONS of men in our day would do the very same.

With some TRADITIONS there may be the observance of liberty. Do we sing 2, 3 or 5 songs at any one service? Must we begin worship with a song? May we close a service with a song instead of a prayer? Just when are we sing an invitation song? Beginning, middle or end of the service? Must there be a song at all? Is it God’s TRADITION or man’s TRADITION to have Gospel Meetings, Lectureships, Vacation Bible Schools, Seminars, Retreats, or Inspiration Days? God gives us principles by which to reach peaceable conclusions in these matters in Romans 14. This chapter does no deal with matters that violate God’s Word. It deals with that which is altogether a matter of indifference. Most assuredly the matter of instrumental music does not fall in this category.

That there are TRADITIONS of God is evidenced in 1 Cor. 15: 1 - 4. Paul says:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that WHICH I ALSO RECEIVED, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

Paul made it quite clear that he respected the Word of God. He declared to the brethren in Galatia, Galatians 1: 11,12:

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after Man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Man must respect the Bible as being God's inspired word if he wants to go to Heaven. Every word of it is revealed by the Holy Spirit. So states Paul in 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

John makes it perfectly clear in Revelation 20:12 that God speaks with authority and will judge man kind at the last day from the Word.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Who would ever have believed that brethren would be upholding the doctrine of Faith Only? Yet, some are willing to trade pulpits with false teachers, embrace all who are willing to audibly confess that Jesus is the Son of God. The doctrine of faith only is taught in nearly every place where professed believers in Christ are found. "That we are justified by FAITH ONLY, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." (Methodist Discipline, Ar. 9). If such is true, we ought to honor Luther and burn the book of James. However, James does make it clear in four statements that FAITH ONLY is not of God.

1. Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. 2:17.
2. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith WITHOUT works is dead? 2:20.
3. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 2:24.

4. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James 2:26.

(FAITH ONLY IS A TRADITION OF MAN - NOT OF GOD!)

In the same category is the matter of baptism. Infant baptism, sprinkling and pouring fall into the same category. It seems to me that some recognized as being more loyal are not far from falling into that category when they are now, “dedicating” babies. Does it not fall into the same file? I believe it does.

Who would have believed thirty or forty years ago that the time would come when preachers of the gospel would be defending the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins against their own brethren. Some would mock Peter for telling the Pentecostians in answer to their question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?,” when Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:37,38).

This answer was from God. Peter didn’t tell them, “there is nothing to do, it is all by grace”. Nor did he inform them that salvation is absolutely without condition as is quite commonly proclaimed by false teachers today.

Certainly, Paul taught that salvation is by grace, but not by GRACE ONLY. “For by grace are ye saved through FAITH. (Eph. 2:8,9).

Peter also makes it quite clear that baptism is for the remission of sins in 1 Peter 3:21.

The like figure wheeunto even baptism doth also now SAVE us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

False teachings involving Calvinistic teachings have been popping up here and there in some of our pulpits. I heard Bro.Clifton Inman say several years ago, that some

of our preachers are more interested in the books of sectarian preachers than they are the Bible. This is certainly true when men are declaring that either a certain number, each determined by God at birth, will be the only ones saved, or just as destructive, all will be saved regardless of what they do, for God will not allow any to be lost.

Enter ye in at the strait gate for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Mt. 7:13,14).

Of course, we cannot close this lesson without being a little more specific regarding the matter of worship. We are hearing a great deal about “TRADITIONAL WORSHIP” and ‘COMTEMPORARY worship. (I guess that is Non-Traditional worship).

God has given us specific orders regarding the worship. Some fear being different today. They seem to think that emotionalism, excitement and theatrics can take the place of “worshiping God in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23,24). I was taught from childhood and I continue to believe and teach that one must, Sing, Pray, Preach, Observe the Lord’s Supper and Contribute of our means as God has prospered us, every Sunday, from the heart, in order to worship God as we should. It is not a TRADITION of MAN but TRADITION OF GOD to continue to do so.

Brethren fought the battle of instrumental music years ago. They did so valiantly and at great cost. We dare not betray their loyalty to the truth by compromising the Word of God on this or any other subject. When God specifies what we are to do, we must do it. When he does not tell us what to do, we are at liberty to do what we believe is best.

We must always remember the part that TRADITION plays in our work and worship. TRADITION is not a bad word necessarily. Nor is it a good word in and of itself. We must do all we can to learn the origin of the TRADITION. If it is of man and does not conflict with God and his orders, we may be able to use it. If, on the other hand, it does conflict with God's we must let it entirely alone. Certainly, we must recognize teaching which came from God by inspiration of the Holy Spirit is often called TRADITION. Such must be respected. We have no right to change the teaching in such cases.

Biographical Sketch

Denver E. Cooper was born April 2, 1923 in Cairo West Virginia to parents Jesse R. and Sarah B. Cooper. He was reared in Parkersburg, West Virginia where he graduated from high school in 1941. He attended Freed-Hardeman University beginning in the fall of 1941.

He was married to Florence E. Smith March 25, 1945. They reared 9 children, one of whom was adopted. They are, Edward T.; Denver E., Jr.; Kelly R.; Timothy L.; Rebecca K.; Jesse L.; Prisca R. (deceased); Denise A. Conley and Martha Noland.

On September 21, 2001 Denver celebrated his 60th preaching anniversary. He has been located in Ironton, Ohio; Harrisville, Chester, Philippi, Weirton, (twice) Moundsville, West Virginia; Timberville, VA. He began working with the Valley Bend church in Valley Bend, WV in May of 2001. He also serves on the faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching.

The Passover and Lord's Supper

Alan Cole

INTRODUCTION:

- I. The night before Jesus endured His suffering for all mankind, He assembled with the apostles to keep the Passover.
 - A. This gathering possessed great solemnity.
 - B. On this particular evening the Lord established what is called "The Lord's Supper."
- II. To have a proper understanding and appreciation of the Lord's Supper one must know something of its origin.
 - A. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus on the night before His crucifixion.
 1. It was at the time of the Passover, one of the three annual feasts required by the law of Moses.
 2. Indeed, to a Jew who kept perfectly all of God's law, there was never a question as to whether Jesus would observe the Passover.
 3. The disciples, therefore, asked Jesus where they were to observe the Passover, not whether they would observe the feast.
 4. The Lord instructed them to go to Jerusalem to a certain man, with this message: "The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" (Mark 14:14)
 5. The two selected disciples carried out His instructions and made "a large upper room, furnished and prepared" (Mark 14:15) ready, and on the last night before His crucifixion they gathered for the final observance of the Passover.
 6. There Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE PASSOVER

- A. The institution and first celebration of the Passover is recorded in the twelfth chapter of Exodus.
1. The Passover feast itself commemorated God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.
 - a. On the tenth day of the month of Abib, the head of each family was to select from the flock either a lamb or a kid, a male of the first year, without blemish.
 - b. If the family were too small to eat the whole of the lamb, the father was permitted to invite the nearest neighbor to join them.
 - c. On the fourteenth day of the month he was to kill the lamb while the sun was setting.
 - d. He was then to take the blood of the lamb in a basin, and with a sprig of hyssop to sprinkle it on the two side-posts and the lintel of the door of the house.
 - e. The lamb was then thoroughly roasted, whole, and not a bone was to be broken.
 - f. It was to be served with unleavened bread and bitter herbs and those who partook were to eat in haste and in a condition of full readiness for an immediate journey.
 - g. Nothing was to be left until the morning; anything that did remain was to be burned. No male who was uncircumcised was to participate.
- B. The people had been informed of God's purpose.
1. The passing of the Lord through Egypt was to smite the Egyptians; when, however, He saw

the blood on the lintel and the side posts “the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you” (Exodus 12:23).

2. Walter Riggins, in his book *Jesus Ben Joseph: An Introduction to Jesus the Jew*, suggests several principles of significance given in the Bible concerning the Passover and the observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
 - a. First, the Passover commemorated the God of Israel who keeps His covenant promises in spite of every obstacle (Exodus 2:23-35).
 - b. Second, The Passover commemorated the God of Israel Who cares for His people (Exodus 3:7-8).
 - c. Third, the Passover commemorated the God of Israel Who is all powerful to deliver His people from all other powers that would hold them in bondage (Exodus 12:29-31).
 - d. Fourth, the Passover commemorated the God of Israel Who graciously committed Himself in blood-covenant relationship to His people (Exodus 19:3-8).
 - e. Finally, the Passover commemorated the God of Israel Who freed the multitude of slaves from Egyptian bondage and transformed this homeless population into a nation with a true homeland, the promised land of Canaan (Exodus 13:5; 23:15, 20-33).
3. In Exodus 12:24-27 Moses wrote, “And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. It will come to

pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.'" (Exodus 12:24-27 NKJV).

- C. Thus, the heart of Passover was substitutionary atonement.
 - 1. By the violent death of another, the firstborn was spared.
 - 2. The yearly Passover celebration commemorated God's physical deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.
 - 3. However, Passover was pointing to a much greater deliverance that would be brought about by the death of God's Son, Jesus Christ - the deliverance of His people from their bondage to sin, Satan, and death.

II. THE LORD'S SUPPER

- A. It was on Thursday night, before Jesus was crucified on Friday, that Jesus sat with His disciples eating the Passover.
 - 1. As they were eating, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.
 - 2. Although it was instituted the night before the law was to be abolished at the cross (Colossians 2:14-16), it was done with a view to its becoming a part of the worship of the church which was to be established by Christ on the coming day of Pentecost.
 - 3. It is referred to Scripture as the "Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians. 11:20), "The Lord's

Table" (1 Corinthians 10:21), "Communion of the body and the blood of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:16). It is also referred to as "The breaking of bread" (Acts 20:7).

- B. The Lord's Supper is a very important aspect of worship as Christians come together upon the first day of the week, and there are six points concerning the observation of this commandment.
1. It is observed in spirit and in truth.
 - a. Partaking of the Supper is a part of New Testament worship, and as such falls under the direction of the Lord in John 4:24. He states there, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." All must partake in a way that is authorized by God (i.e. follow the biblical instructions), and do so with a proper spirit.
 2. It is observed in decency and in order.
 - a. In I Corinthians 14, Paul was addressing a problem of confusion in worship, caused by an abuse of tongue speaking. He instructed the Corinthians, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (vs. 40).
 3. It is observed in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.
 - a. Luke wrote: And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20 NKJV).
 4. It is observed in anticipation of Christ's

return.

- a. Paul reminded the Corinthians: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26 NKJV).
 - b. The efficacy of the Lord's sacrifice is tied directly to His eventual return.
 - c. In observance of the Supper, Christ's faithful followers keep the memory of His death alive until the time when all eyes will see Him coming in the clouds
5. It is observed upon self-examination.
- a. One needs to "examine" (KJV) or "prove" himself (1 Corinthians 11:28).
 - (1) Christians should never partake of the Supper in a flippant, hypocritical, or rebellious attitude.
6. It is observed to proclaim Christ as Savior.
- C. What a powerful sermon Christians preach when the Lord's Supper is eaten!
1. They are not only proclaiming to others the fact that Jesus died for their sins, and shed His blood to save all those who believe and obey Him, but they are also preaching loudly the fact that Jesus is coming again.
 - a. Both of these cardinal teachings give tremendous strength and encouragement in living for Jesus.

III. THE SIMILARITIES.

- A. The Passover was a part of the Old Testament Law.
 1. It fulfilled a purpose for those who lived under the Old Testament, but there are many similarities between the Passover and the Lord's Supper.
- B. These similarities are significant.

1. The Passover was divinely ordained by God for the nation of Israel (Exodus 12:14).
 - a. The Lord's Supper was divinely ordained by Christ for Christians (Luke 22:19).
 2. The time of the Passover was determined by God (Exodus 12:2-3).
 - a. The time of the Lord's Supper is determined by God (Acts 20:7).
 3. The Passover feast required a lamb without blemish (Exodus 12:5).
 - a. Christ was offered on the cross as a lamb without blemish (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:17-19).
 4. The Passover lamb's bones were not to be broken (Exodus 12:46).
 - a. None of Jesus' bones were broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:34-36).
 5. The Passover was a memorial of deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12:14).
 - a. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Jesus' death and Christians' deliverance from bondage to sin (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).
 6. The Passover was to be eaten as a family (Exodus 12:3-4).
 - a. The Lord's Communion is to be eaten by God's spiritual family (1 Corinthians 11:17-20).
 7. The Passover was to be observed throughout their generations (Exodus 12:14).
 - a. The Lord's Supper is to be observed until Jesus comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- C. Christ came not to do His own will but that of the Father's (John 6:38).
1. Being the Son of God, Christians then have the stamp of divine authority in the

establishment of the Lord's Supper.

2. Man must, if he is to serve God in truth, observe that institution in the manner that Christ established.
3. Man does not possess the authority to alter or change that institution.

IV. THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

A. The elements of the Lord's Supper can be misunderstood.

1. There is a misunderstanding as to the consumption (Matthew 26:27).
2. There is a misunderstanding as to the container (Matthew 26:27).
3. There is a misunderstanding as to the contents (Matthew 26:26, 28).

a. Some confusion has arisen from John 6:53-58.

(1) When Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you," He was not talking about partaking of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine in Communion.

(a) The verbs "eat" and "drink" (v. 53) are both in the aorist tense, denoting a once for all action.

i) To eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood is not something repeated, as it would if the reference were primarily to the Lord's Supper.

ii) Also, the word "flesh" (Gk. *sarx*) is never of the Lord's Supper, but the word "body"

(Gk. *soma*).

- (2) Instead, to eat Jesus' flesh and to drink His blood means to appropriate Jesus Christ through an obedient faith, and to receive the benefits of His atonement.
- B. The purpose of the Lord's Supper can be misunderstood.
 1. The church at Corinth has problems associated with the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11).
 - a. They were coming together for the worse (v. 17).
 - b. They were coming together in a divided state (v. 18; cf. 1:10-12).
 - c. They were coming together with an allegiance to men (v. 19).
 - d. They were coming together with no thought as to the significance of the Lord's Supper (v. 20).
 - e. They were coming together to selfishly eat a common meal and then eat the Lord's Supper (vv. 21-22).
 - f. They were coming together with no discernment of the body of the Lord (vv. 27-29).
 - (1) Paul reminds them of the Lord's words to correct the problem (vv. 23ff).
 - C. The attitude of the Lord's Supper can be misunderstood.
 1. There is a problem when there is no anticipation of the worship.
 - a. One must bring his heart to worship (Matthew 15:8-9; John 4:24).
 - b. Worship must be a meaningful part of one's life (Psalm 122:1; Hebrews 10:24-

25; Acts 20:6-7).

- c. If one does not anticipate worshipping God, then the Lord's Supper is reduced to just crackers and grape juice.
 2. There is a problem if a Christian views the Lord's Supper as all that matters.
 - a. There are five acts of worship, and they are all equally important.
 3. There is a problem when one sporadically attends worship and partakes of the Lord's Supper.
 - a. Jesus expects us to partake of this Memorial every Sunday (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26).
 4. There is a problem when a child of God willfully misses Sunday morning and then shows up Sunday evening to partake of the Lord's Supper.
 - a. God's design is for the church to come together and all partake of the Lord's Supper together (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:17, 18, 20).
 - b. Of course, this does not prohibit a Christian from observing the Lord's Supper Sunday evening due to sicknesses, emergencies, or uncontrollable situations.
- D. There are certainly enough misunderstandings in the world without misunderstanding, abusing the Lord's Supper.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Whenever Christians observe the Lord's Supper they are to remember Christ's death upon the cross.
 - A. To add anything to this picture corrupts the image that Christ wanted His followers to see.
- II. It took the body of Christ as a sacrifice to redeem; it

took the blood to wash sins away.

III. Indeed, as Christians commune, they do honor Christ and show forth His death until He comes.

A. This is to be done just as He instituted it, till He comes.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

1. Born in Jackson, Michigan, September 30, 1957.
2. Married to the former Helen Risner;
 - a. We have one son, Keith, who is eighteen and a student at Marshall University.
3. Began preaching full-time in August 1988 for the 26th Street church of Christ in Huntington, WV, and I am still working with the same congregation.
4. Education:
 - a. East Tennessee School of Preaching, 1986-1988.
 - b. Marshall University.
 - c. Theological University of America. B.A., M.A.
5. I have appeared on numerous lectureship programs and conducted several gospel meetings.

The Resurrection of Jesus

Owen Olbricht

Mark, as well as Matthew, gives a very brief account of Jesus' burial, resurrection, and the events that followed. John and Luke give more details but they also give very limited accounts. We might wonder why more is not written concerning the forty-day period following His resurrection (Acts 1:3). We must realize that the three-year ministry of Jesus also is compressed into a minimum of words.

The Burial

John gives information that is not in Mark's account by including the soldiers breaking the legs of the criminals in order to speed their deaths (John 19:31). They did not break Jesus' legs because He was already dead (John 19:33). One of them pierced Jesus' side with a sword. Immediately blood and water flowed from the wound (John 19:34). In this way the certainty of Jesus' death was established.

“Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if he had been dead for some time. And when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he (with Nicodemus, John 19:39, 40) brought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb” (Mark 15:42-46). This was Joseph's new tomb (Matt. 27:60), a garden tomb (John 19:41), where no one had been buried (Luke 23:53).

The women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Joseph, watched Jesus' burial (Mark 15:47) and observed how the body was laid (Luke 23:55).

The day after the crucifixion the chief priests and Pharisees received permission from Pilate to seal and guard the tomb because they remembered that Jesus had stated, "After three days I will rise" (Matt. 27:62-66).

The Resurrection

One of the greatest events in the history of the world, the resurrection of Jesus, took place when an angel descended and rolled away the stone. The guards trembled with fear and became as dead men (Matt. 28:2-4).

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go and tell His disciple—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you'" (Mark 16:1-7).

The women quickly left the tomb (Mark 16:8) and reported these things to the apostles (Luke 24:9-11). Peter and John hurriedly ran to examine the empty tomb. John arrived first but waited for Peter to enter. They found the grave clothing in the tomb with the face cloth rolled up and lying in another place (Luke 24:12; John 20:2-10).

Appearances

During the forty days Jesus was on earth after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), He appeared to a number of people, especially to the apostles, His special witnesses (Acts 1:21, 22; 10:40, 41). Following this, He ascended back into heaven (Mark 16:19, 20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12). Mark reported four of the twelve recorded appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. The following is a list of those who saw Him:

- (1) Mary Magdalene – Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18
- (2) Other women – Matt. 28:9, 10
- (3) Peter – Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5
- (4) Two disciples, one named Cleopas – Mark 16:12, 13; Luke 24:13-34
- (5) Ten apostles, Thomas absent – Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25
- (6) Eleven apostles, including Thomas – John 20:26-31
- (7) Seven of His disciples while they were fishing – John 21:1-25
- (8) Eleven apostles in Galilee – Mark 16:15-18; Matt. 28:16-20
- (9) Over 500 – 1 Cor. 15:6
- (10) James – 1 Cor. 15:7
- (11) Eleven apostles before his ascension – Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8; 1 Cor. 15:7
- (12) Paul – 1 Cor. 15:8

Day of the Resurrection

According to Mark, Jesus rose the first day of the week, our Sunday. “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene” (Mark 16:9). This corresponds with implications in Matthew 28:1-4; Luke 24:1, 2; John 20:1.

The time of Jesus’ stay in the tomb before his resurrection is described with three different terms, “three

days and nights” (Matt. 12:40), “after three days” (Matt. 26:61; 27:40, 63; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; 14:58; John 2:19, 20) and “the third day” (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4).

The following comparison of parallel passages shows that “after three days” and “the third day” means the same (Matt. 16:21 and Mark 8:31). See also Matthew 27:63, 64.

“Three days and nights” appears only once (Matt. 12:40) while “the third day” is used much more frequently. Some references have been construed to mean a longer period of time, but Luke 24:46 indicates the stay in the tomb was from Friday to Sunday.

The two men who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus said in reference to Jesus, “Our chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him... Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened” (Luke 24:20, 21). The phrase, “these things” refers to the chief priests and rulers condemning Jesus and crucifying Him. His burial occurred on the same day. The resurrection of Jesus was the “third day” after “these things”—the condemnation, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus.

“Today,” was “the first day of the week” (Luke 24:1), Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead which was the “third day since these things happened” (Luke 24:21). Counting backward from Sunday, which was “the third day,” Saturday would be the second day, and Friday the first day. Thus Jesus was buried on Friday. He was in the tomb for parts of two days, Friday and Sunday, and all of one day, Saturday. He rose on Sunday.

The larger number is sometimes used when reference is made to a lesser number. Luke reported that on Sunday evening Jesus appeared to the “eleven” (Luke 24:33); however, Thomas was not there (John 20:24), so Jesus appeared to ten instead of eleven. A week later Jesus appeared to the eleven, including Thomas (John 20:26-29).

Paul stated that Jesus appeared to the twelve (1 Cor. 15:5) but no more than eleven were present. Stephen said that seventy-five entered Egypt (Acts 7:14b); however the number was more likely seventy (Exodus 1:5). In like manner the reference to “three days and nights” could have been a larger reference that included the lesser, “the third day.” The Jews were known to refer to a part of a day as a whole day.

Jesus used Jonah in a typographical manner. All aspects are not to be considered applicable to the reality of which Jonah was a type. Consider that Jesus stated that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, He would be lifted up (John 3:14). The reality did not include everything in the type, for He was not lifted up in a wilderness. In like manner His point in Matt. 12:40 was the three days and not the exact totality of three days and nights in the tomb.

Arguments Against the Resurrection

The empty tomb does not necessarily prove the resurrection. However, if Jesus’ body had remained in the tomb, the resurrection would be disproved. Various arguments have been presented to disprove the resurrection and to explain the empty tomb.

(1) The first explanation for the empty tomb was the one the guards were paid to make, that the disciples stole the body while they slept (Matt. 28:11-15). The guards would not know who stole the body if they were asleep. Rolling the large stone away from the tomb and stealing the body without waking the guards would have been almost impossible. The Jews would have paid informants, like they had Judas (Mark 14:10, 11), and searched until they found the body. Also according to Roman law, if guards slept while on duty, they were to be punished with death. Such a weak argument makes a strong case for the resurrection of Jesus, for if this is the best excuse trained and educated

leaders could give, it reveals the falsehood of their argument.

The grave had been removed from the body. Robbers would have taken the wrapped body as it was. If the disciples had stolen the body, they would not have taken time to unwind the body. They would not have so confidently preached the resurrection and been willing to suffer death for their testimony. They built the church by boldly preaching the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:31, 32; 4:33; 5:30; 10:49; 13:30; 17:18).

(2) Some have argued that Jesus merely swooned while on the cross. In the cool of the tomb He supposedly revived and left the tomb.

The blood and water coming from His pierced side indicated that Jesus died on the cross. Even if He did not die on the cross, in His weakened state He could not have rolled the large stone away from the tomb. He had been beaten until He was unable to carry His cross, endured the agony of the cross six hours, was severely wounded with a spear, and was more than three days without anything to eat or drink. Even if He could have rolled the stone away from the tomb, He would have had to go past the guards. He was so bruised and weakened the apostles would not have accepted Him as the triumphant, risen Lord. Where could He hide that the Jews would not find Him? No indication is given that they sought Him.

(3) The argument that in the dark of the early morning the women went to the wrong tomb is not a viable explanation of the empty tomb. The woman knew where He was buried, for they watched His burial, how He was laid in the tomb. Joseph and Nicodemus later could have pointed out the right tomb and identified the grave clothing as not belonging to Jesus if the women had gone to the wrong tomb. The indication is that He was buried in a garden in a private tomb hewn in the rock (Mark 15:46; John 19:41), not in a graveyard filled with graves. It was

not one grave among many. Going to the wrong tomb would have been almost impossible.

Were the guards also at the wrong tomb? Surely they would not have sealed and guarded the wrong tomb. They would not have guarded an open, empty tomb, and then fled from it. If they guarded the right tomb and the women went to the wrong tomb, they would have produced the body to prove Jesus had not risen. Also they would not have gone to Pilate to tell him about an empty tomb if they were guarding the closed tomb containing Jesus' body.

(4) Others have argued that the disciples did not see Jesus, but simply hallucinated. The problems this presents are also many. The tomb would not have been empty. The enemies could easily have produced the body and disproved the resurrection. Hallucinations usually occur to those who expect to see someone. The disciples did not expect the resurrection (Mark 9:31, 32). Surely over 500 would not hallucinate at the same time (1 Cor. 15:6).

(5) The most recent attitude by liberal theologians is that Jesus died and remained buried but that He rose into the *kerygma*, the message preached. In this way He survived through death to become a living influence. Such an approach ignores and denies the sources on which it depends to prove that Jesus was born, lived, and died. It does not explain the empty tomb and the testimony of so many that they saw Jesus after His resurrection. The church was built on the fact that Jesus' body lived again, giving hope of a resurrection of all mankind (1 Cor.15:22).

Proof of Jesus' Resurrection

The empty tomb is testimony that the body was gone but more is needed to prove the resurrection. Proof of Jesus resurrection is based on the testimony of witnesses. The angels were the first to testify concerning Jesus' resurrection. "He is risen! He is not here" (Mark 16:7).

An impressive number testified that Jesus was resurrected. Two or three witnesses would have been adequate but He was seen by over 500 at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). A one-time appearance might have left doubt, but He was seen for forty days (Acts 1:3). The apostles, the special witnesses (Acts 1:22, 23) gained no wealth or fame but rather died for their testimony. Men usually will not die for that which they know to be false. None of the many who testified that they saw Jesus after His resurrection ever changed their testimony, even in the face of death. Surely one of these many who testified He rose would have come forward to state that He was not raised.

The apostles preached His resurrection (Acts 2:31, 32) shortly after the event, very near to where it took place. This meant that those who heard could have examined the evidence to find out if He had been raised (Luke 1:1-4). They could have gone to the tomb to see if it was empty and could question those who witnessed His resurrection. In this way they could have disproved His resurrection if He was not raised.

The apostles' changed nature is testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. When the Jews came for Jesus, they all fled for fear of their lives (Mark 14:50). They thought His life's work had ended in failure (Luke 24:21). After the resurrection they spoke boldly concerning Jesus' resurrection even though threatened with death (Acts 4:2, 17).

Paul's changed life is also testimony of the resurrection. He ceased persecuting Christians to become a leader in preaching the resurrection (Acts 13:30). He preached the gospel he had sought to destroy (Gal 1:23).

Jesus' resurrection was to be expected. He showed that He was more than human by fulfilling prophecy, by miracles, and by insights into future events. All these add weight to the fact that His resurrection should take place. We should be surprised if He was not resurrected.

Nature of the Resurrected Body

Some have assumed that the resurrected body was a glorified body and not the physical body that was crucified and buried. His resurrection body had to be the same as the crucified body in order for the disciples to identify Him as the one who had died on the cross. How could they testify He arose if they could not recognize Him?

He proved He had a physical body by showing it to Thomas and by asking him to put his finger in the nail prints in His hands and his hand in His side (John 20:27). Thomas could not have touched a spiritual body. Jesus said to the disciples who thought He was a spirit, “Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me have” (Luke 24:39b, 40). To prove this, He ate before them (Luke 24:41-43).

Some seek to prove His body was not physical because He passed through doors, but He could walk on water before He died. Enoch and Elijah were caught into heaven. What happened to their bodies? “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50). Their bodies must have been changed from physical into spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:44). This is what must have happened to Jesus’ physical, resurrected body.

Meaning of the Resurrection

The reality of the resurrection is important but the meaning of the resurrection is even more important. The resurrection means:

- (1) Jesus is the Christ who now rules supreme (Acts 2:33-36; Eph. 1:20-23).
- (2) There will be a judgment (Acts 17:31).
- (3) Jesus can save us and forgive us (Rom. 5:10; 1 Cor. 15:17; Heb. 7:25).
- (4) We can be raised to a new life with Him in baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

- (5) We should be joined to Jesus, not the Law (Rom. 7:4).
- (6) He ever lives to help us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).
- (7) We will be raised (1 Cor. 6:14; 15:12; 2 Cor. 4:14).
- (8) Our faith has a firm basis (1 Cor. 15:14, 17).
- (9) Our loved ones have not perished (1 Cor. 15:18).
- (10) We should continually serve Jesus (1 Cor. 15:58).
- (11) Satan has been defeated (1 Cor. 15:55-57; Heb. 2:14, 15).
- (12) The power of His resurrection can transform us (Phil. 3:10; Col. 3:1-3).
- (13) We can have hope (1 Pet. 1:3).
- (14) Eternal life in heaven can be ours (1 Pet. 1:4)

Conclusion

Christianity is built on the resurrection of Jesus. If He was not raised, our faith in Jesus is valueless. Jesus' resurrection is one of the most important events in human history, for His resurrection is the basis of our hope of life after this life and of eternal life in heaven.

We can expect our own resurrected if we share Jesus' burial and resurrection in baptism (Rom. 6:4-8). Through sharing His burial and resurrection we can be made spiritually alive and receive the forgiveness of sins (Col. 2:12).

We can thank Mark for his witness to the resurrection of Jesus and our hope because of it.