

THE APPROACH OF THE END
Mark 13:1-13

Intro: This is the one really prophetic chapter in the Gospel of Mark.

It all leads up to v. 26--the coming of the Lord in glory!

However, in order to understand exactly what the Lord is talking about, we need to have some idea of the order of prophetic events.

Our Lord is not talking here about the rapture of the Church. Up to this point in history there was no Church. The Church did not begin until Acts 2. So any teaching about the rapture such as Paul gives in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 would only have confused the disciples more than they were.

Our Lord is talking here about His return to the earth. This will follow the rapture of the Church by approximately 7 years. Those seven years will be the Tribulation period. Therefore, as we understand the prophetic scriptures and from where we are in history this morning, the order of prophetic events which are just ahead of us is:

- 1) The rapture of the Church.
- 2) The Tribulation.
- 3) The second coming of Christ.

All of this means that we who know the Lord today will not be on the earth when the major events of chapter 13 in Mark take place. I say, major, because some of the conditions which the Lord describes here run throughout the present age and continue right up to the time of His return.

A chapter like Mark 13 is extremely important for many reasons. But, in view of many things that are taking place today in and out of the Church, it is especially important. Many of the world-wide problems that men are concerned about today are mentioned right in this chapter as being problems right up to the coming of the Lord. THE LORD LEAVES NO DOUBT IN THE MIND OF HIS DISCIPLES BUT THAT THE ONLY HOPE FOR THE WORLD, THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WHICH CONFRONT US ALL, IS IN THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO THE EARTH.

Matthew (24, 25), Mark, and Luke (21:5-36) all record this message which we know as the Olivet Discourse because it was delivered on the mount of Olives. It is the longest message given by our Lord which Mark records.

This morning we will take only the first 13 verses. Let us note, first of all,

I. THE SETTING (Mark 13:1-4).

one reason the Lord begins by saying,
"Take heed lest any man deceive you" (v. 5).

People could be deceived in two ways:

- 1) By misinterpreting the characteristics of the age as signs of the imminent coming of the Lord.
- 2) By being discouraged into believing that these things will never take place.

WE NEED TO HAVE THIS WARNING IN MIND AS WE STUDY PROPHETIC TRUTH. THERE PROBABLY HAS BEEN NO AREA OF TEACHING IN ALL OF THE WORD OF GOD ABOUT WHICH PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED MORE THAN ABOUT PROPHETIC TRUTH. FALSE PROPHECY IS INVOLVED IN PRACTICALLY EVERY MAJOR CULT!

What are the two areas in which men are most likely to be deceived?

FIRST, about the Messiah, or Christ Himself. Cf. v. 6.

Deception has been the master scheme of Satan from the garden of Eden to the present. And it will continue that way to the very end. Cf. Rev. 12:9,

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

If we can be deceived about Christ, nothing else matters. A person who is wrong about Him, is wrong everywhere else!

But this is not the sign!

SECONDLY, about world problems. Cf. vv. 7, 8.

Our Lord mentions three:

- 1) Wars.
- 2) Earthquakes.
- 3) Famines.

Will you note this very carefully? THESE THREE THINGS (AND ALL OTHERS JUST LIKE THEM) ARE GOING TO BE WITH US UNTIL THE LORD RETURNS!

This does not mean that we should not work on them, BUT IT DOES MEAN THAT WE ARE NOT GOING TO SOLVE THEM! AND THIS MORNING WE HAVE 2,000 YEARS OF HISTORY TO BACK UP WHAT OUR LORD TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES!

But notice, too, how vv. 7 and 8 end:

- 1) V. 7b, "but the end shall not be yet."
- 2) V. 8b, "These are the beginnings of sorrows." Our Lord

uses a word here which means, "birth pangs" (NASB). It is like a mother in the first stages of labor. The real agony is yet to come. None of the wars of history, nor all of them put together, can even begin to compare with what will take place during the Tribulation.

Let us not be deceived into believing that it can be any other way!

But let us go on. In the midst of all of this, what will happen to the Gospel? If things are going to get worse for the world, can it be any other way for the Gospel? The answer: NO and YES. Let us note . . .

III. THE FATE OF THE GOSPEL (Mark 13:9-13).

Be careful to note that not even these are the signs. These things have been characteristics of the age, but they will continue and worsen right up to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So far the Lord has given two practical exhortations:

- 1) V. 5.
- 2) V. 7.

Now we have two more:

- 1) V. 9.
- 2) V. 11.

There is no question but that things are going to get worse for the child of God--AND THEY WILL BE THE WORST THEY HAVE EVER BEEN.

BUT . . . it will be during this time that the Gospel will make its greatest penetration into all the world, and when believers will be provided with unplanned opportunities for witness the likes of which they have never experienced before!

Note in v. 9: Terrible persecution "for my sake," the Lord says, but "as a testimony to them" (NASB). Paul wrote about his experiences along this line in Phil. 1:12 ff.

Note especially v. 10: This is not for today. It speaks of missionary work during the time of the end. Nothing more needs to be fulfilled before the Rapture, but this needs to be fulfilled before the Second Coming! The Gospel will make its greatest penetration into the world during the time of the Tribulation. How is that for a display of the overruling hand of God?

Note v. 11: It will be a time of special ministry by the Holy Spirit. Again, this has been experienced by believers

in the past (cf. Acts 4:8), but it will be much more common during the Tribulation!

Note v. 11: And all of this will be going on at a time when opposition to the Gospel is literally tearing families apart.

Note v. 12: The people of God will be marked people. They will be "hated by all on account of My name," the Lord said. This is not a world that has turned to Christ, but a world that has turned in bitter hatred against Him.

Persecution always has a purifying effect. And in that day, as now, people are not saved because they endure, but people endure because they are saved! There is only one salvation from Genesis to Revelation--salvation by grace, and salvation that is eternal. Our endurance proves it! Those who do not endure never have been saved! Cf. v. 13.

Concl: What are we to learn from this passage? Several things:

- 1) The world will not reach a utopian state before the the Lord Jesus Christ returns. In fact, things are not going to get better; they will get worse.
- 2) The world is not going to be saved. It is not even going to be fully evangelized in our day--even though this is our call.
- 3) We learn from this passage that the words of the Lord Jesus are words which we can trust implicitly.
- 4) The most important Person is Christ. We can be deceived about many things, but nothing is as disastrous as being deceived about Him.

Christ is the only hope of men; He is the only hope of the world. How important it is, then, that we know who He is, what He has done, and that we trust Him as our Savior from the judgment that is to come!

THE SIGN OF THE SECOND COMING
Mark 13:14-27

Intro: Mark 13 gives us Mark's account of the Olivet Discourse, the teaching which our Lord gave to His disciples just a few days before His arrest. It was given to them on the mount of Olives (see v. 3), AND IT HAD TO DO WITH HIS RETURN TO THE EARTH--THE SECOND COMING.

We learned last Sunday morning that this is not the Rapture of the Church. There was no Church at this time; to have talked about the Rapture would have caused the greatest confusion. What we are considering in Mark 13 takes place after the Tribulation (as v. 24 clearly indicates). Thus, putting these three major prophetic events together we find that they come in this order:

- 1) The Rapture.
- 2) The Tribulation Period--the last half of which is The Great Tribulation. It will be a period of 7 years.
- 3) The Second Coming of Christ to the earth--which ushers in the millennial reign of Christ, meaning a reign of 1,000 years.

To pick up the thought from the first part of the chapter--the disciples had asked the Lord about the destruction of the Temple and of the city of Jerusalem which He had mentioned as they were all leaving the Temple. (See vv. 1-4.) They wanted to know:

- 1) "When . . . ?"
- 2) "What will be the sign . . . ?" By this they had reference to a distinguishing mark of identification.

In the Olivet Discourse the Lord is answering these questions.

But, as the first part of the chapter indicates, they must be careful not to be deceived. Although Satan is not mentioned, the word deceive is his word. They can be deceived about:

- 1) Who the Messiah is.
- 2) The sign of the Lord's coming.

They could be deceived into:

- 1) Discouragement.
- 2) False expectations.
- 3) Not expecting Him.

Basically, the Lord is telling them these things so that they will not be deceived.

So, He tells them, first of all, what are NOT THE SIGNS, but are the characteristics of the age which lead up to the coming of the Lord. See esp. vv. 5-13.

However, as we come to v. 14, the teaching of our Lord takes a very decided change, and we can see that we have come to the answer to the disciples' questions!

What will be the sign of our Lord's return to the earth?

Luke concludes this ~~same~~ passage (in Luke 21:28) with these words:

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth near."

Before we look at these events in detail, let me point out that there never has been a time to the present hour when we have had a complete fulfillment of all of the things which have been mentioned by our Lord here in these verses which we are considering this morning. This proves conclusively that it is all still in the future.

- I. THE INTRODUCTORY EVENT--but not the sign (Mark 13:14-23):
"the abomination of desolation" which marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

Note how our Lord confirms the prophecy of Daniel by this reference to what Daniel predicts in at least three passages:

- 1) Dan. 9:27, speaking of the events which center around the Antichrist,
"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."
- 2) Dan. 11:31,
"And forces shall stand on his part" (Luke tells us that Jerusalem shall be surrounded with armies),
"and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate."
- 3) Dan. 12:11,
"And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."

What will the abomination of desolation be?

We can see that, before this prophecy can be fulfilled, there will have to be a Temple. Sacrifices will be restored in Jerusalem. Things will be going normally until the middle of the 70th week of Daniel. But then trouble breaks loose with the surrounding of Jerusalem and the setting up, apparently, of an idol or an altar on or in place of the altar of burnt offering--thus making it impossible for the people of Israel to continue to offer the daily burnt offering.

Thus, the events which lead up to the coming of the Lord are introduced by . . .

A. "The abomination of desolation" (Mark 13:14a).

The importance of this is indicated in two ways:

- 1) It is a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.
- 2) Mark, or possibly the Lord, says, "Let him that readeth, understand."

This is followeth by the Lord telling them . . .

B. What they should do (Mark 13:14b-18).

It all speaks of a time of extreme danger for people who know the Lord. (Keep in mind that this will not take place until after the Rapture of the Church.)

C. Why they should do it (Mark 13:19, 20).

"Affliction" is the same word which is translated in v. 24, "tribulation." It is translated this way in the parallel passage in Matt. 24:21,

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

There have been terrible times of suffering and persecution in the past, BUT THERE NEVER HAS BEEN A TIME LIKE THIS ONE WILL BE. IN FACT, IT WILL BE SO TERRIBLE THAT, IF THE LORD DID NOT SHORTEN THOSE DAYS (by keeping men from doing what they otherwise would do) NO FLESH (either human or animal) WOULD BE SPARED!

And why will the Lord put it to an end?

"For the elect's sake," i.e., His own people in Israel.

Note: He will not do it for the whole nation, but for the elect, the remnant, within the nation.

This principle is illustrated in Noah, and in Lot, etc.

D. A warning (Mark 13:21-23).

The same problem will exist in the Great Tribulation: Satan trying to deceive men as to who the Messiah is. And there will be the addition at this time of:

- 1) "Signs."
- 2) "Wonders."

Both are terms used of miracles which our Lord performed. But here the purpose is "to seduce," i.e., to lead them astray.

Cf. vv. 5, 6, and note that this is the third time that we have, "Take heed." Cf. vv. 5, 9, 23.

But how, specifically, will those days be shortened?

By . . .

II. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST (Mark 13:24-26).

Again remember, this is not the Rapture. The Rapture will have taken place about 7 years before this.

Note: "But in those days, after that tribulation . . ." (v. 24a). Matthew (24:29) is even more specific when he writes,
"Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . ."

What will happen?

Isa. 13:10 will be fulfilled: (reading v. 9 with it)
 "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine."

There have been times of darkness, such as when our Lord was on the cross (cf. Matt. 27:45) for three hours, but it was not followed by what we have here in Mark 13.

The Spirit was poured out in Acts 2, but they did not have the other signs mentioned here and mentioned also in Joel 2:30-32.

No, there has been no other time when all of these things were put together, nor will they be, until the real end of things.

BUT THEN WE WILL HAVE THE SIGN!

Matthew even says this:

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all of the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:31).

In other words, it will be impossible to miss Him. No one will be deceived. John tells us,

"Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see

Him . . ." (Rev. 1:7a).
 Paul says,
 " . . . every knee should bow . . . every tongue should
 confess . . ." (Phil. 2:10, 11).

He will be identified by the full manifestation of His glory
 --just as Peter and James and John saw Him in the holy mount.
 No one can possibly be mistaken, deceived, or lead astray
 then!

But, is this all? No! Then we will have . . .

III. THE REGATHERING OF THE ELECT OF ISRAEL (Mark 13:27).

It will be miraculous.

It will be carried out by "His angels."

It will extend to every nation on the face of the earth.

Anyone who uses this verse to describe the return of the
 Jews to Israel today has taken it out of context and is mis-
 interpreting it. Obviously, much is going to take place in
 Israel before the Lord returns, but it will all be destroyed
 during the Great Tribulation at the close of which the Lord
 will return.

Concl: What practical lessons can we draw from this passage
 since this has to do with events which will take place
 after the Church is in heaven?

There are several:

- 1) Some who are listening to my voice and who do not know the
 Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour may very well live to see these
 things. Thus, it emphasizes the need for trusting the Lord
 as Savior NOW!
- 2) Those of us who know the Lord can be encouraged to know that
 the Lord's purposes are going to be carried out to the full.
- 3) The passage certainly teaches us how dear the Lord's people
 are to the Lord Himself.
- 4) The importance of keeping Christ in the very center of our
 lives, hopes, and all that concerns us.

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE
Mark 13:28-37

Intro: We come this morning to the close of John Mark's account of The Olivet Discourse--the message which the Lord gave His disciples on the mount of Olives just before His arrest and crucifixion, a message which had to do with The Great Tribulation and The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been learning that our Lord is not speaking of The Rapture.

He is speaking of two events which follow The Rapture.

The Church may experience greater tribulation before the Lord comes in the air to get us, but we will not go through The Great Tribulation.

Our passage this morning is given, basically, to show the practical implications of the teaching which our Lord had just given to His disciples. We can divide the verses as follows:

- 1) What the fig tree tells (v. 28).
- 2) The application of its message (vv. 29-37):
 - a) The nearness of the Lord's coming (v. 29).
 - b) The certainty of the Lord's coming (vv. 30, 31).
 - c) The uncertainty involved in the Lord's coming (vv. 32-37).

I. WHAT THE FIG TREE TELLS (Mark 13:28).

"Learn" is the verb from which we also get the word, disciple. The Lord wants them to increase their knowledge from the parable.

It is literally called, the parable FROM the fig tree.

Years before David had written,

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1).

Just think of how many of our Lord's parables were taken from nature itself. There is a difference between God and nature, but what He has made contains messages so great and so loud that

"There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psa. 19:3).

In a sense, there are two ways in which we have messages from nature here:

- 1) The leaves on the fig tree.
- 2) The seasons of the year--following each other in the same order, year after year. The coming of the Lord to

the earth is like summer coming!

II. THE APPLICATION OF THE FIG TREE'S MESSAGE (Mark 13:29-37).

- A. Its primary message: the nearness of the Lord's coming (Mark 13:29).

"At the doors" is explained as meaning "near." When you see these things taking place which will come as The Great Tribulation, then you can know that (some translations say) HE is near! He is closer than you think He is!

- B. Its secondary message: the certainty of the Lord's coming (Mark 13:30-31).

When the fig tree puts out its leaves, you know, not only that summer is near, but you know that there is no doubt but that summer is near. There is no question but that summer will come.

Note: for the 10th time, "Verily, I say unto you," pointing to:

- 1) Its importance.
- 2) Its truthfulness.
- 3) The authority with which something is being said.

"This generation" is not the generation which was living at that time because they did not see all of these things take place. IT MEANS THAT GENERATION WHICH IS LIVING WHEN THESE THINGS TAKE PLACE IN THE EARTH!

Since a generation is about 30 years, but we know that these events will take place in 7 years, this gives us an idea of the time involved.

Those who mark the Second Coming of the Lord from 1948 when Israel was established as a nation are, in effect, setting dates. Christ would come by 1978. But, if this is true as to the date, and the Tribulation has to begin 7 years before The Second Coming, then this means that the Rapture of the Church should have taken place last year!

Now the Lord uses this to emphasize the certainty of all that He has to teach:

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

The Psalmist knew that the earth and the heavens as they

are now would not last forever:

"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall become old like a garment; like a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years have no end" (Psa. 102:25-27).

Isaiah knew it, too:

"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall grow old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished" (Isa. 51:6).

Later, Peter wrote:

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are in it, shall be burned up . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:10, 13).

So the changing of the present order is just as certain as any other promise we have in the Word of God--just as certain as the unchanging character and eternal existence of God, just as certain as the salvation that we have in Christ!

Note: "My words"--every detail of what the Lord said is important! Not one word can be omitted!

- C. The uncertainty involved in the Lord's coming (Mark 13:32-37).

There are three words here which speak of time:

- 1) "Day"--the exact date.
- 2) "Hour"--the exact hour of that particular date.
- 3) "Time" (v. 33)--Trench (p. 211) defines this word as pointing to a critical, epoch-making event, fore-ordained of God, when that which has been ripening suddenly gives birth to grand, decisive events when one period closes and another begins.

NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THE DAY, THE HOUR, THE TIME WILL BE!
 --Men do not know it.
 --Angels do not know it.
 --The disciples did not know it (vv. 33, 35).

--NOT EVEN OUR LORD KNEW IT!

This last is the most surprising of all! In it we are confronted with one of the mysteries of the incarnation. Cf. also Luke 2:52,

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

No one can really explain such a phenomenon--how a God who is infinite in knowledge could become a man who did not know everything!

One thing is certain: IF OUR LORD DID NOT KNOW IT, THEN IT IS PRESUMPTION FOR ANY MAN TO CLAIM THAT HE DOES.

It is enough that our Father knows! Cf. Acts 1:6, 7.

But what does this all lead to?

It leads to the practical emphasis that the Lord wants to make. HE HAS INTENTIONALLY PLANNED IT THAT MEN WOULD NOT KNOW THE EXACT TIME OF HIS COMING. (The same thing applies to the Rapture of the Church.) This means that we must always be looking forward to it, always expecting that we might be in that generation that would live to see His return.

Our Lord uses two words for "watch" in this passage. We have one word in v. 33; another word is used in vv. 34, 35, and 37.

- 1) The first word means a wakeful frame of mind in which a person refuses to go to sleep.
- 2) The second word speaks of a person who has been asleep, but who rouses himself so that he is clearly awake.

It is just as though our Lord has gone on a far journey. He has "commanded the porter" (i.e., the doorkeeper) "to watch." The Lord could come back:

- 1) "At evening"--the first watch, from 6 to 9 p.m.
- 2) "At midnight"--the second watch, from 9 p.m. to 12 midnight.
- 3) "At cockcrow"--the third watch, from 12 midnight to 3 a.m.
- 4) "In the morning"--the fourth watch, from 3 to 6 a.m.

For our Lord to speak specifically about the night means that He could come anytime, and so they were to be watch in all of the time!

Concl: Now, from all of this, what is important for us in this passage that relates also to the time when the Lord will come for us?

We can emphasize the following things:

- 1) We need to know the truth of the coming of the Lord. There are many who do not know it. THERE ARE MANY OTHERS WHO KNOW IT, BUT WHO DO NOT LIVE LIKE THEY KNOW IT!
- 2) We are to have absolute confidence in this promise, AND IN ALL OF THE OTHER PROMISES THAT THE LORD HAS GIVEN TO US. "My words shall not pass away." It is a double negative!
 - a) Isaiah wrote:

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field . . . The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:6, 8).
 - b) The Psalmist wrote:

"Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89).
 "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever" (Psa. 119:152).
 "Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth forever" (Psa. 119:160).
- 3) We may not be able to understand why our Lord said that He did not know, BUT DO NOT LET THIS CAUSE US TO MISS THE BLESSING BOUND UP IN THE WORDS, "but my Father" knoweth (understood). This is enough.
 - a) After telling the multitudes not to use "vain repetitions" He said,

"for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matt. 6:8b).
 - b) Cf. Matt. 6:32b also,

"For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."
 - c) "Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee" (Psa. 38:9).
 Oh, how wonderful to know that HE KNOWS--whatever the need may be!
- 4) "WATCH" for:
 - a) The fulfillment of His promises. Be hopeful in the times of testing and trial. He knows.
 - b) His coming. It could be today!
Illustration: the POW's and their families. Many of them said that they never gave up, they hoped that every day would be the day of release! This is the way we should be about the Lord's return--watching day and night!

DEVOTION THE LORD WILL NOT FORGET
Mark 14:1-9

Intro: We can say that we are coming to the third and last division of the book of Mark when we get to chapter 14. The first division ended in 8:26. The second started when our Lord took His disciples up to Caesarea Philippi and told them for the first time about His death and resurrection. With the beginning of chapter 14 we are being introduced to all of the tragic events which finally culminated in our Lord's death-- and then His resurrection!

These were very hard and difficult days for the Lord.

Judas was going to betray Him--and He knew it!

Peter was going to deny Him--and He knew this, too!

Peter and James and John were going to fail to "watch" with Him in Gethsemane.

And, then, all of the disciples were going to forsake Him, and flee!

BUT PROBABLY THE ONE THING THAT HURT HIM THE WORST OF ALL WAS THE GLARING FACT THAT NONE OF THE DISCIPLES REALLY BELIEVED THAT HE WAS GOING TO DIE! He had mentioned it several times since Caesarea Philippi, but all to no avail! It is impossible for us to know the added distress that this caused our Lord, but we can be sure that it was very great!

Added to all of the above, we have the fact to face that . . .

I. A HOSTILE ATMOSPHERE (Mark 14:1, 2)

still prevailed in Jerusalem.

Matthew tells us that there had been an especially called meeting at "the palace of the high priest" where the plans had been laid which Mark mentions in v. 1--"how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death."

They were not going to do it openly, but they were going to
--deceive Him,
--trap Him,
--and secretly take Him and kill Him!

But these men were cowards and criminal at heart. They had decided NOT to do it on the feast day, i.e., the Passover, because they were afraid of what the people might do to them.

Vv. 1, 2 are clearly introductory, but also set a contrast, in some respects, for what is immediately to follow.

II. THE SUPPER AT BETHANY (Mark 14:3-9).

John (12:2) tells us that it was "a supper," but Mark says also in v. 3 that they were "eating." John's description puts this in the evening.

Matthew and Mark tell us that it was held in the home of Simon the leper--the only time he is mentioned in Scripture. He evidently was well-known, and was always remembered because of the leprosy which he had had, and from which the Lord must have delivered him.

The supper was probably given in his home because he had more room than Mary and Martha and Lazarus had in their home.

John also tells us that this was following the resurrection of Lazarus! He, therefore, was the great attraction, and so John tells us that people came to see Lazarus even more than they had come to see the Lord!

Martha was there--serving!

But Mary was also there! AND IT IS AROUND HER THAT THE WHOLE ACCOUNT REVOLVES.

A. What Mary did (Mark 14:3).

It was all so unexpected.

And it was over before anyone could do anything about it!

Where Mary got this, we do not know--but she had it there. The costly perfume was in a vase-shaped container made of alabaster, a semi-transparent stone, light in color.

She "broke" it open, which evidently means that she broke open the top--which also means that, once she had done this, she had to use all of the perfume.

Had this had anything to do with Lazarus' death? Had Mary just saved her money to buy this for herself? (This would be hard to believe.) Had she had this from even before the time that she had come to know the Lord? All of these questions we have to leave unanswered!

Matthew and Mark say that she poured it on our Lord's head; John says, His feet. She evidently anointed His entire body, "and wiped His feet with her hair" (John 12:3).

We are going to find out in a few minutes what this meant to the Lord, but we can say at this point that we are reading about a lady who loved the Lord Jesus Christ perhaps more than anyone else who was present.

Do you know that Mary is mentioned only three times in the Gospels, and that each time she is referred to as being at the feet of the Lord--taking the place of a humble servant? They are:

- 1) Luke 10:38-42--to hear His Word.
- 2) John 11:32--to be comforted, following Lazarus death.
- 3) John 12:3--to worship.

But, before we go farther, let us notice what developed.

B. How the disciples reacted (Mark 14:4, 5).

None of them understood this!

John tells us that Judas was the leading objector, but Matthew tells us that all of the disciples were with him.

What Mary did grieved them, pained them. They would have stopped her if they had known ahead of time what she was going to do.

And they voiced their objection. Instead of wasting it, why had she not sold it and given it to the poor. It was valued at more than a year's wages!

They considered it a total loss.

"They murmured," i.e., were very angry.

How this must have grieved the Lord because it revealed how much needed to be done in the hearts of these disciples before they could become fruitful servants.

ALWAYS REMEMBER: THERE ARE COMPARATIVELY FEW WHO REALLY UNDERSTAND PERSONAL DEVOTION TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Failure to understand always reveals immaturity for the child of God, and it was just proof that Judas was a thief (cf. John 12:6).

Let me ask this question this morning: TO YOU, what is the most important thing in your relationship with the Lord? Is it your service FOR the Lord, or is it your fellowship WITH the Lord? HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU HAVE BEEN ON YOUR KNEES AT HIS FEET (in heart as well as in act) TO HEAR HIS WORD, OR TO BE COMFORTED, OR TO WORSHIP HIM?

C. What the Lord said (Mark 14:6-9).

1. He called them off: "Let her alone."
2. He gave Mary His full approval: "She hath wrought a good work on Me."

Sometimes we get so involved in doing things for the Lord that we forget Him. Mary had not made this mistake!

3. He indicated that which must always have priority (Mark 14:7).

The Lord was not telling them that they should not help the poor, but He was telling them that there was one thing which was more important than anything else.

4. AND THEN HE MADE AN AMAZING DISCLOSURE (Mark 14:8).

Do not say for a moment that this was an unintended coincidence!

The Lord says that there was a purpose behind what Mary did. She was deliberately anointing the Lord's body for His burial because she apparently believed that the authorities would not let her do it when the time came.

SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE OUT OF ALL OF THE FOLLOWERS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WHO BELIEVED THAT HE WAS GOING TO DIE!

Illustration: Dr. A. W. Tozer remarks in his book, The Root of the Righteous (p. 17), that he feels that, if you can get one good thought out of a message, then that message has been worth the time you have taken to hear it.

He heard a message on one occasion where the one speaking said,

"Listen to no man who fails to listen to God."

In other words, before you go to any man for advice, be sure that he (or she) is a person who is walking with the Lord, and has been taught by Him. Degrees, experience, etc. do not necessarily mean anything at all. The question is: Is he at the Lord's feet every time he can get there?

Mary's devotion to the Lord had opened her heart to greater insights than Peter or James or John or any of the others had.

5. Our Lord dedicated to Mary a lasting memorial (Mark 14:9).

Where do you find this memorial?

Right here in the Word--AND IT HAS BEEN THE COMPANION OF THE GOSPEL FROM THAT DAY UNTIL THIS.

Note our now familiar, "Verily I say unto you."

The Lord predicts the world-wide proclamation of the Gospel.

BUT HE ALSO WANTS PEOPLE WHO HEAR THE GOSPEL TO HEAR ABOUT MARY, TOO.

Why?

Because if you hear the Gospel but do not learn what Mary knew, you will never get beyond the state of spiritual infancy. IT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THIS AS IT IS TO KNOW HOW TO BE SAVED.

And yet how many there are, and have been, who have never learned what Mary had learned. I have heard many preachers say that they would like to have been able to preach like Peter did, but have you ever heard one say that he would like even more to be as devoted to the Lord as Mary was?

Concl: Let me close with this illustration.

Evidently one of those who objected to what Mary did that evening was Peter. Considering what happened to Peter before our Lord died, as compared with what happened to Mary, WHOSE RECORD WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE? ...

And how did the Lord restore Peter?

Read John 21:15-17.

What does it mean? It means that if Peter had been living like Mary was, he would never have done what he did. Much is recored about what Peter said, but the one time he denied the Lord must have grieved him for the rest of his life. Only one sentence is recorded that Mary said, but people are still talking today about how much she loved the Lord!

HOW WILL YOU BE REMEMBERED?

THE MAN WHO SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN BORN

Mark 14:10-21

Intro: How quickly the atmosphere changes when we move from v. 9 to v. 10 in Mark 14! In reading about Mary of Bethany, we have unsurpassed devotion; in reading about Judas Iscariot, we have unbelievable treachery!

What Mary did will never be forgotten, and wherever the Gospel has been preached, men have heard of Mary's great love for the Lord Jesus Christ. BUT WHAT JUDAS DID WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN EITHER--AND WHEREVER THE GOSPEL HAS BEEN PREACHED, THIS HAS BEEN SPOKEN AS A MEMORIAL OF HIM, TOO!

We have the two extremes here. It is a good thing for us to consider how people will remember us.

But let us consider the passage by looking first at . . .

I. THE EVIL PLAN (Mark 14:10, 11).

Luke tells us that Satan entered into Judas, but Mark lets us see that Judas was responsible for what he did.

The unbelievable treachery of what he did is seen in the intimate relationship which he had with our Lord. It is mentioned several times that Judas was "one of the twelve."

You might expect trouble to arise from the Sanhedrin, but who would ever think that "one of the twelve" would actually go to the Sanhedrin with a plan so sure to succeed that we do not know what the Sanhedrin had planned according to vv. 1, 2 in this chapter!

King David in the OT had an experience with his trusted friend, Ahithophel, which was a type of what happened to our Lord. David wrote in Psa. 41:9,

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." He gets back to it in Psa. 55:12-14,

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hidden myself from him; But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and my familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

No death was ever more tragic than the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but its circumstances were even more abominable because they were initiated by "one of the twelve."

Notice how the Lord comes back to this while they were eating

the Passover--in v. 18,

"One of you who eateth with me shall betray me,"

and in v. 20,

"It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish."

But then we have . . .

II. THE SOLEMN PREPARATIONS (Mark 10:12-16).

At this point an OT passage begins suddenly to take on new meaning: Exodus 12, the story of the original Passover. The disciples did not know the special significance of this particular Passover, but our Lord did!

The Lord also had made some plans.

It was now Thursday. That evening, sometime after sundown, they would eat the Passover together. The question as to where they would eat it evidently came up while they were still in Bethany. The two disciples who went into Jerusalem to make the plans, Luke tells us (22:8), were Peter and John.

The sign was that they were to look for a man carrying "a pitcher of water." He was obviously a servant. They were to follow him, and he would take them to a home where the owner of the house was to be asked where "the guest room" was.

It all worked out just as the Lord had indicated to His disciples that it would. In that upper room (about which John has so much to say) our Lord was to spend some of the most sacred moments with His disciples that we have on record any place in the Gospel records!

III. THE SHOCKING NEWS (Mark 14:17-21).

One writer (Lenski, p. 614) says, "The statement must have exploded among the disciples like a bombshell."

For the 12th out of 14 times our Lord gives His disciples this now-familiar preface to what He said when He wanted them to pay particular attention to what He was saying,
"Verily I say unto you."

The disciples were shocked, and they were "grieved" (NASB)! Perhaps they felt safe there. But now they learn that the traitor is among them.

Two things are quite amazing at this point:

- 1) That none of the 11 knew who the Lord was talking about.
- 2) That each of them wondered about himself.

We could translate the question, "Surely not I?" It anticipates a "no," but it leaves the door open for the dreadful possibility of a "yes."

Matthew tells us that even Judas asked. But, while the other disciples called Him, "Lord" (kurios), Judas called Him, "Rabbi."

Do we know that there is such a potential for evil in our own hearts? Even though there were unfortunate things said by the disciples at this time, yet it certainly is wonderful to see their questions here.

The Lord answered in v. 20 with words which show the awful treachery of what Judas was going to do.

BUT THEN WE HAVE THE MOST SHOCKING STATEMENT OF ALL: v. 21!

We have a verse in which we see a strange alliance between:

- 1) A sovereign Lord Jesus Christ, and
- 2) A completely responsible Judas Iscariot.

As mentioned before, Luke tells us that Satan had entered into Judas (meaning that he was not a true believer in Christ), BUT MARK OMITTS THAT SO THAT WE CAN SEE THAT JUDAS WAS FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HE DID!

But note: THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

"The Son of man, indeed, goeth, as it is written of him."

Two things stand out:

- 1) This is another way in which our Lord made clear what He had said in John 10:17, 18,

" . . . I lay down my life . . . No man taketh is from me, but I lay it down of myself . . ."

To betray a person means to deliver that person over to the authority of others. JUDAS COULD HAVE NOT DONE THAT AT ALL IF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AS THE MESSIAH, AS "THE SON OF MAN," HAD NOT SAID, "The Son of man, indeed, goeth."

- 2) The trustworthiness of OT Scripture: "as it is written of him," and stands written.

This was not a plot by the Sanhedrin, nor a carefully laid plan that Judas had. THIS IS THE CARRYING OUT OF A PLAN WHICH HAD BEEN DIVINELY PREPARED FROM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD!

But, in spite of this, Judas is responsible!

And by this one statement, if we had nothing else to back it up in the Word of God, every man is robbed of any excuse he might think he has as to why he has done what he has done!

Listen to the words:

"But woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!
Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

It was not going to help Judas to die. That would only seal his doom--and his torment forever! The only thing that could have helped him would have been if he had never been born.
IT WAS TOO LATE NOW TO TURN BACK!

Concl: Let us turn back the clock possibly 30 to 40 years before this incident took place which we have read about this morning which took place in the upper room in Jerusalem.

In the little village of Kerieth in Judea a baby is born. His parents are looking at him with pride and with great joy. Perhaps he was the first one, perhaps he was not--every child is special to his parents.

There must have been great joy--possibly even a celebration. great hopes filled the parents hearts as to what their son might become.

On the eighth day, when he was circumcised, it became official that his name would be, JUDAS!

It had been a good name up until then. Leah had given her 4th son this name, JUDAH. It means praise. Gen. 29:35 tells us that Leah said,

"Now will I praise the Lord: therefore shall called his name Judah."

JUDAH BECAME THE HEAD OF THE VERY TRIBE FROM WHICH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST CAME. It seems that only the Lord and Judas had been born in Judea; all of the others were Galileans.

IF JUDAS' PARENTS HAD KNOWN WHAT WAS COMING, THEY WOULD HAVE PUT ON SACKCLOTH AND ASHES BECAUSE THIS WAS A BABY WHO SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN BORN!

How ominous!

But the Lord was not surprised. Much earlier He had spoken the words which we find in John 6:64-71. (Read.)

Why did the Lord choose Judas?

It is doubtful if anyone can answer that question fully, but we can certainly see one big reason: As a warning to all men, the Lord wanted it to be clear that no amount of knowledge, no con-

nection with any group, no national origin, NOT EVEN HAVING BEEN ONE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, can possibly be a way of salvation.

Yesterday as I was driving to a funeral service I heard a man on the radio, preaching, and saying that if you wanted to make sure of heaven you must obey Rom. 12:1, 2!

Men have many ideas. Some of them come out of Scripture--distorted in the hands of men. BUT THERE IS CLEARLY ONLY ONE WAY FOR MEN TO BE SAVED, AND THAT IS THROUGH PERSONAL FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Judas teaches us that:

- 1) Only Christ can save.
- 2) If a person does not know the Lord Jesus Christ, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR HIM, TOO, IF HE HAD NEVER BEEN BORN!

How about you?

FROM THE PASSOVER TO CHRIST
Mark 14:22-25

Intro: The overwhelming importance of the last week of our Lord's life just prior to His death is indicated by the space devoted to this week in all four of the Gospels.

Even before our Lord actually was crucified, many significant things were said or took place.

Among the important things that were done, none was more meaningful than what we now refer to as the institution of the Lord's Supper. It is very doubtful if the disciples actually knew at that time the importance of what the Lord was doing. It was an event which not only looked ahead to the Cross, but it looked back some 1,500 years to the Passover. BY WHAT WE HAVE IN OUR PASSAGE THIS MORNING THE LORD BROUGHT TOGETHER FOR ALL ETERNITY WHAT MOSES DID WITH THE PASSOVER LAMB, AND WHAT HE WAS DOING IN OFFERING HIMSELF AS A SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS. Mark tells us, "And as they did eat, Jesus (or better, He) took bread," the unleavened bread of the Passover, etc.

He said that the bread was His body. He said that the Passover wine was His blood.

Luke in 22:19 and Paul in 1 Cor. 11:24, 25 indicate that this feast was a memorial of the Lord. Most of us are familiar with Paul's words,

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

The same memorial aspect was true of the Passover. The Lord had told Moses:

"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever" (Ex. 12:14).

SO BOTH OF THESE ARE SYMBOLIC.

The symbolic nature of the Lord's Supper is brought out also by the fact that the Lord was still in His body, and His blood was still running in His veins.

If we need further evidence . . . the Lord uses this to describe what it means to believe on Him when He says in John 6:53,

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

Having said this, we need to see that, just as every detail of

the Passover was significant, so every detail that Mark gives us of the Lord's Supper is also significant.

Apart from the elements which the Lord used,
the bread and
the cup,

the emphasis in the passage falls upon two things:

- 1) What the Lord did (vv. 22, 23).
- 2) What the Lord said (vv. 24, 25).

So, let us look at these three aspects of the passage:

- 1) The elements that were used.
- 2) What the Lord did.
- 3) What the Lord said.

I. THE TWO ELEMENTS: the bread and the cup.

Why was it necessary to have two instead of just one?

The answer: Because there are two important truths that need to be emphasized when we think of the death of our Lord.

The unleavened bread pictures the sinless nature of our Lord. Thus, the emphasis in the bread is upon HIS PERSON, i.e., who He was--that He was more than a mere man; HE WAS IN TRUTH THE VERY SON OF GOD--TOTALLY AND FOREVER WITHOUT ANY SIN OF HIS OWN!

The cup pictures His death--HIS WORK for us on the Cross.

It is necessary to believe both of these in order to become a child of God. And they must be in this order! NO MAN WILL EVER APPRECIATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST UNLESS HE RECOGNIZES WHO JESUS CHRIST IS!

Every time we take the Lord's Supper we are to be reminded of this. Neither truth can ever be given too strong an emphasis.

II. WHAT THE LORD DID (Mark 14:22, 23).

The first thing we notice as we read these two verses is that there was a similarity between what our Lord did with the bread when comparing it with what He did with the cup:

- 1) He took both.
- 2) He gave thanks for both.
- 3) He gave both to His disciples.

The one thing additional that He did with the bread was to break it.

Let us look at these things.

- A. "He took bread . . . and He took the cup."

Will you notice how completely voluntary this was on the part of our Lord?

--No one forced Him to take either.

--No one even suggested that He do this.

The Lord did this completely on His own.

Now, let us relate this to the incarnation and to the crucifixion.

While many Scriptures speak of the fact that the Father sent His Son, yet the NT clearly teaches us that He came VOLUNTARILY. On one occasion He said,

"No man taketh it, i.e., my life, from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18a).

The coming and death of Christ were an expression of the Father's will, **BUT THEY WERE ALSO AN EXPRESSION OF THE WILL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!**

- B. He "blessed" the bread, and gave thanks for the cup.

Mark uses two words here. The one in verse 22 is the verb from which we get our word, eulogize. The one in verse 23 is the verb from which we get our word, eucharist.

There is the possibility that they are used synonymously in this passage. If there is a difference,

--the first means to consecrate;

--the second means to give thanks.

Thus, we have the Lord setting Himself apart to do the Father's will--AND GIVING THANKS FOR IT.

Wouldn't you love to know what what He said?

It is amazing that we would have thanksgiving at a time like this!

Heb. 12:2 gives us a hint of the meaning:

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

HIS THANKSGIVING WAS BECAUSE OF WHAT WAS GOING TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY HIS DEATH AND BY HIS RESURRECTION.

- C. Concerning the bread only, He "broke it."

The purpose here is to give us a further picture of the absolutely sovereignty of our Lord--even in His death.

When Matthew (27:50) describes the death of Christ, he uses a unique expression. (See note 4 on pp. 1043, 1044 in the NSRB.) He "yielded up the spirit," i.e., His spirit. He delivered it up to the Father.

Again--John 10, verses 17, 18,

"I lay down my life . . . I lay it down of myself.
I have power to lay it down . . ."

This is what the Lord was picturing when He broke the bread.

D. "He gave, or, gave it, to them," i.e., to His disciples.

What a portrayal of the fact that salvation is of the Lord!

It is true that we have to believe. It is true that, to use another expression meaning the same thing, we have to receive Christ in order to be saved. BUT IF WE HAVE ONLY SEEN THIS ASPECT OF SALVATION, WE HAVE NOT SEEN THE GREATEST ASPECT. It is not just a matter of our taking, but it is even more so a matter of His giving!

Cf. John 10:28, " . . . and I give unto them eternal life . . ."

Cf. both side in John 1:12.

But now let us look at . . .

III. WHAT THE LORD SAID (Mark 14:24, 25).

His words fall into two categories:

- 1) An explanation (v. 24).
- 2) A prediction (v. 25).

A. The Explanation (Mark 14:24).

A "testament" is an agreement,
a contract,
a will--when it takes a death to make
it effective.

The blood of Christ, i.e., His death as our sacrifice for sin, is our guarantee that God will save all who come to Him through His Son. Here is the basis of our assurance --not our feelings, but the explanation given by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

B. The Prediction (Mark 14:25).

This is a prophecy.

Not only does it anticipate OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION, but it also promises HIS RETURN!

The death of Christ did not destroy all hope; IT BECAME THE FOUNDATION OF THEIR HOPE.

Luke (22:18) expresses it this way:

"For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come."

Later on in the same chapter, Luke (22:30) records our Lord as saying,

"That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

This has to do with Israel.

But, even with respect to the Church, Paul teaches us that

". . . as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.

This is 1 Cor. 11:26.

Concl: What does all of this mean?

1) It means that the Lord never wants us to forget His death on the Cross--why He died, and what was accomplished by it.

2) It means that He never wants us to lose sight of the divine aspect of the Cross. It was NOT a human triumph. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19a).

3) It means that He never wants us to forget that He is coming again.

THE SIFTING OF A SAINT
Mark 14:26-31

Intro: There probably has never been a time in history when the need for the death of our Lord was more apparent than it was in the very circumstances and in the very people who were involved in all of the events leading up to His death.

We see the sinfulness, the deceptiveness, the weakness, the self-confidence of man. Some went through those events without having their hearts touched at all. Others were sorry, but unrepentant. And still others were to learn some of the greatest lessons of their lives--lessons which were terribly hard to take at the time, but which were to be apparent in the lives of at least some of them from that time on.

Our passage this morning begins with . . .

I. AN ENCOURAGING TIME OF SONG (Mark 14:26).

Jewish history seems to be quite unanimous that what they sang was Psalm 115 through Psalm 118. It was called The Great Hallel.

They are Psalms of praise. (Turn to them, and note some of the expressions.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF VERSE 26 IS TO BE SEEN IN WHAT FOLLOWS BECAUSE THE DISCIPLES WERE APPROACHING ONE OF THOSE TIMES WHEN IT SEEMED THAT THEIR EXPERIENCES WERE IN DIRECT CONTRADICTION OF THE WORD OF GOD!

Have you ever had a time like this? If so, then our passage this morning should be a great comfort to you. If not, then take it to heart because such a time will surely come some-time!

II. OUR LORD'S MESSAGE FOR ALL OF THE DISCIPLES (Mark 14:27, 28).

A. The solemn part (v. 27).

The Lord was announcing to them something that would happen to all of them that very night, and He had Scripture to back it up.

It is hard for us to realize:

- 1) How weak we can be when the right circumstances are present.
- 2) That we are no different from anyone else in this respect.
- 3) The forces that are arrayed against us when we seek to be faithful to the Lord.

On this latter point, note the words, "shall be offended." Lit. they mean, shall be made to stumble. It suggests that someone else is going to put a stumblingblock in their way so that they will fall.

Mark does not mention who that someone is, but Luke does:
 "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31, 32).

Luke tells us that Satan had entered into JUDAS; but PETER was a marked man, too. However, the Lord was going to use this, not only to strengthen Peter, but to enable Peter to strengthen his brethren.

ONE IMPORTANT THING TO NOTE BOTH IN LUKE AND MARK IS THAT WE HAVE CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT THE LORD WAS GOING TO REMAIN IN ABSOLUTE CONTROL EVEN THOUGH OUTWARDLY IT WOULD NOT LOOK LIKE IT.

How quickly all of this can come! Note: "All . . . this night."

The Lord is quoting in the latter part of Mark 14:27 from Zech. 13:7. Note the difference between the two passages. In Zechariah this is what we have:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."

Obviously, some man (or men) had to use to the "sword." In our Lord's quotation of this passage we look back of the human instrument and see that all of this is something that GOD is doing! "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."

Is there a sight that is more pathetic than shepherd-less sheep?

Now do not miss the point.

The disciples were about to enter into one of those experiences when it would seem that the Lord was not their shepherd, but they were completely on their own. Keep this in mind when we come to Peter's denial of the Lord. There was coming a time when those Psalms would seem like empty words. They would pray, but heaven would be silent. It would seem that the world of ungodly men were right, and that the disciples were wrong! "The sheep shall be scattered."

If you have ever been in a time like this, you know that things look so dark that it seems impossible that the light will ever shine again. Sooner or later, it seems to come to all.

If we had to stop here, it would be hopeless--and the child of God would have nothing but despair. HOWEVER, THERE IS . . .

B. A message of hope (Mark 14:28).

It is really twofold:

1. It involved what was going to happen to the Lord.

Sometimes it might seem to us as though God were dead, but remember: THE DISCIPLES WERE GOING TO SEE THE LORD JESUS TAKEN BY HIS ENEMIES, AND THEY WERE GOING TO KNOW THAT HE WAS DEAD. Nothing could possibly cause more despair than this!

But now the Lord says, before any of these things happened, "But after I am raised up."

Satan may seem to have the last word, but he never does. Things may seem to be absolutely hopeless, but they never are. THE MEASURE OF THE POWER THAT GOD WILL EXERCISE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF HIS PEOPLE IS THAT WHICH IT TOOK TO RAISE HIM FROM THE DEAD IN A GLORIFIED BODY. Cf. Eph. 1:19-23 where Paul is telling the Ephesians how he has been praying for them--that they may know

"What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only is this age, but also in that which is to come; And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

In Col. 2:15 Paul writes,

"And, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

If God could do this for the Lord, then He is surely sufficient for our needs.

But there is another part to this message of hope.

2. It involved what the Lord was going to do.

What was it? "I will go before you into Galilee."

This is what a shepherd does according to John 10:4.

THE LORD WAS GOING TO GET THE FLOCK BACK TOGETHER AGAIN! And it would be in "Galilee"--away from Jerusalem and all of the dangers that were there. What wonderful hope and encouragement we have here!

But this, in turn, leads to . . .

III. THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN PETER AND THE LORD (Mark 14:29-31).

A. Peter's objection (v. 29).

Our hearts are so proud that we resent being put into the same category with everyone else. Our feeling is just like Peter's: They might, but we never would!

Undoubtedly Peter loved the Lord, but he did not know:

- 1) The power of the enemy.
- 2) The incredible weakness of his own heart.
- 3) That he was just as capable of failing as anyone else.

How proud our hearts are, and many times this is the very thing that the Lord is dealing with.

B. The Lord's response (v. 30).

Peter would fail worse than anyone else! The NASB has it this way:

"Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows, shall three times deny me."

In Mark 13:35 we learned that the cock crowing marks the third hour of the night--from midnight to 3!

When a cock crows once, it is soon followed with another. THE IDEA HERE IS THE SPEED WITH WHICH THIS WHOLE DENIAL WILL TAKE PLACE. We fail God before we have time to think about it!

"Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

C. Peter's second objection (v. 31).

You would think that he would listen to the Lord. BUT

YOU WOULD ALSO THINK THAT WE WOULD LISTEN TO THE LORD AS HE SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WORD AND AS HE DEALS WITH OUR HEARTS. But so often we do not!

Instead, Peter states it in the strongest language possible. If he had to die, he would never deny that he knew the Lord Jesus, nor that he was one of His disciples.

Oh, it is so easy for us to talk! But when the test comes, that is a different thing.

Concl: What was the outcome?

We do not see that until we get to vv. 66-72. BUT LET ME SAY THIS: THE LORD WAS RIGHT, AND PETER WAS WRONG! Peter denied that he knew the Lord in an even stronger way than he had denied before that he would fail the Lord.

Then what happened. Mark says, "He (Peter) wept." Cf. 14:72b. Luke say in 22:62,

"And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Have you wept tears like that? What is the remedy? Let's let Peter tell us in words which he wrote ^{years} later. We have them in 1 Pet. 5:5b-11, and note how he puts himself with every other believer:

"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, Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

There is nothing safer or more wonderful for the child of God than to walk humbly with his God, and with men. That is where the blessings are, and that is where we experience the joy of the Lord.

OUR LORD IN GETHSEMANE
Mark 14:32-42

Intro: It is impossible for us to say which of our Lord's experiences as He approached the Cross was the most dreadful. But we can certainly say that our Lord's time in the Garden of Gethsemane was terrible to a degree that is beyond our comprehension.

Luke tells us two things which are not mentioned by either Mark or Matthew which help us to understand just how really terrible that time in the Garden was. It is found in Luke 22:43, 44,

"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

It is significant that Luke, the beloved physician, is the one who tells us this.

A medical doctor who has written on, The Passion of Christ From A Medical Point of View, states the following:

"Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock."

So the emotional stress and strain that our Lord was under at this time cannot be overemphasized. Mark says, as it is translated in the New Scofield Bible,

"And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and to be very depressed" (Mark 14:33).

In v. 34 Mark adds more of our Lord's words,

"And (He) saith unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death."

This was equal to saying, "My sorrow is killing me . . . it is crushing the life out of me" (Gould, p. 269).

Why was He sorrowing?

At least for two reasons:

- 1) At the awful contemplation of what was involved for Him in offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.
- 2) His amazement at the hatred that was in the hearts of men.

But let us look now at the details of the passage as we have it in the Gospel of Mark.

I. THE EVIDENCES OF OUR LORD'S HUMANITY.

We believe that the Scriptures teach the absolute Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had no sin in Him, nor was He ever guilty of sin--outwardly or inwardly!

But we must also believe from the Scriptures in the true humanity, the perfect humanity, of our Lord. It is in understanding the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ that the child of God finds the comfort that is expressed in Heb. 4:15,

"For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

What are the evidences here?

A. He felt the need to pray (Mark 14:32).

It was customary for the Lord to seek to be with His Father.

Dr. Lewis Johnson says that, whenever the Lord would come into a place, He would look for the nearest mountain where He could pray.

How wonderful to see this in our Lord! And, if the fires of testing have touched our lives, we know how He felt!

B. He wanted His disciples with Him--especially Peter, and James, and John (Mark 14:32, 33).

We know what it is to want those who are especially dear to us in times of special need. How wonderful to see that our Lord was like this, too.

C. What is perhaps the most amazing of all, He wanted His disciples to watch and to pray for Him (Mark 14:34).

To "watch" meant that they were to arouse themselves so as to stay away to be on guard against enemies--the seen as well as the unseen!

Here we see one of the purposes of prayer: to watch!
We cannot watch unless we pray!

We can certainly understand why the Lord would pray for them, BUT IT CERTAINLY IS SOMETHING THAT WE WOULD NOT EXPECT TO READ THAT THE LORD NEEDED THEM TO PRAY FOR HIM!

D. He was under great emotional stress (Mark 14:33, 34).

I have already spoken of this, but let us recognize it again.

This is often the worst kind of suffering.

While the Lord has promised to "keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," yet this does not necessarily come the first time we pray.

Finally, we note that . . .

E. He prayed (Mark 14:35).

Note:

- 1) His posture, as well as
- 2) His petition, His supplication.

Many times we recognize our need to pray, but then we do not pray. Never ignore those promptings which the Lord Himself places in our hearts.

THIS POINTS TO ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR THE TRIALS THAT WE HAVE: The Father wants us to recognize that we need HIM, and that HE is really the only ONE who can meet our needs.

How often we see this in the Psalms!

But let us go on to look at another aspect of the time that our Lord spent in Gethsemane. I speak now of . . .

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR LORD AND THE FATHER IN HEAVEN (Mark 14:36).

This is especially holy ground. We seem to be hearing things which we have no right to hear. There are times when we do not want anyone to hear what we are saying as we pour out our hearts to God. This was such a time. And yet we have the record of what He said.

Note four things:

A. What He called God: "Abba, Father."

He reverted to the language of a little child--words, or a word, which a child can speak before it has any teeth.

Have you ever noticed how testing somehow strips us of our sophisticated ways in prayer, and we become like little children again?

We only have this, "Abba, Father," two other times in the NT:

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15).

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).

When the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray, He responded by teaching them,

"When ye pray, say, Our Father" (Luke 11:2).

This is Father's Day. What a time for all of us to be reminded that the term which God loves to hear from us, more than any other, is, Father--"our Father," my Father.

The only people in the world who can call a man, father, are his children. AND THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN CALL GOD, FATHER, ARE HIS CHILDREN.

Are you one of them? Cf. John 1:12; Gal. 3:26,

"For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

In such a time, how precious becomes such a verse as Psa. 103:13,

"As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

- B. He recognized what His Father could do: "All things are possible unto thee."

We all are inclined to feel this way about our fathers.

The Lord Jesus felt this way, and said so, in His prayer to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The writer of the book of Hebrews has put it this way:

"Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7).

We need to recognize that our Father can do anything, even

"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

C. The request: "Take away this cup from me."

Concerning the "cup," one writer has given us the following information:

"By a figure common to Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, and not unknown to Latin writers, one's lot or experience, whether joyous or adverse, divine appointments, whether favorable or unfavorable, are likened to a cup which God presents one to drink" (Thayer, p. 533).

Examples:

- 1) Of blessing: "My cup runneth over" (Psa. 23:5).
- 2) Of judgment: "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling and wrung them out" (Isa. 51:17).

The Lord Jesus poured out His heart to the Father, and in simple words presented His request.

D. His expressed submission to the Father's will: "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

The Lord had taught His disciples to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

How foolish it would be to say that to just anyone, but can we not say that to our Father?

Again let me remind you of what our Lord said about going to the Father in prayer:

"If a son shall ask bread of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11, 12).

Ill: My grandfather who found a plug of chewing tobacco in his stocking when he was a child one Christmas morning.

A true father is not like that, AND NEITHER IS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. He can be trusted!

But then we come to the third thing:

III. OUR LORD'S CONCERN FOR THE DISCIPLES (Mark 14:37-41a).

The Lord came back the three times because He was concerned

about the disciples. called Peter, Simon.

PROBABLY NOTHING ABOUT US AMAZES OUR LORD ANY MORE THAN OUR FAILURE TO PRAY--WHICH MEANS A GLARING IGNORANCE OF OUR NEED AND OF THE AWFUL POWER OF OUR ENEMY, WITHIN AND WITHOUT!

A. The threat: "temptation"--to sin!

B. The situation:

GOD'S
PORTRAIT
OF A
CHRISTIAN
←

1. A ready, eager, willing spirit. Paul uses this word, "ready," in Rom. 1:15. This is the new man. And this is why Peter spoke as he did in vv. 29, 31.

2. Weak, powerless, failing flesh. This points to all that we are in ourselves, apart from Christ.

How easy it was for Peter to say what he did in vv. 29, 31, not knowing how utterly weak his flesh was. But look at vv. 66-72 to see what he did!

The only answer is to come to the Father in prayer--continually, and with much prayer.

How wonderful it is to see our Lord, in the hour of His greatest need, ministering to His disciples. Is this not what is involved in Job 42:10? "And the Lord turned the captivity..."

IV. THE OUTCOME (Mark 14:41b, 42).

Note the expressions:

- 1) "Betrayed into the hands of sinners." "Betrayed" = delivered up.
- 2) "He that betrayeth me," meaning, Judas.

But it is Luke who tells us that, just as the Lord was dying on the Cross, He said,

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Concl: Sometimes the Lord answers, Yes. Sometimes, No. At other times, Wait.

Here the Lord received a No. But the marvelous thing is this: That out of this No would come victory over sin,

victory over death,

victory over the grave,

and the hope of an eternal salvation for all who would put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Here, too, we see the scene set for the display, the greatest display, ever of the power of God, the same power that is manifested for us time and time again when we face situations where apart from God there is no hope.

If the Lord Jesus could implicitly trust the Father in such circumstances, surely we can trust Him in ours!

THE BETRAYAL
Mark 14:43-52

Intro: We are considering this morning Mark's account of the betrayal of our Lord Jesus Christ. His account is very brief and to the point.

He does not tell us, as Matthew does:

- 1) That, when Judas kissed our Lord, our Lord said to him, "Friend, why art thou come?"
- 2) That, when ~~Peter~~ ^{one of the disciples} cut off the ear of the man who was the servant of the high priest, our Lord said to ~~Peter~~ ^{him}, "Put up again thy sword into place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how, then, shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

He does not tell us, as Luke does:

- 1) That the Lord said to Judas, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"
- 2) That the disciples asked the Lord when the multitude met them, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?"
- 3) That the Lord touched the ear of the high priest's servant and healed him.
- 4) That the Lord rebuked the multitude by saying, "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

He does not tell us, as John does:

- 1) That the multitude came with lanterns and torches as well as with swords and clubs.
- 2) That "Jesus . . . knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?" And that He then said to them, "I am." And that as soon as He said, "I am, they went backward, and fell to the ground." And that this whole thing was repeated a second time when He asked them and they said that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth.
- 3) That Jesus then said to them, "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way; that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Of them whom thou gavest me have I lost none."
- 4) That Peter was the one who cut off the ear of the high priest's servant.
- 5) That the servant's name was Malchus.
- 6) That, in addition to what Matthew records about our Lord's words to Peter, He said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

It is a great temptation to take all of these remarks and add

them to what Mark has recorded, but we are studying the Gospel of Mark, not teaching the life of Christ. So we will confine ourselves this morning to Mark's Gospel--after recognizing that there were other things that were said and done in addition to what we have in Mark's Gospel.

Why does Mark give us only what is recorded here?

Mark clearly is focusing attention on four men:

- 1) Judas.
- 2) Peter.
- 3) Our Lord.
- 4) "A certain young man."

We might say that everything that Mark records is found in the other Gospels with the exception of the last incident--the part about the young man with the linen cloth wrapped around his body. This is found only in Mark.

But let us look at the four in the order in which they are mentioned.

I. JUDAS (Mark 14:43-45).

Dwell for a moment on the expression, "Judas, one of the twelve." Cf. vv. 10, 17-20.

Judas was an apostle. He has lived and worked with the Lord like all of the other 11. He had undoubtedly performed miracles. He had preached. He knew the Gospel. All of the privileges the other disciples had, he had.

But the ominous, tragic nature of what we are reading about now is emphasized by the description that he was "one of the twelve."

He was an apostle--but he was an unregenerate apostle, an unsaved apostle, an apostle who did not know the Lord as his Savior, one who had never known the Lord in salvation.

Cf. Jn. 13:
10, 11

Our authority for saying this is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. In His high priestly prayer in John 17, our Lord said in v. 12,

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled."

What a solemn thing this is!

Was the Lord thinking of Judas and possibly other like Judas when He said to the seventy who had come back from their

mission rejoicing that the demons were subject to them through his name? And the Lord responded with these words: "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

And was the Lord thinking of Judas also when He said, "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23).

Notice how much in a hurry Judas was.

Notice how thorough the preparation had been. They were taking no chances.

Notice how low he stooped to betray the Lord Jesus with a kiss. In Prov. 27:6 we read,

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

The Lord Jesus had said about Judas in Mark 14:21 that it would have been good for him "if he had never been born."

BUT IT IS HERE FOR MORE THAN JUST THE HISTORICAL RECORD. IT IS HERE TO SERVE AS A SOLEMN WARNING FOR EVERYONE WHO THINKS HE IS A CHRISTIAN TO MAKE SURE!

If Judas were not a child of God by being an Apostle, then you and I will never be a child of God just because we belong to this or that church, or even if we belonged to every Church.

How can we know? Cf. John 3:16; 1:12. There is no need to guess. YOU CAN KNOW. YOU MUST KNOW!

II. PETER (Mark 14:46, 47).

Peter had spoken loudly and strongly, but actions speak louder than words!

You see a lot of courage here, a lot of determination, BUT A LOT OF IGNORANCE TOO!

Let me remind you of two incidents as we look at this 47th verse this morning--all the more forcible because it stands along without any comment or addition. They are:

- 1) Peter's reaction when the Lord began to teach them about His death. Cf. Mark 8:32. "Peter took HIM, and began to rebuke HIM."

What do we learn? We learn that you will be wrong in what you DO if you are wrong in what you believe.

Peter made a fool of himself and revealed his igno-

rance by almost killing a man! He did not understand the ways of God; he only knew the ways of men!

How about you? How about me?

- 2) Peter's response when in this very garden of Gethsemane the Lord had asked him and James and John to "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (v. 38).

Peter was full of self-confidence when he needed to be a man of prayer, full of confidence in the Lord!

A child of God who is weak in prayer is a child of God who is too confident in himself--a confidence which will, sooner or later, lead to disaster.

Why is this here?

Because we need:

- 1) To know and believe the Word--all of it!
- 2) To be spending more and more time in prayer.

III. OUR LORD (Mark 14:48-50).

It does not seem right to place the Lord with the others we are thinking about this morning, but it is refreshing to think about Him, isn't it?

Mark wants us to think about what the Lord said, just as he has asked us to think about what Peter did.

The Lord sought to bring to them two things:

- 1) The ridiculous nature of what they were doing. It would be interesting to know if the hearts of any of these men were touched by the words of the Lord Jesus. Obviously He is trying to reach them.
- 2) The absolute certainty and authority of the Scriptures. Behind all of this tragic confusion in the garden of Gethsemane was the sovereignty of a God who is always in control. His Word will stand!

How different was Peter's understanding when, on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, he stood before the multitudes in Jerusalem and said,

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22, 23).

The Lord knew this. But He wanted all who were there that night to recognize this, too.

Is this what you believe about the Lord concerning your own

circumstances? Do you believe that He still works all things together for good? Do you believe that He is working things out according to the counsel of His own will--and that that will is "good, and acceptable, and perfect"?

If God could do this for the Lord Jesus, then certainly He can do it for you and me.

IV. "A CERTAIN YOUNG MAN."

Thayer in his Greek lexicon says that this could be a man anywhere between 24 and 40. Others take it as meaning a man in his early 20's.

Who could Mark be talking about, especially when he is the only Gospel writer who includes this incident?

Many think it was Mark himself.

Alfred Edersheim, in his Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, says that the Upper Room was in the home of John Mark. He thinks that the mob stopped by there before they came to the Garden of Gethsemane. And then he pictures Mark as following the crowd hurriedly with just his night cover over him to see what was going to happen.

Of course, we cannot prove this. But it does seem very possible that the writer of this Gospel might refer to himself without telling who he was.

BUT WHY SHOULD IT FIND A PLACE LIKE THIS IN HOLY SCRIPTURE?

One answer would certainly be this: So that WE would know that we would have failed the Lord just as miserably as the others did if we had been there that night.

Look at Judas. Look at Peter. Look at this "certain young man." We are looking at an unbeliever, and two believers. What do we see? Corruption, foolishness, fear. The man without Christ is obviously in need, but, oh, how much needs to be done in the hearts of those who know the Lord!

Concl: No one can turn away from this passage of Scripture without seeing his need. But, thank God, we also have the One here who can meet our needs: the Lord Jesus Christ!

If you do not know Him, even though you might have even called yourself a Christian, you can trust Him as your Savior this morning.

If you do know Him, then let this passage teach you how much you need Him--moment by moment, trusting Him with all your heart and in all your ~~pe~~ ways.

AS A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER
Mark 14:53-65

Intro: Some 700 years before our Lord Jesus Christ was subjected to the mockery which is to be seen in the passage we will consider this morning, Isaiah, the prophet, had predicted of the Messiah,

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

The Lord did speak at times during the so-called trials, but there was none of the pleading which the judges were used to when criminals were brought before them facing a possible death penalty.

We read in v. 61a,

"But he held his peace, and answered nothing."

BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER SENSE IN WHICH HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH. IT WAS IN CONNECTION WITH:

I. THE MANY VIOLATIONS OF JEWISH LAW.

Even in the Scriptures not all of these are pointed out as violations, but those who have studied the Jewish Law of the time have given us the following points which have to do with the passage we are considering.

- A. There were specified times when the Sanhedrin met for trials; this was not one of them.
- B. It was illegal to conduct a trial at night.
- C. Before a prisoner could be arrested, an indictment had to be prepared charging the person to be arrested with a specific crime. No such indictment was prepared in connection with our Lord.
- D. When the trial began, the indictment was to be read.
- E. The purpose of the trial was to determine the innocence or guilt of the prisoner; our Lord was assumed to be guilty before the trial began.
- F. Following the preparation of the indictment and its reading in the court, witnesses were to come in support of the indictment.

In this case we have many false witnesses--no two of whom could agree in their charges against our Lord.

Thus, we have many cases of perjury.

And, a very significant oversight by the Sanhedrin is seen when we turn to Deut. 19:18, 19,

"And the judges shall make diligent inquiry; and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother, Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother. So shall thou put the evil away from among you."

Obviously, this was not done!

- G. A person charged with a crime could not be forced to witness against himself. And yet even Caiaphas put the Lord under oath to condemn Himself.
- H. When he was charged with blasphemy, not one thing was done to prove that it was blasphemy. Our Lord was immediately condemned as being guilty.
- I. In capital cases, the verdict could only be passed at a second session of the court.
- J. The second session could never be held on that same day.
- K. "Then the verdict had to be taken in a fixed, formal way: two scribes recorded the votes which had to be written out, the one scribe tabulating the votes for acquittal, the other those reading guilty" (Lenski, p. 669).

Here are at least 11 ways in which Jewish Law was violated and, according to which, the Lord Jesus should have been set free.

What a marvelous testimony this is to the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Cf. John 8:46,

"Which of you convicteth me of sin?"

Also in John 15:25 our Lord is reported to have said,

"But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." This is a quotation from Psa. 35:19.

When Paul was preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, he referred to this trial we are looking at this morning and said,

"And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain" (Acts 13:28).

And add Peter's own testimony in 1 Pet. 2:22-24,

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he

suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously; Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."

The second thing of interest in our passage this morning is:

- II. THE EMPHASIS UPON THE MAJOR TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE. We have this during the course of the trial.

The first came up through the testimony of the two false witnesses (Matt. 26:60) who even did not agree in their accounts of what the Lord had said in the beginning of his ministry. I refer to vv. 57, 58.

What did He actually say? Cf. John 2:13-22. (Read.)

We can see the grace of God extended to these men in the fact that this was even remembered because this brought before them the truths of . . .

- A. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But notice: Their judgment of the Lord Jesus was based upon a misinterpretation, even a false quotation, of what the Lord had actually said. (Note the discrepancies.)

How often this is true even today! Please read the Word of God accurately. Examine carefully the words of the Lord Jesus Christ before you decide that He was an impostor and that His words were not true.

Next, notice the issue which Caiaphas himself raised. Considering his question and our Lord's answer, there are six more great truths which the Sanhedrin faced on that dreadful night.

- B. The office which Christ filled: "Art thou the Christ?" Was He the One who had come in fulfillment of OT prophecy, and the One for whom the devout in Israel were looking? "I am"! To have failed to answer here would have been an admission that He was not the Messiah.
- C. The deity of our Lord: "Art thou . . . the Son of the Blessed?" I.e., are you the Son of the One who is worthy of our worship and our praise, the Son of God?

That this meant Deity, cf. John 8:17, 18:

"But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore, the Jews sought the more to

kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

But we have the Lord's answer, "I am."

D. The authority of Scripture.

In v. 62 our Lord is really citing two passages of Scripture. In the first part of the verse, "and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power," we have a reference to Psa. 110:1,

"The Lord said; unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

In the second part, "and coming in the clouds of heaven," our Lord is referring to Dan. 7:13, 14,

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Was the Lord not seeking to set His claims before the Sanhedrin in the light of Holy Scripture?

But, observe! In these two quotations we have ^{three} ~~two~~ major truths concerning our Lord:

E. His humanity: "the Son of man."

So we have the complete nature of our Lord presented to the Sanhedrin: His deity and His humanity. He was a real man, a representative man--with all of the wonderful truth that is bound up in this glorious fact.

F. His acceptance by the Father--seated at God's right hand, our guarantee that His work was accepted by the Father. He might be "rejected of men," but He was well-pleasing to the Father!

G. His second coming to reign upon the earth.

How interesting is the expression, "And ye shall see . . ." Just when they would see is not made clear, but our Lord is indicating that some day they will realize that these things are really true. But it will be too late then!

How important for us to weigh these great statements of our Lord. Let us not be like the Sanhedrin who judged Him before

they had really examined the facts!

Without hesitation, and in violation of their own Law, Caiaphas took the lead in getting the Sanhedrin to condemn the Lord as being worthy of death.

Then it is that we have an opportunity to see . . .

III. THE BESTIALITY OF THE HUMAN HEART (Mark 14:65).

Here we have a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Isa. 51:10,

"I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

Lenski says, "The condition of Jesus after this ordeal is easier to imagine than to describe" (p. 671).

These supposedly honored, dignified, religious men begin to show how beastly and wicked they are in heart. The things they did indicated three things:

- 1) They meant to insult Him as a Person.
- 2) They were showing scorn for His knowledge by asking Him to "prophecy" as to who was hitting Him.
- 3) They challenged His power. The RV says that they "received Him with blows."

How amazing it is to see the silence of "the Lamb of God" at this point!

Concl: Let me close this morning with a quotation from Alexander Maclaren. He preached on this passage at one time, and closed with these words:

"It was not an ignorant mob who thus answered His claims, but the leaders and teachers--the crème de la crème of the nation. A wild beast lurks below the Pharisee's long robes and phylacteries; and the more that men have changed a living belief in religion for a formal profession, the more fiercely antagonistic are they to every attempt to realise its precepts and hopes. The 'religious' men who mock Jesus in the name of traditional religion are by no means an extinct species (italics mine). It is of little use to shudder at the blind cruelty of dead scribes and priests. Let us rather remember that the seeds of their sins are in us all, and take care to check their growth. What a volcano of hellish passion bursts out here! Spitting expresses disgust; blinding and asking for the names of the smiters is a clumsy attempt at wit and ridicule; buffeting is the last unrestrained form of hate and malice. The world has always paid its teachers and benefactors in such coin; but all other examples pale before this saddest, transcendent instance. Love is repaid by hate; a whole nation is blind to supreme and unspotted goodness; teachers steeped in 'law and

prophets' cannot see Him of and for whom law and prophets witnessed and were, when He stands before them. The sin of sins is the failure to recognise Jesus for what He is. His person and claims are the touchstone which tries every beholder of what sort He is.

"How wonderful the silent patience of Jesus! He withholds not His face 'from shame and spitting.' He gave 'his back to the smiters.' Meek endurance and passive submission are not all which we have to behold there. This is more than an uncomplaining martyr. This is the sacrifice for the world's sin; and His bearing of all that men can inflict is more than heroism. It is redeeming love. His sad, loving eyes, wide open below their bandage, saw and pitied each rude smiter, even as He sees us all. They were and are eyes of infinite tenderness, ready to beam forgiveness; but they were and are the eyes of the Judge, who sees and repays His foes, as those who smite Him will one day find out" (Maclaren, Vol. 6, pp. 217, 218).

Those of us who know the Lord can marvel at all that took place that night before the Sanhedrin, how the Lord seemed to holding out His hand to receive the very men who hated Him "without a cause." How thankful we can be for His grace extended to us!

But, if you do not know Him as your Savior, will you be warned by what we have seen this morning, and realize that by your neglect of the Son of God you are taking sides with these men who knew much about religion, but nothing about salvation?

May God in His grace cause you, too, to see that the only person who can turn his back on the Lord is the one who refuses to consider the amazing evidence which proves that the Lord Jesus Christ is all that He claimed to be--the One and only One who can meet our needs before God. Will you not turn to Him now?

A SUDDEN ATTACK
Mark 14:66-72

Intro: Apart from Judas' betrayal of our Lord, nothing is more regrettable than Peter's denials of our Lord. Both were Apostles; one was an unbeliever, but Peter was a believer. The whole account is hard to accept as having actually taken place, but it did! It is here, not to humiliate Peter even more than he was, but for us to learn from and to profit from his experience.

I wonder if we will!

It is so easy to read a passage, or study it in detail, but not to profit from it. We are sorry for Peter and sorry that it happened to him, but we do not realize how easily similar things can happen to us if we do not learn from his experience. That is why it is here.

Let us note, first of all,

I. THE DETAILS OF THE ACCOUNT.

Verse 54 seems to indicate that this happened to Peter while the Lord was before the Sanhedrin. In other words, vv. 53-65 and vv. 66-72 record events while were going on simultaneously.

We see a very determined Apostle. (Review vv. 26-31 and 47.)

But we also see that he was taken completely by surprise
BECAUSE THE TROUBLE AROSE IN A WAY WHICH HE LEAST EXPECTED
IT.

And note what he does: He not only denied that he had any connections with, or knew, the Lord Jesus, BUT HE DID IT
THREE TIMES!

Why did the Lord speak of the cock crowing twice? Obviously, the first was intended to be a signal, a warning, that this was the test. BUT PETER PAID NO ATTENTION TO IT AND WENT ON TO DO JUST AS THE LORD HAD INDICATED THAT HE WOULD.

To show the limit to which Peter would go we have v. 71. He made himself "liable to the severest divine penalties" (Thayer, p. 38) and swore with an oath that what he was saying was true.

But then the cock crowed the second time--AND HE REMEMBERED
WHAT THE LORD HAD SAID TO HIM!

"And he began to weep" (NASB)--audibly, like a little child,

is what the verb means.

Peter cried like this again with the other Apostles in Mark 16:10.

But who could possibly describe the awful grief that was in the heart of the Apostle when he realized what he had done? Luke says that he "wept bitterly." This means with piercing pain!

Now we must move on to ask, secondly,

II. WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

For the answer we are going to have to look back. But the answer is threefold:

- 1) Satan wanted it.
- 2) God allowed it.
- 3) Peter needed it.

Here we must go to Luke's account of what the Lord had said to Peter while they were all in the Upper Room. Please turn to Luke 22:31, 32.

- A. Satan wanted it: Our Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

For anyone who is acquainted with the OT, this reminds us of what happened to Job.

Paul teaches us in Eph. 6 that our warfare is not against people, but against Satan and satanic forces, the demons.

Peter knew more about this in later years when he wrote in 1 Pet. 5:8, 9,

"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

The Lord had already indicated that He had a special ministry for Peter, and so Satan was out to ruin the work of God by ruining this child of God.

The people of God are marked people, and we can never tell when we might be the special objects of a Satanic attack. There are some things that you find in the OT that you do not find in the NT, BUT THIS EMPHASIS UPON SATANIC ASSAULTS IS FOUND IN BOTH OF THEM. THEREFORE, WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THE DANGER, AND BE ON OUR GUARD.

B. God allowed it.

Satan could not have touched Peter if God had not allowed it. He asked God for permission. From Job we learn that God sets limitations upon what Satan can do to us.

For our encouragement the Lord said in John 16:11,
"The prince of this world is judged."

And the Apostle John wrote,
"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4b).

All of this should be encouraging to us. The Lord never leaves us at the mercy of Satan. There are always limits to what Satan can do, BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT SOMETIMES GOD ALLOWS SATAN TO TEST US--AND HIS TESTINGS CAN BE VERY, VERY SEVERE.

But how thankful we should be that God is always sovereign!

But the account in Scripture also shows that

C. Peter needed it.

If God is going to be able to use us and bless us, He must fashion us into usable instruments.

What can we learn about Peter from the Gospels?

1. He needed this testing because he was too proud and self-confident.

He had told the Lord in Mark 14:29,
"Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."
He was sure that his performance record would be better than any of the others.

He also said,
"If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any way" (Mark 14:31).

Peter looked in the future and could not anticipate any circumstance where he would possibly fail the Lord.

How different is God's view of us:
"For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psa. 103:14)!
And this applies to all of us!

What did the Apostle Paul have to go through to be able to write,

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18).

David learned the same truth:

"Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5).

Peter had not yet learned the depth of his need, his utter helplessness, his need to be dependent upon God for everything.

2. He needed this because he did not understand the ways of the Lord.

Cf. Mark 14:46, 47. John (18:10) tells us that this was Peter.

God does not do things the way we do. AND SO WE HAVE TO LEARN HIS WAYS BECAUSE HIS WORK IS GOING TO BE DONE IN HIS WAY. David prayed in Psa. 25:4,

"Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths."

Have you ever prayed this prayer, or do you think that you already know the ways of the Lord?

Listen to Isaiah's words:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways that your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Paul marvelled at the ways of the Lord with these words:

"How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33b).

Every child of God who has ever been used by the Lord has had to learn God's ways. This is one reason Peter needed this experience.

Again, years later, Peter wrote these words which apply here:

"If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen." This is in 1 Pet. 4:11b).

3. He needed it because prayer did not have its proper place in his life.

Do you remember back to Gethsemane, and that the Lord had said,

"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).

How wonderful it is to read what Peter wrote years later in 1 Pet. 4:7,

"But the end of all things is at hand; be ye, therefore, soberminded, and watch unto prayer."

You and I know that we need to pray, and that we should pray. BUT WHAT IS IT GOING TO TAKE TO MAKE US PRAY?

You can always know that one reason for our trials is to make us pray more than we are praying now. Prayer means being with the Lord, fellowship with Him, and, as Peter wrote years later, from the Psalms,

"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers" (1 Pet. 3:12a),

and,

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Peter's prayer life was changed because of his failure.

But let me close with one other precious truth.

III. WHY DID IT TURN OUT THE WAY IT DID?

Did you ever ask why Peter did not take his own life because of his great humiliation over this? Can you imagine the thoughts that must have gone through his mind?

Instead of ruining him, this was probably one of the greatest factors in making him what he eventually was. Why?

One reason: Our Lord said, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

James wrote,

"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 6:16b).

If this is true of the prayers of a man, what must be true of the prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Cf. Heb. 7:25. Also, Rom. 8:34.

Do you remember another wonderful thing that Peter wrote? He said that he and we are,

"Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5).

When Satan attacks, and we are sometimes where PETER was, weeping bitterly over our own failures, IF WE COULD ONLY LISTEN TO WHAT IS GOING ON IN HEAVEN WE WOULD HEAR THE SON TALKING TO THE FATHER ABOUT US!

Concl: We have this story of Peter in the Bible because we are all like him. We think we can do so much when we cannot do anything without the Lord. We think that we know so much when our actions show how blinded we are to ourselves and our own great need. We are ready to talk to men, but so slow to talk to God.

What blessings would be ours if we would only let the Spirit of God teach us these extremely important lessons which we have seen this morning so our lives would be different and pleasing to the Lord.

THREE MEN AND A NATION
Mark 15:1-15

Intro: It is a healthy thing spiritually for us to think often of the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why we observe the Lord's Supper--to remember Him in His death.

Three times in the first 11 verses of Romans 5 the Apostle Paul refers to the death of our Lord. These are the references:

- 1) "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (v. 6).
- 2) "But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v. 8).
- 3) "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (v. 10).

The death of Christ brings out nothing but the worst in man, whether we are thinking of:

- 1) The reason for His death, or
- 2) The historical event itself.

In Romans 5 Paul is concerned with the reason for the death of Christ; in Mark 14 and 15 John Mark is concerned with the awfulness of the historical event. When we see how terrible the death of our Lord was, in all of its aspects, then we marvel more and more when we come to discover why it was that He died.

This morning we are looking at the events which led up to our Lord's death, but which formed a vital part of it.

In our text we are concerned with three men and a nation.

The nation, of course, is Israel.

The men are: our Lord, Pilate, and Barabbas.

These four we want to consider this morning.

We can be sure that there is a message for us in every person we meet in the Word of God. They are not here by accident. Therefore, it is extremely important that we learn why they were given a place by the Spirit of God in the Word of God.

Let us look first at . . .

I. PILATE.

He was the Roman governor. He had the power of Rome behind him. The Jews of the Sanhedrin had to take our Lord to Pilate because, while they could condemn, only Rome could

execute a prisoner.

Pilate is a pathetic character. Mark gives us only a part of the account. When we combined what we have in all four Gospels we see that he recognized more about the Lord Jesus Christ than he was willing to admit.

Mark mentions ~~five~~ things which I would like to emphasize this morning.

- A. He was one of those rare persons to whom the Lord openly confessed His Messianic Office. Cf. v. 2.

The woman at the well in Samaria was another:

"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25, 26).

The Lord made no attempt to hide this from Pilate. We cannot help but see that the Lord was seeking to reach him. He became without excuse.

- B. "Pilate marveled" (v. 5b).

This expression not only means that he was amazed and that he wondered, but that he admired the Lord.

Pilate recognized that there was something different about our Lord from any prisoner who had ever stood before him. There was none of the pleading and begging to which Pilate was accustomed. Instead, a dignified silence which witnessed of His innocence.

- C. What he knew: "For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy" (v. 10).

He knew the jealousy of the chief priests.

There are two words the Greeks could have used here. One speaks of a desire to be like another person. This is not the word that Mark uses. The other is a word which mean a desire to take away what a person has with- necessarily wanting it for one's self. This is the word we have here.

All of this was clear to Pilate. He knew that the chief priests had no case against the Lord. All of this adds to his own condemnation.

- D. Pilate knew that the Lord Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. Cf. v. 14--the question.

But, when you take all of this, and then add the last, you see the trait of Pilate's character which doomed him.

- E. "Pilate, willing to content the people" - lit. means to take away from every person every ground of complaint (according to Thayer, p. 300).

Pilate had tried to do everything in his power to secure the release of the Lord Jesus, but, having failed, he gave the people what they wanted, ignoring the consequences for himself.

How many are there here this morning who have been exposed to a lot of truth concerning the Lord Jesus, just like Pilate was, but your desire to please people instead of God has kept you right up to this very moment from receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?

The story of Pilate is given here to serve as a warning to you.

II. THE NATION, ISRAEL.

If we see weakness in Pilate, we see fickleness when we look at the nation--speaking especially of the people.

It is generally agreed that many of the people who were present when our Lord made His entry into Jerusalem were present here at His trial.

But what had happened to them?

They had allowed themselves to be changed completely by their religious leaders.

Two things stand out here:

- 1) Their worship of the Lord had to be, for the most part, just an outward form. There was no inner reality to it.
- 2) They took the word of their leaders as being more important than the words and works of Jesus Christ.

The leaders envied the Lord--not because of what He was, but because of the authority He had over the people. They did not want to be like Him, nor did they want Him!

The Sanhedrin and the nation itself are remembered down to this present hour as having said,

- 1) "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Mt. 27:25).
- 2) "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Lk. 19:14).

As a result, Edersheim has written the following words:

"Some thirty years later, and on that very spot, was judgment pronounced against some of the best in Jerusalem; and among the 3,600 victims of the Governor's fury, of whom not a few were scourged and crucified right over against the Praetorium, were many of the noblest of the citizens of Jerusalem."

And then Edersheim adds,
And still have these wanderers seemed to bear, from century to century, and from land to land, that burden of blood; and still does it seem to weigh 'on us and our children'" (II, 578).

But even worse than this, those who rejected the Lord Jesus Christ are the victims of a death that is eternal, the death our Lord died to save them from.

Are there those here today who at one time professed to follow the Lord? But perhaps, like many in this crowd, you have been disillusioned by one thing or another, and the emptiness of your faith became apparent. Do you still continue on without Him?

III. BARABBAS.

We can only put a few pieces together about Barabbas.

He may have been selfishly ambitious, or he may have been a true patriot.

However it may have been, he was not only an insurrectionist but he was a robber and a murderer. At best he was out to accomplish the freedom of his people in the wrong way. And he failed.

His name means, son of the father. Some feel that he was a rabbi's son. We do not know.

But what a waste--just like many today who are off on all kinds of sidetracks, trying to do something which they will never be able to do because man's greatest needs are NOT met in this way.

Are you devoting your life to a lost cause?

But more than this . . . IF THERE IS ONE MAN WHO SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN THE TRUTH OF ISAIAH 53:5, 6, IT HAD TO BE BARABBAS! "But he was wounded . . ."

Do we have any among us this morning who are like Barabbas? There must be many in past history, and there must be some today!

Finally, let us look at . . .

IV. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A look back will confirm . . .

A. The truth of His words:

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles": (Mark 10:33).

This has just been done, and it confirms along with all of the other evidence everything that our Lord Jesus Christ said. He was a true PROPHET.

B. He was the true KING. Cf. Mark 15:2.

Note what He had told the high priest in Mark 14:61, 62.

When anyone wants to know this, the Lord will see to it that he has the answer. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the King of Israel, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

C. He was the true PRIEST. Cf. Mark 15:15.

What is the purpose of the priest but to provide sacrifices for the sins of the people? Our Lord was not only the priest, but He was also the sacrifice.

Blood was shed in Gethsemane.

Blood was shed when He was scourged--with leather thongs with bones, lead, and spikes tied to them. All of this was in preparation for the Cross where He died, shedding His blood for the sins of the whole world!

Concl: Is there anything that shows the depravity of the human heart any more than man's behavior during the events that led up to and culminated in the death of our Lord?

No man should ever rejoice to see another man treated this way! BUT HOW MUCH MORE SO WHEN THE ONE WHO IS SUFFERING IS NONE OTHER THAN THE SON OF GOD, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

Believer, do you need to be reminded again this morning that you are only a sinner saved by the infinite grace of God?

For you who do not know Him as your Savior, would that this account would take on new meaning for you this morning, and that you would see that it was because of God's great love for you that Christ died so that you would be able to have eternal life.

WHEN THE LORD PRAYED DAVID'S PRAYER
Mark 15:16-37

Intro: We have noted before in our study of the Gospel of Mark that Mark is not concerned about the theological significance of the suffering and death of Christ. He is not primarily a teacher of doctrine except as historical events form the foundation of doctrine.

Mark is recording history for us. He is telling us what happened to our Lord during those six awful hours He was on the Cross! But what important lessons there are in sacred history, and these lessons are what we should be interested in as we read a passage like the one we have before us this morning.

Let us note, first of all,

I. THE UNSPEAKABLE CRUELTY OF MAN.

Marks shows us this in:

- A. What the soldiers did (Mark 15:16-20, 24).
 1. Before the crucifixion (vv. 16-20).
 2. After the crucifixion (v. 24).
- B. What the people said (Mark 15:29-32, 35, 36).

All of these things were said with the utmost of scorn and in complete contempt for the Lord Jesus Christ!

Imagine the inhumanity of all of this even if the Lord Jesus were guilty of the things for which He should have been put to death.

II. THE NATURE OF THEIR RIDICULE.

Without planning to include certain things in what they said, it is extremely important to note what was the object of their contempt.

- A. They ridiculed His position (Mark 16:18).

And these soldiers were like thousands upon thousands of people who have scorned the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ without ever investigating the possibility that those claims might be true.

What a dangerous thing to do!

- B. They ridiculed His Word (Mark 15:29, 30).

Note as we did when we considered Mark 14:58 that they still have it wrong. This is not what He said and this is not what He meant! Check John 2:18-22.

How often people will turn away from the Lord without taking the time to make sure that He said what they have been told that He said.

- C. They ridiculed His power (Mark 15:30-32).

But they were setting what the test of His power would be.

At least three times we see this in what they said.

- D. They ridiculed His work (Mark 15:31): "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

To be able to discredit Him now seems to discredit all that He had done before in His miracles.

- E. They ridiculed the genuineness of His concern for them (Mark 15:32).

Do you remember what Abraham said to the rich man in the story that our Lord told about the rich man and Lazarus? Abraham said,

"If they hear **not** Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

- F. They ridiculed His cry from the Cross--completely mistaken again as to what He had really said (Mark 15:35, 36).

When you gather together the passages which deal with the nature of man, do not pass over a passage like this! It affords us amazing illustrations of the absolute corruption of the human heart--and this is why the Lord Jesus Christ had to die!

BUT WE CANNOT LEAVE THIS PASSAGE THIS MORNING WITHOUT SPENDING SOME TIME LOOKING AT . . .

III. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

There are several things here that are worthy of our most careful notice.

- A. His silence--all through this terrible ordeal.

Isaiah had prophesied of the Messiah,

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

How amazing this is especially in the light of what our Lord had told Peter:

"Put up again thy sword into place . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:53).

- B. His weakness (Mark 15:21).
- C. His submission (Mark 15:23).
- D. His humiliation (Mark 15:27).
- E. His one cry recorded by Mark (Mark 15:34).

There were seven sayings of our Lord while He was on the Cross:

- 1) Luke records three.
- 2) John records three.
- 3) Mark records one.
- 4) Matthew records one--the same one that Mark records.

Luke's are:

- 1) "Father, forgive them . . ." (Luke 23:34).
- 2) "Today thou shalt be with me . . ." (Luke 23:43).
- 3) "Father, into Thy hands . . ." (Luke 23:46).

John's are:

- 1) "Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple; Behold thy mother" (John 19:26b, 27a).
- 2) "I thirst" (John 19:28).
- 3) "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Both Matthew and Mark have the one record in v. 34 of our passage this morning.

The fact that two of the four Gospel writers give this saying and only this saying indicates clearly how very important it is.

Probably nothing that the Lord Jesus ever said has caused so much discussion and controversy as this. HOW COULD THE SON OF GOD, OF ALL PEOPLE, HAVE BEEN FORSAKEN BY THE FATHER?

After all, do not even we have the promise of Heb. 13:5, 6? Note:

Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Those are quotations from Deut. 31:6 and Psa. 118:6.

How could the Lord say such a thing?

First of all NOTE: The Lord was praying a prayer that David had prayed before Him. Cf. Psa. 22:1,

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"

V. 2 continues,

"O my God, I cry in the daytime, and thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

And do you notice that the Lord got no answer?

Whatever David was experiencing, the Lord experienced, too!

Have you noticed this in the Psalms in other places?

See the following passages:

1) Psa. 10:1,

"Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?"

2) Psa. 13:1-4.

3) Psa. 44:23-26.

4) Psa. 77:1-9.

Obviously there are times in the lives of the people of God when their experience seems to contradict the Word of God. We pray, but it seems that God does not hear. We expect an answer, but are disappointed day after day. He withdraws every conscious recognition that we have of His presence. OF ALL THE TRIALS WE GO THROUGH, THIS IS THE WORST OF ALL!

Why did this happen to the Lord Jesus Christ?

1) So it would help us to understand Calvary when we have the same experience.

2) So a passage like Heb. 4:14-16 would mean what it should mean to us.

3) So that we would learn how much we need the Lord.

4) So we can know, from what followed in the life of our Lord, that the Lord is always with us even when our consciousness of His presence has been removed. God is at work, and God is carrying out His purposes even when it seems to us that He does not care!

Concl: Have you ever asked God, "Why?"

Are you asking Him, "Why?" about something NOW?

The Lord Jesus did, too! God is the One to ask. Turn to Him.
He will not fail you, nor forsake you.

John Newton penned the following words which express what we
have in these words of the Lord Jesus:

How tedious and tasteless the hours
When Jesus no longer I see!
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flow'ers,
Have all lost their sweetness to me:
The mid-summer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay;
But when I am happy in Him December's as pleasant as May.

His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than music His voice;
His presence disperses my gloom,
And makes all within me rejoice:
I should, were He always thus nigh,
Have nothing to wish or to fear;
No mortal so happy as I; My summer would last all the year.

My Lord, if indeed I am Thine,
If Thou art my sun and my song,
Say, why do I languish and pine?
And why are my winters so long?
Oh, drive these dark clouds from the sky,
Thy soul-cheering presence restore;
Or take me to Thee up on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more.

THE FIRST TRIUMPHS OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE

Mark 15:38-47

Intro: If we did not know otherwise, we might feel that the words of verse 37 speak of hopeless doom and defeat for every hope that had been placed in the Lord Jesus Christ: "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the spirit."

Or, let your eye run back to verse 25. The words are hard to believe: "And it was the third hour; and they crucified him."

The Word of God makes it very clear that the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ died, died in humiliation and shame, died as the worst of criminals would have died.

But it was not defeat!

In fact, it was the greatest triumph that the world has ever seen. It was a triumph that extended back before the foundation of the world, and one that will last for all eternity.

Everyone here this morning who knows the Savior is evidence of the victory which was won on the Cross by our Lord Jesus Christ!

Time will not permit us this morning to treat this subject exhaustively. We could not do it in a hundred Sunday mornings! But John Mark, in our Scripture passage, has given us some of the first triumphs of our Lord Jesus, evidences of victory which were seen even before that wonderful day when He arose from the dead. We want to look at those triumphs and to think of them as first only as following the actual death of our Lord. The death of Christ and its results were so certain from even before creation that to get the real firsts we would have to look at what took place before this universe came into existence, and then see the results on down through time.

What do we have here?

I. THE RENDING OF THE VEIL (Mark 15:38).

I have repeatedly said in our study of Mark that Mark does not write basically as a theologian, but as an historian! He does not, for the most part, tell us why, but what! He fits into that pattern in this verse. BUT HE COULD NOT HAVE WRITTEN ANYTHING WHICH HAS MORE SIGNIFICANCE THEOLOGICALLY THAN THIS: "And the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom."

This meant the end of something old, and the beginning of something new. For centuries the veil which was hanging between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies had excluded men from the presence of God--with the one exception of the

high priest who entered once each year on the Day of Atonement.

That veil was rent!

What did it mean?

For our answer we must turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 19-22,

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, And having an high priest over the house of God, Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

When Jesus Christ died, the veil was rent indicating that the way into the very presence of God was now opened for all who would enter through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The priesthood was no longer in effect. Sacrifices were no longer necessary. The Lord Jesus did by the sacrifice of Himself what the sacrifice of all of the animals up to that time would never have been able to accomplish!

"For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

The rent veil was evidence of this.

But notice: It was "from the top to the bottom"--just as though God Himself had reached down and torn it apart. It could not have happened any other way.

Edersheim gives us the following comment in II, p. 611:

"According to an account dating from Temple-times, there were altogether thirteen Veils used in various parts of the Temple--two new ones being made every year. The Veils before the Most Holy Place were 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand, and wrought in 72 squares, which were joined together; and these Veils were so heavy, that, in the exaggerated language of the time, it needed 300 priests to manipulate each. If the Veil was at all such as is described in the Talmud, it could not have been rent in twain by a mere earthquake or the fall of the lintel, although its composition in squares fastened together might explain, how the rent might be as described in the Gospel."

And so we have the first indication of the far-reaching effect of the death of Christ when God rent the Veil!

II. THE CENTURION (Mark 15:39).

This surely means the same man who is consulted by Pilate in vv. 44, 45, meaning that he is the man who was in charge of the crucifixion!

Mark does not mention the earthquake at this point, or the other things that were taking place. He simply tells us what the centurion said--so that it could hit us with its full force: "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Many argue about how this should be translated because the word, "the," is not in the original. Let it remain that way, we could just as accurately translate it, Truly this was God's Son! Why does Mark mention it at all if it is not a confession of faith on the part of the centurion?

As far as the Scriptures are concerned, this centurion was the first one to be saved after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ! Seeing and hearing what he saw and heard, he could come to no other conclusion than that this was the Son of God.

So the Lord Jesus did not lose men in His death; HE GAINED!

I II. THE WOMEN (Mark 15:40-41).

No only did the Lord get one whom He did not have previously, but He kept what He had.

Can you think of anything that would make people turn away from the Lord Jesus any more than for Him to die? Surely if they were just enthusiastic followers, and no more, this would have put an end to it all.

But the women were there--and they are still there after the Sabbath was over in 16:1! Their devotion to the Lord Jesus remains the same right through this whole, terrible ordeal.

When the Lord Jesus prayed the prayer of John 17, one of the things He said to the Father was this:

"Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12b).

Who does Mark mention?

- 1) Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord had cast 7 demons. Cf. Luke 8:2.
- 2) Mary, the mother of James the less and of Joses (or Joseph). There have been many attempts to make her either a sister or a cousin of the mother of our Lord, but the whole thing is in doubt. The only

- thing that may be true ^{is} that she was the mother of the second Apostle who ^{was} named, James--the less, meaning either younger, or shorter, or less in importance
- 3) Salome, called in Mat. 27:56, "the mother of Zebedee's children."

And so we have the possibility here that two were mothers of Apostles--with all of the interesting sidelights that gives us.

But what does Mark say about them? Two things:

- 1) They followed the Lord.
- 2) They ministered unto the Lord.

The first means, in turn, two things:

- 1) They were devoted to Him.
- 2) They obeyed Him.

Note: "Him" is emphatic in the Greek, and the verbs are imperfects, meaning that they had been doing this for some time.

Ministering means servicing. Here it probably means that they were meeting his daily needs of food, clothing, etc.

BUT THEY WERE DOING ALL OF THIS FOR HIM! And, when He died, their devotion continued.

How amazing it is to see believers of all ages, bewildered and discouraged, confronted with evidence which seems to indicate that the Lord has failed, and yet their devotion to Him continues!

The glory is His! He keeps His own, as He was doing then.

IV. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA (and Nicodemus) (Mark 15:42-46).

Both men seem to have been members of the Sanhedrin, the body responsible for condemning our Lord to death.

The Apostle John alone mentions Nicodemus, and he tells us about Joseph that he was

"a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38).

Luke tells us of Joseph that with regard to the action of the Sanhedrin, he

"had not consented to the counsel and deed of them" (Luke 23:51).

He also tells us that

"he was a good and righteous man" (Luke 23:50).

Here was a man who had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, but he had not told anybody! NOW HE CANNOT BE SILENT. How amazing

this is! When it would seem the part of wisdom to be quiet, Joseph comes out with a boldness that scorns the dangers. He must declare himself as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps he did it with regret that he had not spoken out during the trial. Perhaps he regretted that he had not followed the Lord Jesus publicly. Whatever the reason, now in this time of apparent defeat, he and Nicodemus intervene to keep our Lord from being buried in the potter's field!

And as they acted, prophecy was fulfilled:

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isa. 53:9).

Concl: Do you see what I am saying this morning?

Here, where you should find the scattering of the disciples; the scorn of those who had stood on the fringes, afraid to declare themselves; a centurion, hardened through many such experiences and satisfied that he had done the right thing; things going on at the Temple uninterrupted!

But instead, we have the opposite.

Instead of defeat we have victory! What greater evidence do we want that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God? How this should fill our hearts with praise and confidence for our Lord! And perhaps the Spirit of God will use this to turn someone this morning to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Such a conclusion to such a story surely indicates that all of this is of God and that God never once lost control!

Romans 8:28 was never truer of any child of God than it was of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

THAT NOTABLE FIRST DAY
Mark 16:1-8

Intro: What I have said repeatedly about the Gospel of Mark holds true right to the end: John Mark is writing primarily as a historian, not as a theologian. He is concerned with telling us what happened, not why they happened!

All of this serves to emphasize the importance of the facts of sacred history. To reject the facts, or to alter them in any way, is to destroy (if such a thing were possible) the great results, the great doctrines, which are built upon the facts.

NEVER MINIMIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT.

But there is another characteristic about our passage that should attract our attention.

It is this: THERE IS NO GREAT ANGELIC DEMONSTRATION SUCH AS THERE WAS WHEN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN! Cf. Luke 2:8-14, concluding with,

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Here in chapter 16 there is no angelic host. There are angels (as Matt. 28:2 indicates; Luke 24:4 says there were two), but they are not singing! No heavenly host appears. AND YET THEY HAVE A MESSAGE THE LIKES OF WHICH THE WORLD HAS NEVER HEARD. One of them said,

"Be not amazed. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him" (v. 6).

This great fact of history, this truth which marked our Lord's victory for believers of all ages--over sin, over death and the grave, is announced to a group of women (not even to the Apostles), but only when they went into the tomb and found the angels instead of the body of the Lord Jesus.

Has this ever struck you as being strange?

Was John Mark so unfeeling and matter-of-fact that he could write this with no more enthusiasm than we find here?

Twice this past week I have stood by the caskets of two men from our church family and have repeated those tremendous words from 1 Thess. 4:14,

"For if (or, since) we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

If it were not for the resurrection of Christ, I would have nothing to say at funerals. We would be without hope. And yet Mark does not seem to get excited about it at all. He records it just like anything else in the Gospel which he has written.

But let me point out another strange thing.

In this passage which deals with the resurrection of our Lord, more is said about the women who were there than is said about our Lord Himself!

What does all of this mean?

It means just this: That Mark wants us to know that Jesus Christ was raised physically, i.e., bodily, from the dead, but he also wants us to notice who knew about it first, and who told about it first, and why they were given that great privilege.

Let us look into the passage.

I would like to ask and answer 7 questions:

- 1) Who went to the tomb?
- 2) Why did they go?
- 3) When did they go?
- 4) What did they find?
- 5) Whom did they see?
- 6) What did they hear?
- 7) What did they do?

I. WHO WENT TO THE TOMB? Read verses 1 and 2.

Only women went. Luke adds to the list when he wrote: "It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women that were with them . . ." (Luke 24:10a).

But there were NO men--not a single Apostle was there!

This immediately gives us something to think about.

They are the women who were mentioned in Mark 15:40, 41, 47.

But, I repeat: NOT A SINGLE MAN FROM AMONG THE DISCIPLES WENT WITH THESE WOMEN.

II. WHY DID THEY GO? Read the last part of v. 1.

They went because they loved Him. They went to do as they had done during the years of His ministry--to minister unto Him. See Mark 15:41. When they could have been disappointed and disillusioned by the disastrous circumstances in which it seemed that the Lord had been shown to be an impostor, their devotion to the Lord remained unchanged!

But they went to do the last thing that they could do to show their love for Him. They were anointing Him for His burial.

What a lesson there is in this for us?

III. WHEN DID THEY GO? Read v. 2.

They went just as early as they could go after the Sabbath was past.

Two things stand out here:

- 1) They were obedient to the Word since there were strict rules in the Law for the observance of the Sabbath. The Word is always our guide.
- 2) That day of rest indicated what our greatest need is when trials come, especially when it appears that our Lord may not be what we had hoped that He would be! That must have been the longest Sabbath they ever lived, but it gave them time to be even more sure that they should do what they did.

IV. WHAT DID THEY FIND? Read vv. 3, 4.

Evidently they did not anticipate the problem regarding the stone. (Mark does not mention either the guard or the seal.)

What wonderful evidence that the Lord prepares the way before us and removes the barriers that may stand in the way of our devotion to the Lord.

Matt. 28:2 tells us that two things had happened:

- 1) An earthquake.
- 2) The angel of the Lord had come down and had rolled the stone away--NOT TO LET THE LORD OUT, BUT TO LET THE WOMEN IN!

V. WHOM DID THEY SEE? Read v. 5.

They did not find the Lord's body as they had expected, but, instead, an angel! He was an angel appearing as a man, and there were two of them. (See Matthew and Luke for these added details.)

As a result, they were utterly amazed, beside themselves with amazement! This was not what they had expected at all.

VI. WHAT DID THEY HEAR? Cf. vv. 6, 7.

Here we come to the heart of the passage.

The angels were waiting. Did they know who would come? Were they expecting Peter, or John, or one of the other Apostles?

We may not be able to answer these questions, but several things are very clear:

- 1) The angels were there to dispel their fears.
- 2) The angels knew why they had come: "Ye seek Jesus."
- 3) The angels knew what had happened to the Lord, and they wanted the women to know.
- 4) Then the angels commissioned and commanded the women to be the first to carry the message of the resurrection--and to take it first to the disciples! This is certainly the reverse of what we would expect!

Why was it this way? Because it was the women who were seeking the Lord. The Apostles were not! As Lenski says, "The love of these women receives its fitting reward" (p. 746).

What a tremendous lesson we have here! Think of the passages which speak of seeking the Lord.

- 1) Psa. 9:10, "And they who know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord hast not forsaken those who seek thee.
- 2) Psa. 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after . . ."
- 3) Psa. 27:8, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."
- 4) Psa. 63:1, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul . . ."
- 5) Song of Sol. 3:2, "I will seek him whom my soul loveth." In v. 4, "I found him whom my soul loveth!"
- 6) Isa. 8:19, "Should not a people seek unto their God?"
- 7) Jer. 29:13, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."
- 8) Lam. 3:25, "The Lord is good unto those who wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."
- 9) Hosea 10:12, " . . . it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."
- 10) "For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live." Cf. Amos 5:4.

- 11) Phil. 2:21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."
- 12) Col. 3:1, "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."
- 13) Heb. 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

The Psalmist David said,
 "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psa. 34:4).

Even our Lord said,
 " . . . seek, and ye shall find . . ." (Matt. 7:7).

Every believer has the same privilege, but not all are seeking. People who love the Lord cannot be satisfied without HIM!

The angels could have miraculously appeared to the Eleven. But they did not! They waited for those who would come. And, since the women came, the Lord used them to minister to the men instead of having the men minister to the women.

Paul does not even mention Mary Magdalene as the first one who saw the Lord in His glory, but Mark is the one who lets us see that which really touches the heart of the Lord.

Are you seeking Him? Have you been with Him this morning? Does anything give you greater joy than to be having fellowship with your Lord in the Word?

VII. WHAT DID THEY DO? Read v. 8.

They went. But we are told how they went instead of where they went. They went physically trembling, feeling both fear and wonder, and this condition did not immediately pass. They went to minister to the Lord, but the glory of ~~it~~ all was the way He ministered to them!

Concl: Nothing which Mark has written is more amazing. Truth is really stranger than fiction. But what a rebuke to us who believe in the resurrection of our Lord-- that we would spend so little time seeking Him. This is the only thing that limits the blessing of our lives.

THE RISEN CHRIST
Mark 16:9-20

Intro: We come to the concluding message on the Gospel of Mark.

We can all be grateful to the Lord for the blessings we have received in going through these 16 chapters. Undoubtedly much of it has been a review of things that we have known before.

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Perhaps in other ways the Lord has opened our eyes to know Him in new ways, and to learn things that we have not known before. Whatever our experience has been, let us thank Him and continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will not let us forget or lose the things which He has been seeking to impress upon our hearts so that the effect of them may be seen in our lives.

Our concluding passage is what we might call a disputed passage.

This means that it is not found in some of the oldest mss. In some, the book ends with verse 8. In others, there are various additions.

Some believe that John Mark ended the book abruptly at verse 8. Others feel that his conclusion must have been lost, and that some day it may turn up when some new copy is found.

~~Some believe that these verses were written by John Mark.~~

Many feel that someone besides John Mark wrote the passage we have this morning. This, of course, would not be a problem because we have other instances in the Bible where books have been written primarily by one person, but concluded by someone else. E.g., Deuteronomy with its account of the death of Moses.

This is not the place to go into the problem this morning. But let me make a few observations which I trust will be helpful:

- 1) The facts that are given to us here are true. We know this by checking them with the details given in Matthew, Luke, John, and the book of Acts. This is a major factor, it seems to me when considering whether or not it belongs.
- 2) Although we have books with rather incomplete conclusions, like the book of Acts, yet it does seem when comparing Mark with the other Gospels that it does need a conclusion more than we would have if we stopped with verse 8. Verses 9-20 meet that need.
- 3) The fact that you have words in our passage this morning which are not found elsewhere in Mark's Gospel does not necessarily mean that it was not written by Mark. We use different words which we deal with a different subject. There is certainly nothing like what we have in these verses that we can find in any other part of the book.

However, suppose someone else did write these verses. This would not automatically mean that they were not written under the direction of the Spirit of God. We are not basically concerned with whether or not they are from John Mark, but whether or not they are of God!

I am assuming this morning that they are of God.

The account itself is very brief.

The verses should be divided into three parts:

- 1) In vv. 9-14 we have Mark's account of the post-resurrection appearances of the our Lord--with a special emphasis of the unbelief of the Eleven Apostles.
- 2) In vv. 15-18 we have words spoken by our Lord to the Eleven --words which are sometimes referred to as the Great Commission.
- 3) Finally, in vv. 19, 20, we have, as in the Gospel of Luke, a reference to the ascension of our Lord, followed by a brief statement as to what the Apostles (and other disciples) did immediately afterwards.

To simplify what we have here, let us use the following headings:

- I. Thinking of our Lord as the Risen Christ,
HIS WAY TO THEM (vv. 9-14).
 - II. HIS WORDS FOR THEM (vv. 15-18).
 - III. HIS WORK WITH THEM (vv. 19, 20).
- I. HIS WAY TO THEM (Mark 16:9-14).

We observed last Sunday morning that the Lord could have appeared to His Apostles in some kind of a glorious manner, but, instead, two angels came and quietly waited in the tomb until the women came. And they were told to go and tell the Apostles about our Lord's resurrection, and that they would find Him in Galilee, as He had told them.

The truth of vv. 9-11, our Lord's appearance to Mary Magdalene, is confirmed by John's Gospel.

The truth of vv. 12, 13 is confirmed by Luke's Gospel--the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Both John and Luke confirm the appearance to the Eleven in v. 14.

IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE DISCIPLES TO SEE OUR RISEN LORD, BUT YOU CAN SEE FROM THE EMPHASIS IN THIS PASSAGE, AS WELL AS FROM OUR LORD'S APPEARANCES TO OTHERS, THAT THE LORD WANTED THEM TO BELIEVE BEFORE THEY SAW HIM WITH THEIR OWN EYES!

We have in this passage three witnesses. According to the Law this was adequate evidence to establish a fact--and yet read v. 13.

In addition, the Apostles had had the words of the Lord Jesus Himself predicting His resurrection. Cf. the first one in

Mark 8:31.

More than that, they had had the predictions of the OT prophets. Do you remember what the Lord said to the two disciples which Mark mentions here in vv. 12, 13? Cf. Luke 24:25, 26,

"Then He (the Lord) said unto them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ (the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

Oh, how the Lord wants us to take Him at His word, to believe what He has promised. Therefore, when He appeared to them, He rebuked them for their "unbelief and hardness of heart." John tells us that our Lord said to Thomas,

"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou has believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

May I ask you this morning, Do you believe in the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, why not? The evidence of it comes to us as one of the best attested, if not the best, facts of all history.

The disciples had to see the Lord, but how sad that they did not believe before they saw! John may have believed (cf. John 20:8), but for the most part they did not.

These verses come to us as a testimony this morning that the Lord wants us to trust Him and to believe His word even before we have the evidence that His words are true.

II. HIS WORDS FOR THEM (Mark 16:15-18).

All of this, too, is confirmed by other parts of the Word of God.

We have here the mission, and the message, and the methods that were to be employed in the work of the Apostles.

Note the burden on the Lord's heart in v. 15--its general and its particular aspects: "all the world . . . to every creature." Every person in every nation in every generation needs to hear the Gospel.

Why?

Note v. 16. There are only two alternatives: salvation, or damnation; heaven, or hell; life, or death.

Do not let this verse become a problem. Baptism is not a part of salvation except for the fact that it is an evidence

of salvation, of faith, as the book of Acts confirms. Do not through out the mass of Scripture which talks about salvation by faith alone just because one verse seems to teach otherwise. Learn to take all that the Word teaches on any subject. Then, and only then, can you arrive at the truth!

What about the "signs"?

The book of Acts confirms these--except for drinking "any deadly thing." Mark mentions five signs. Some were proofs; others were for the protection of the Apostles. Regarding "serpents" and the poisonous drinks, these have to do with accidents (as in the case of the Apostle Paul in Acts 28), and with attempts to kill them so as to silence their message. Tradition gives us a story indicating that the Apostle John was forced to drink poison, but survived. BUT IN NO CASE WERE THEY SNAKE CHARMERS, OR MEN WHO FOOLISHLY PLAYED WITH DEATH JUST AS A SPECTACULAR DEMONSTRATION.

How important it is to get these words of the Lord Jesus into our hearts--and to distinguish between what was to be permanent, and what was temporary.

III. HIS WORK WITH THEM (Mark 16:19, 20).

We still must say, as we have said repeatedly, Mark is writing as a historian. But in the last two verses we come to some statements of historical facts which form the foundation for some of the greatest truths of the NT. I refer to

- 1) Our Lord's ascension.
- 2) The fact that He is now seated "on the right hand of God."
- 3) And that, amazing as it might be, He continued to work with His disciples on earth.

The facts that the Lord is now in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, leads me to say that our next study for our Sunday morning services will be in the book of Hebrews where we learn more about our Lord's present ministry than in any other book of the Bible. Four times in Hebrews our Lord is referred to as being at the right hand of the Father. The Lord willing, we will learn more of what that means in the weeks to come.

But for now . . . let us get this one truth in our minds: THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC ABOUT THE LORD'S WORK IS THAT, ALTHOUGH HE IS IN HEAVEN, HE IS ABLE TO BE WITH US ON EARTH. AND THE WORK OF GOD IS NOT WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR HIM, BUT WHAT HE IS DOING WITH US!

You could only make such statements about an omnipresent Lord. Cf. Acts 1:1. What He began when He was here, He now

continues through you and through me!

Concl: And so what do we have as we come to the close of this wonderful Gospel according to John Mark?

We have:

- 1) The absolute necessity of believing in the bodily resurrection of our Lord. No one can be saved who does not believe in this, and no one can serve the Lord who does not believe in this!
- 2) The absolute necessity of knowing what our message is, who needs it, and what the eternal consequences are!
- 3) The absolute necessity of understanding who does what in the Lord's work--that, as the Apostle Paul taught later, "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

Do you believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ill.: Last Thursday we drove down to Detroit Lake and Dam. On the Salem freeway just now work is going on to widen the freeway. As you come to the construction area there is a sign asking you to reduce your speed to 50 m.p.h. After you go through this area for a while you come to another sign which says something like this:

IF YOU HAVE REDUCED YOUR SPEED, THANK YOU. IF NOT, WHY NOT?

What is your excuse for not believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? If not, why not?

To those of you who know the Lord, do you really believe that everyone should hear the Gospel of our Lord? If so, what are you doing about it? And do you understand that, if you are to have any vital part in reaching people with the Gospel, it will not be through what you do for the Lord, but through what the Lord is able to do with you?

Oh, how much we need these truths today!