

IN THE HOLY MOUNT

Mark 9:1-8

Intro: Anyone who has read the Gospels carefully knows that there are certain events in the life of our Lord which stand out with special significance. They are:

- 1) His birth.
- 2) His baptism.
- 3) His temptation.
- 4) His great discourses: The Sermon on the Mount.
The Olivet Discourse.
The Upper Room Discourse.
- 5) His praying in Gethsemane.
- 6) His crucifixion.
- 7) His resurrection.
- 8) His ascension.

To these we must add the event which is before us in our passage this morning: His Transfiguration.

It is an event of tremendous importance.

Two of the three disciples who were there wrote about it. The three were there, for one reason, for the sake of giving a united witness that this amazing event really took place.

— But we can never understand The Transfiguration without noticing what has led up to it. We need to go back as far as Mark 8:27.

This is a part of all that our Lord was seeking to do to help the disciples to understand what was necessary before the Lord could reign over all the earth. We are thinking here about the kingdom of God.

One thing was sure: They knew that Jesus was the Messiah.

But they did not know that He was going to die. They strongly objected to this.

They did not know that to follow Him might lead to their own deaths--which it did!

NOR DID THEY UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE GLORY THAT WOULD CHARACTERIZE THOSE WHO HAVE A PART IN THE KINGDOM. They needed to know this too.

— The Lord had given an indication of this when He spoke the words recorded in Mark 8:38, "when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

To deal with this subject of the glory that is to come, let us note, first of all, . . .

I. THE WORDS SPOKEN BY OUR LORD (Mark 9:1).

Some believe that this verse belongs with chapter 8. It seems quite certain that it does. It was probably spoken when the Lord said what He did in 8:34-38.

BUT THEY ALSO BELONG TO CHAPTER 9.

They are all a part of this whole ministry of our Lord to His disciples in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Glory was coming--and it still is. BUT THERE COULD BE NO GLORY APART FROM THE CROSS. The Lord had to die before He could reign in glory over all the earth.

There is no need to struggle with these words (as many have done). Let us take them for what they mean, and then seek to understand what might not be perfectly clear.

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM WITH POWER WAS SO CLOSE THAT OUR LORD SAID, "Some of them that stand here . . . shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."

The key word here seems to be "power." It does not mean that the kingdom in all of its fullness and power would be established before some who were living then would die, but it meant that the power would be firmly established which would guarantee the eventual fulfillment of all of the promises having to do with the spiritual and literal realization of that which is involved in the term, "the kingdom of God."

"Power" here means that which will guarantee a certain result. It is the cause which will produce a certain effect.

The same idea is in the word power (the same word) in Rom. 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation . . ."

It does not mean that everyone has believed who will believe, nor that everyone will eventually believe, BUT IT MEANS THAT THE POWER HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE GOSPEL TO PROVIDE FOR THE SALVATION OF ALL WHO WILL BELIEVE. NOTHING MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE.

What would guarantee the fulfillment and ultimate triumph in the earth of the kingdom of God? The death of Christ. Victory would come through apparent defeat. Glory would come through humiliation. This is what the disciples did not believe, but what they needed to know. That is why the Lord begins with, "Verily I say unto you."

II. A MOST AMAZING EVENT (Mark 9:2-4).

Could we not classify this as the most amazing thing that happened to our Lord while He was here on earth--apart from His resurrection?

A week goes by between verses 1 and 2. What happened during that time we do not know. We can be sure that our Lord was ministering to His disciples, but we are not told what He had to say to them.

Then He takes Peter and James and John in "an high mountain" where He could have them by themselves. This was probably Mount Hermon.

The Lord had taken these three men one time before (when Jairus' daughter was raised, Mark 5:37), and He would do it one more time in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). Why these three? We can only speculate. But they seem to have been the leaders, probably because of the hunger that was in their hearts.

SUDDENLY THE LORD "WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM." This does not mean that a light began to shine on Him, but a glory appeared from within. IT MEANS THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME THE DISCIPLES REALLY BEGAN TO SEE SPECIAL, VISIBLE EVIDENCE OF HIS DEITY!

Notice how John wrote about it: John 1:14.

Then notice how Peter wrote about it: 2 Pet. 1:16-18.

Then, to add to the most frightening sight, Moses and Elijah appeared--talking to the Lord, as Luke indicates, about His death.

Again, we can only speculate why Moses and Elijah were chosen to be there, but the one thing that is certain is there apparent interest, above everything else, in the fact that our Lord's death was so near. Cf. Luke 9:31.

This throws a flood of light upon the Old Testament and upon Old Testament saints.

And all of this glory was greater than any man whose business it is to purify garments could possibly make them. This was definitely not something human as to its origin.

But then we have . . .

III. THE WORDS SPOKEN BY PETER (Mark 9:5, 6).

He and the others were so frightened that they did not know

what to say, but Peter began talking anyway. What a missed opportunity! He should have been still to know that Jesus was GOD!

But of his words we can say this--some good, and some bad:

- A. It meant that he was happy to be there, and contented to stay. "Master, it is good for us to be here." This is how people must feel when they get to heaven.
- B. He was in error because he wanted to stay with^{out} a cross.
- C. He was also in error because he seems inclined to put Moses and Elijah on a plane with our Lord.

And so it is very obvious that we have need of that which comes last . . .

IV. THE WORDS OF THE FATHER (Mark 9:7, 8).

Peter and the disciples with him needed to know how the Father considered the Son, and that they needed to listen to Him and believe what He had to say about what He had to do.

Moses had been great. Read the record of his life in the Word.

Elijah had also been great. Read his story.

Both stand out in the Scriptures for their devotion to the Lord. BUT NEITHER OF THEM COULD BEGIN TO COMPARE WITH THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF THE SON OF GOD, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Concl: What was all of this? It was a foreshadowing of the glory that is to come. It is a glory anticipated by OT saints as well as NT. BUT THERE COULD BE NO GLORY, NO KINGDOM OF GOD, NO PERFECTION FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD, NO PURGING AWAY OF SIN--none of the things that this world needs and the things all believers anticipate UNLESS the Lord Jesus Christ will go on to the Throne by way of the Cross.

We do not see that glory yet,

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:9, 10).

WHAT ABOUT ELIJAH?

Mark 9:9-13

Intro: The passage before us this morning records the things that our Lord and Peter and James and John talked about as they came down from the mount where the Lord has been transfigured.

At first glance it would seem that there is not much here.

But then, as is always the case with the Word of God, the longer we look at these 5 verses, the more we see. In fact, our Lord touches here upon some of the greatest principles that we face when it comes to understanding the Word, and ministering the Word.

We would probably all agree that nothing that man could experience on earth would be comparable to what these three disciples had just seen: the Lord in His glory, with Moses and Elijah.

The only possible parallel would have been the Apostle Paul in the experience he relates in 2 Cor. 12.

But now let us look at Mark's account.

Matthew is the only other Gospel writer who tells us of this event. His words are recorded in Matt. 17:9-13.

In Mark's record we have four things:

- I. Our Lord's Charge (v. 9).
- II. The Disciples' Discussion Among Themselves (v. 10).
- III. The Question They Asked The Lord (v. 11).
- IV. The Lord's Answer To Their Question (v. 12).

I. OUR LORD'S CHARGE (Mark 9:9).

What a letdown this must have been!

You can imagine that they could hardly wait until they got back to the other 9 disciples so that they could tell about the great experience that they had had. BUT THE LORD SILENCED THEM; THEY WERE TO TELL MAN!

Cf. Mark 7:36; 8:26, 30. WHY?

One reason, as we have seen, is that the Lord did not want His disciples or anyone else to spread confusion because they only knew part of the truth!

After the way Peter rebuked the Lord in Mark 8:32, Peter have spread endless confusion if he had told what he had ex-

perienced on the basis of what he knew then! To tell a part of the truth without seeing the whole is to spread error-- and misunderstanding!

They wanted a glorified Messiah without a Cross, and this is exactly what it seemed that they had.

But look . . .

The Lord put a limitation on the time that they had to be silent: "Till the Son of man were risen from the dead."

After His resurrection they would have the background necessary to understand His glory. But they did not have it now.

Application: If there is one thing that we need in order to understand the Word of God as we should it is an overall picture of all of the Word of God. Without it we can get into trouble with any truth of Scripture. This applies to salvation, to prophecy, to the Holy Spirit. Our experience must never be permitted to distort any part of the Word of God for us.

II. THE DISCIPLES' DISCUSSION AMONG THEMSELVES (Mark 9:10).

The translation of this verse needs to bring out the amazing thing which happened to the disciples as they came down from the mount. IF ANYTHING, THIS MAY HAVE EVEN BEEN MORE STARTLING FOR THEM THAN THE TRANSFIGURATION.

"Kept" does not mean that they obeyed what the Lord said to them in v. 9 (although they probably were obedient). It means, as the NASB translates it, "And they seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead might mean."

It means that for the first time they noticed it, they laid hold of it, they fastened their thoughts on something which they apparently had never heard before!

And yet the Lord had clearly mentioned it in Mark 8:31.

But they did not hear it. NOW THIS TRUTH WAS GETTING THROUGH TO THEM FOR THE FIRST TIME!

We cannot understand all about how this happens, but we know that it does. We can read the Word over and over, and then one day it seems that the Word comes to life, and the words of Scripture stand right out on the page for us.

Some people have never noticed this in the Word. The major-

ity in Israel, with all that they knew of the Messiah, had never had their eyes opened to this truth. And only the Lord can make us see it.

This did not understand it, but they noticed it in what the Lord was saying for the first time.

Application: How carefully do you read the Word of God? People notice the word, Law, in the Bible, but they completely pass over the word, grace. They notice works, but they completely disregard faith. They see God, but pay no attention to Christ. Or, if they notice Christ, they pay attention to what He said, but not to Who He was, or what He did! People look upon Him as an Example, who have never seen that He is a Savior!

What are you missing? You maybe like the disciples who were missing the most important thing!

III. THE QUESTION THE DISCIPLES ASKED THE LORD (Mark 9:11).

This grew out of their experience on the mount. "Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come?"

Some times you can even hear some truth from false teachers!

Why did they say it?

Because Malachi did! It comes right at the end of the OT-- in Mal. 4:5, 6,

"Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and they heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

This seemed to bear out what they had seen on the mount. There was Elijah, and the Lord was there in His glory. Surely this meant the Kingdom would be established.

Before we look at the Lord's answer, let us note this word of . . .

Application: Do not be surprised to hear the truth from almost any direction, but neither should you think that because something true is said, even something that is from the Word of God, that this necessarily proves that all that that teacher says is true.

Now we are ready for . . .

IV. THE LORD'S ANSWER TO THEIR QUESTION (Mark 9:12, 13).

There are three parts to His answer.

- A. He verifies what the scribes were teaching on this point: "Elijah verily cometh first, and restoreth all things."

The important word here is "restoreth." Normally this word means to bring something back to its former state, but since Israel has never known such a state, it means here to correct "a disturbed order of affairs" (Thayer, p. 62). THINGS ARE DREADFULLY WRONG IN THIS WORLD, AND ELIJAH IS COMING, SAID MALACHI, TO STRAIGHTEN THINGS OUT --ESPECIALLY AMONG FATHERS AND CHILDREN, i.e., in the home!

People are proposing many answers for the problems we face today, but Malachi says that Elijah will have the right answer, and that without his answer there can be no restoration in the world.

We will notice that answer in just a moment.

- B. He calls attention to truth which the scribes had missed.

The last part of v. 12 should be a question. Let us read it like this:

"And how is it that it is written of the Son of man, that He must suffer many things, and be treated with contempt?"

He means:

1. How is it that they have noticed the very little that is said about Elijah, but have overlooked the fact that the OT is full of Christ, the Son of man?
2. Why has it been written, and why does it stand written that the Son of man would suffer so much, even to death, and yet be treated as though He were nothing?

If they had known all of the Word of God they would not have felt that the teachings of the Lord about His death were strange at all; in fact, they would have expected such teaching.

- C. He makes a startling announcement. Cf. Mark 9:13.

Here we are to see one of the fine points of divine reve-

lation. Matthew brings it out clearly when he writes:
 "Then the disciples understood that he spoke unto
 them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:13).

We have this on the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ
 Himself: "But I say unto you."

ELIJAH IN THE OT IS A TYPE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST IN THE NT.
 THE PROPHECY CONCERNING ELIJAH WAS FULFILLED IN THE MINI-
 STRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

What was the substance of His ministry?

There is more than we can mention in the time we have
 this morning, but let me select three things which John
 the Baptist preached:

- 1) "Repent ~~ye~~, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"
 (Matt. 3:2). The nation was not right with God. Sin
 was the problem.
- 2) "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin
 of the world" (John 1:29). The Lord Jesus Christ
 is the only One who can settle the sin question.
- 3) "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).
 When the Lord comes, we no longer need John.

What did Israel do with John the Baptist? For a time
 there was a great response, but when he died, no one
 raised a protest.

Concl.: The features in this passage belong to our own day, do
 they not?

We are so prone to look at only a small part of the Word. We
 can completely overlook the most important truths.

We notice Elijah or Moses, or many, many others, but often ignore
 the Lord Jesus Christ completely.

And, therefore, we miss the main thing that we need to know:
 that there can be no peace in men or among men until men forsake
 their sin and turn in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for forgive-
 ness and eternal life.

Perhaps the Lord has opened your eyes while we have been thinking
 about these things this morning. Perhaps you have never seen
 that Christ had to die--that He had to die for you. May the Lord
 enable each one of us to see it clearly. And if you have seen
 this, may He give you the grace to trust Him right now as your
 personal Savior--if you have never done so before.

A QUESTION THAT NEEDS TO BE ANSWERED
Mark 9:14-29

Intro: At this point in Mark's Gospel we move from the heavenly to the earthly, from the manifestation of our Lord's glory to a display of the disciples' weakness!

Peter and James and John had seen the Lord in the holy mount; now they are to see their fellow-disciples, humiliated and defensive.

Therefore, let us look first at . . .

I. A HUMILIATING SITUATION (Mark 9:14-19).

The first thing that the Lord noticed was that the scribes were disputing with the 9 disciples who had not been in the mount.

They had the disciples on the defense. They were seeking to discredit them in the eyes of the people. And perhaps they were even seeking to discredit the Lord in the eyes of the disciples. After all, the Lord had given them power to cast out demons (cf. 6:7), why could they not cast the demon out?

How the enemy loves to make the most of failure in the lives of the Lord's people!

BUT . . . v. 15 shows how quickly they were silenced by the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were taken by surprise, utterly amazed, when the Lord showed up!

So the Lord asked them in v. 16, "What question ye with them?" He wanted to know what the dispute was all about.

The father of the boy concerned answered (see vv. 16, 17). He had brought his demon-possessed son to the Lord. It was "a dumb spirit," i.e., a spirit which makes a person mute.

Whenever the demon wanted to, he did four things:

- 1) He threw the boy down with convulsions.
 - 2) The boy would foam at the mouth.
 - 3) Then he would grind his teeth.
 - 4) Finally, he became stiff, and just seemed to waste away.
- This was worse than any disease, and it must have been a dreadful sight to see.

The father had brought his son to the Lord, but, not finding Him, had asked the disciples for help. BUT, TO HIS DISMAY, "THEY COULD NOT"--They did not have the strength, lit.

This is what had led to all of the disputing.

Upon receiving the answer from the Father, we see great distress of the Lord, which must have caused even greater anxiety for the disciples. But the questions in v. 19 contain a lot of truth:

- 1) "O faithless (or unbelieving) generation, how long shall I be with you?"

The emphasis here is on the "I" which points to the Lord. He is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Therefore, it should have made a difference for them to be with Him!

- 2) "How long shall I suffer you," i.e., bear with you, put up with you?

If the Lord were to deal with us as we deserve, He would have given up hope long ago. The question was so that this impression might be written deeply on their minds.

The disciples, in an unbelieving generation, had succumbed to the spirit of the age. A lack of faith was the problem. But more about this in a moment.

II. A DESPERATE FATHER (Mark 9:20-24).

When the Lord told the man to bring his son, he brought him immediately. BUT WHEN THE BOY SAW THE LORD, THE SPIRIT THREW HIM INTO ONE OF THESE AWFUL CONVULSIONS. THE LORD SAW FOR HIMSELF WHAT HAD BEEN GOING ON.

And so the Lord asked the father how long this had been going on. The answer: "From a child."

THIS MEANT THAT NO ONE HAD EVER BEEN ABLE TO HELP HIM. So the need was desperate.

But v. 22 reveals a dreadful fact, but also a hopeful note was sounded. THE DEMON HAD TRIED TO BURN THE BOY ALIVE, OR TO DROWN HIM. BUT, WITH ALL OF THE ATTEMPTS HE HAD MADE, HE HAD BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL--evidence of the sovereign power of God!

So, finally, the father says, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us."

Omit the word, "believe," in v. 23--the first part. The Lord said in amazement, "If thou canst!?", reflecting the words of the father. And then He followed it with, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

Here we come to faith again.

Now this is where we need to read our Bibles carefully and to see that God does not always see fit to deal with people

in the same way. There never was a time when miracles were performed in as great numbers as when our Lord was here on earth. The early Church experienced outstanding miracles in the beginning, but they did not last.

It is not God's purpose to have every age characterized by such miracles. He can still do anything that He ever could do, but He does not choose to work the same way all of the time.

Therefore, faith does not mean asking and expecting God to do all of the things that He has ever done, or even all of the things that we think that He should do. FAITH IS OUR TRUSTING RESPONSE TO THAT WHICH GOD WILLS FOR THE PARTICULAR AGE IN WHICH WE LIVE.

The earthly life of Christ was a time of miracles, but even in His life He did not perform the miracles toward the end that He did at the beginning.

But this definitely was during the time when He was performing miracles. Therefore, the father could sincerely have faith that the Lord would meet the need of his son.

But this does not apply today!

How many of us have been where this father was in v. 24? We believe, but it is continuing to believe where we have our trouble. And, if the Lord does not help us, if our faith is not sustained and strengthened with the Word, we will not continue to believe. Cf. Rom. 10:17.

III. A MIGHTY LORD (Mark 9:25-27).

This is not just a matter of helping a human being; it is a conflict with the forces of Satan. It is beyond all of the combined forces which men can gather together. Only God is equal to a task like this.

So the Lord, with His word, rebuked the foul, deaf and dumb spirit.

This is the Creator speaking to a rebellious, demonic, unseen angelic creature. He brought the world into existence through His Word. Cf. Gen. 1:3; John 1:3.

Oh, the power of the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Before the demon left, he made one more vicious attack, and then left the boy looking like he was dead. But the Lord lifted him up and he was delivered.

What an amazing miracle this was--especially in view of the disciples' failure!

This is followed by . . .

- IV. A HARD QUESTION (Mark 9:28, 29). It was a hard question for the disciples to ask.

Are you one who says that we should never ask the Lord, Why? Look closely at this question. It was a question which needed to be answered.

They had been given the power to do this.

They had evidently done it before.

Why had they failed?

The Lord answers it very simply and briefly: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer (and fasting)."

"By nothing, but by prayer." Note those words carefully.

Concl: Two things we must note as we close:

- 1) These disciples had not been praying.
- 2) They were overlooking the fact that there is absolutely nothing that can take the place of prayer.

As I have said, our ministry is not the same today as it was during the time that the Lord was here on earth. But the Lord is still manifesting His power--His power to save from sin, His power to transform lives, His power to give peace in a world that is anything but peaceful--all of the ways in which the Lord can make life different. He does not deliver us from trouble, but He delivers us through trouble.

But so often the people of the world look in vain to the Church for help. We make such great claims, but often our lives contradict what we have to say. WHY?

Because the people of the Church are doing everything these days except for praying. Prayer:

- 1) Takes time--and we are too busy.
- 2) Must come from the heart--while we are too often concerned with the outward form.
- 3) Prayer reveals that we know our own desperate need, and realize our helplessness.
- 4) Prayer is an indication that we know the blessing must come from God, or it will not come.

Do we want to know why the world is not asking us for a reason

of the hope that is in us? Because they can see so little evidence of what we talk about in connection with the Lord!

It probably could be said about the Church in any generation that it prays too little, or not at all!

How much do you pray? How deeply do you feel your need to spend time in the presence of the Lord, opening your heart to Him, and pouring out your heart before Him? As you have been sitting there this morning have you been trying to figure out when you could take some time this afternoon to pray?

The Lord did not say just that it would help to pray. He said that the blessings are not going to come until we do pray. Oh, that God would touch our hearts with this truth and move us to give ourselves to prayer as we have never prayed before.

Luke tells us that it was shortly after this humiliating experience that the disciples asked the Lord, when they found Him praying and waited until He had finished, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

May that be our prayer too!

BASIC LESSONS IN DISCIPLESHIP
Mark 9:30-37

Intro: My subject this morning, Basic Lessons In Discipleship, cannot really be limited to this passage.

Last week in vv. 14-29 we had a very important lesson--a lesson on the importance of prayer.

And there have been other lessons designed especially for the disciples.

In fact, from Mark 7:24 on, the Lord has been doing everything, including even getting out of Galilee altogether, so as to be alone with His disciples so that He could teach them.

But, with our passage this morning, we have completed a cycle. Look back to Mark 8:31 and you will see the reason for this statement. The Lord again is taking up the subject of His own death and resurrection.

Then He goes on to speak of how to become the first disciple.

The more we know of these two points, the more we will realize that these two things are as basic as anything else for anyone who wants to know what it means to walk with and to serve our Lord Jesus Christ!

Let us, then, look first at the . . .

I. THE LESSON REGARDING THE APPROACHING WORK OF THE LORD (Mark 9:30-32).

The Lord and the disciples had been up in the area of Caesarea Philippi since 8:27. Now they were returning "home"--to Capernaum. The Lord took advantage of the time they were on the road (possibly even travelling on back roads) to bring up again what every servant of the Lord must be absolutely clear about: His death and resurrection.

This is the reason that "He would not that any man should know it."

Read v. 31 very carefully. This is a summary of what the Lord was teaching them.

There are at least six important things to be seen in this verse:

- A. How the Lord identifies Himself: "the Son of man."
With the use of this title He identifies Himself with "the Son of man" in Dan. 7:13, 14. That passage is very

definitely Messianic. Therefore, this would assure the disciples that they were not mistaken in believing that He was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God!

B. Two things about the verb, "is delivered":

1. "The present is used to denote the certainty of the event" (Gould, ICC, p. 172). The Lord speaks of it as though it had already taken place--so certain it is that it will!
2. The passive character of the verb indicates, not that men will trap Him and take Him, but that He will be delivered into their hands.

By whom?

Cf. Acts 2:22-24. Every child of God needs to have a clear understanding of the sovereignty of God, even in the death and resurrection of Christ.

C. Two things about the verb, "shall rise":

1. This, along with the preceding verb, will give the disciples an opportunity to test the prophetic power of the Lord. To find out that He was right about this would be **proof** that they could put their complete trust in everything that He said.
2. The active character of this verb, "shall rise," indicates that the Lord would raise Himself from the dead--a most amazing prophecy!

The Word of God teaches that all three of the members of the Godhead were active in the resurrection, but at this point we need to be reminded that our Lord said in John 10:17, 18,

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

D. The importance of these two events.

This is seen in the fact that the Lord comes back to it again when it is the only subject that is repeated during this time. **EVERYTHING IN THE GOSPEL, EVERYTHING THAT HAS TO DO WITH OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, IS DEPENDENT UPON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST!**

Before, when the Lord had spoken of this, His disciples rebuked Him. They still do not understand, and are afraid to ask for fear that they might find out other things which did not fit in with their ideas about what the Lord should do.

And they were right . . . when you think about the ascension.

All of these truths are extremely important for the child of God to know . . .

- who Jesus Christ is.
- what God's purpose for Him was.
- that the Lord was sovereign in it all, and that men were fitting perfectly into His pre-ordained plan.
- that the Lord knew then what the outcome would be.

The great truths related to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ would come later. But for now the fact must be comprehended clearly. No person who denies the reality of Christ's physical death, or the reality of His physical resurrection, has any right to claim to be a child of God, and certainly no right to claim to be a servant of God!

← II. THE LESSON REGARDING HOW TO BE THE GREATEST DISCIPLE (Mark 9:33-37).

They are off the road now, and back in Capernaum.

The Lord raises a question regarding something that took place while they were travelling from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum. He knew that repeatedly during that journey the disciples had been arguing about something.

What was it?

They were ashamed to tell him.

How often we engage in things, or in disputes, when we know that we are wrong without anyone else telling us! This probably came up as a result of Peter and James and John going into the mount of Transfiguration with the Lord.

The Lord knows that it is time for school. This is just the picture you have with the Lord sitting before His disciples, who must also have been sitting.

The Lord knew what they had been discussing.

But will you note something? THE LORD DOES NOT REBUKE THEM FOR WANTING TO BE FIRST. In fact, He encourages it. HE WANTED THEM TO HAVE AMBITION, TO HAVE PURPOSE, TO BE DETERMINED, TO BE MOTIVATED BY CERTAIN GOALS. There is nothing wrong with ambition, providing it is the right kind and that it heads you in the right direction. A child of God without convictions and goals will not stand very long in a world like this.

So the Lord spoke to them about being "first"--the main one,

the one with the greatest influence and rank.

But, oh, how He surprised them when He said,
 "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last
 of all, and servant of all."

How different this is from what the world's standards are!

A "servant" here is the word from which we get our word, deacon, but it is not limited to an office in the church. It basically means one who serves the interests of others more than he does his own.

Paul was thinking of this when he wrote Philippians 2. Note vv. 3, 4:

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things or, interests), but every man also on the things of others."

Later in the chapter Paul says the following about Timothy:
 "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:20, 21).

Now this helps me to understand the rest of our passage in Mark. A DISCIPLE IS TO SEEK THE GOOD OF OTHERS AS THAT IS RELATED TO THE INTERESTS THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS IN THEM!

Note what the Lord goes on to say in our passage in Mark. (Read vv. 36, 37.)

What a tender sight this must have been--our Lord loving a little child!

Most people do love little children. And we are seeking to do more for our children today than perhaps any generation that has preceded us. This includes:

- 1) Health.
- 2) Education.
- 3) Safety.
- 4) Financial security.

And many other things.

But . . . what did the Lord mean when He said,
 "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name"?

To "receive" them means:

- 1) To recognize their importance.
- 2) To take time to be with them.
- 3) To do what the Lord wants you to do to help them.

→ This latter part is what it means to receive them in His name! "In My Name" means in accord with my revealed will.

Thank of the disciples seated on the floor with the Lord and the little child in their midst. And then the Lord saying to them that, If you want to be first, then seek the interest that I have in boys and girls, and lead them to know Me as their Savior!

To receive children by seeking their salvation is seeking the interests of the Lord Jesus Christ and the interests of the Father--and so receiving them.

Concl: Now, let us put these two lessons together.

A disciple must know and believe and have no doubts about the death of Christ, nor about His resurrection. These are the basic truths of the Gospel. We would have no Gospel without them. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day--"according to the scriptures."

But what must follow?

If I want to be first with the Lord, it is not for me to worry about my position over or under my fellow-believers, but I must make sure that I am doing all that I can possibly do to see to it that boys and girls get to hear about the Lord Jesus.

When some of you mothers here this morning are asked, What do you do?, do you respond, Oh, I'm only a housewife and a mother.

ONLY!!! If you are seeking to teach your children to know and love the Lord, you could not have a more important job.

Think of the teachers of children's classes, the Sunday School teachers, the Camp workers, who feel that they are just a background for the ministry of the Pastor. The Lord says that they are first, they are the ones who are doing the one thing that is closest to the heart of the Lord Himself. Hear Him as He would say today,

"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 18:16).

And, men, if the Lord wanted His disciples to win children, then none of us is excluded if we want to be first with the Lord.

THINGS THAT ARE BETTER

Mark 9:38-50

Intro: The passage we have this morning is a continuation of vv. 33-37--the question about who is the greatest in the sight of the Lord! And also what it means to serve others.

It was important that the disciples get the Lord's point-of-view in all of these things. There are four in number, one of which we had last Sunday. In vv. 33-37 the Lord made it clear that the one who is the greatest in His sight is the one who devotes himself to the interests of others. And the others who have the greatest priority are children.

The Apostle John, who seems to have been sensitive to the Lord's teaching, raises a matter which seems to him to have been wrong in the light of what the Lord has just said. And so we see first of all . . .

I. THE ATTITUDE OF THE TWELVE TOWARD OTHER DISCIPLES (Mark 9:38-41).

IF NO ONE OF THE DISCIPLES WAS GREATER THAN THE REST OF THE TWELVE (from the standpoint of their position), THEN PERHAPS THE TWELVE WERE NOT GREATER THAN THE MANY OTHER DISCIPLES THE LORD HAD.

This may have been a special case, but, nevertheless, it was a real one. Some other disciple had been discovered who was casting out demons--not just once, but apparently many times.

John (and whoever else was with him) told him to stop because he was not one of the twelve. In John's eyes only the twelve had the right to do this.

How revealing the Lord's answer was!

Note the repetition of, "in my (or thy) Name," in vv. 37, 38, 39, 41. This is the key. The person who was doing this did not claim to do it with his own authority, or for his own glory, or as a manifestation of his own will, but in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ! That is, as we saw last Sunday, in accord with His revealed will.

The Lord said, "Forbid him not." And then he went on to explain that the person who did miracles in the Lord's Name cannot turn around and blaspheme Him.

The Lord does not allow men to be neutral with Him (cf. v. 40). Men have to be either for Him, or against Him. We may

for or against Him to different degrees, but the principle still stands.

And (v. 41), even a cup of water given in His Name, i.e., "because ye belong to Christ," would be rewarded.

So, it did not require a great display of power like casting out a demon, but even giving a cup of water carried with it a reward!

FROM THIS WE SEE HOW GREATLY CONCERNED THE LORD IS ABOUT MEETING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS, AND HOW THE LEAST THINGS CAN BE AMONG THE GREATEST.

To know this, and act upon it, is for things to be better among disciples.

II. HOW THINGS CAN BE BETTER AMONG MEN (Mark 9:42-48).

This is one of those passages where the Lord repeats certain statements almost verbatim for the sake of emphasis, and yet each expression is slightly different.

First of all, note that vv. 44 and 46 are not in the best MSS; the verse belongs in v. 48.

Then note that vv. 42, 43, 45, 47 all talk about:

- 1) Offending.
- 2) What is better.
- 3) Being cast into hell.
- 4) Fire.

What does it mean to "offend"?

It means to cause a person to stumble so that he falls into sin. Or, to state it another way, it means "to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey" (Thayer, 576).

We have been talking about being servants of all (v. 35), i.e., being devoted to the interests of others.

In v. 42 the Lord goes back to where He was interrupted by the Apostle John in v. 37--to children.

And He says . . . (read v. 42).

It is a sin to offend anyone, in the sense that we are using the word here, BUT IT IS EVIDENT THAT IT IS SERIOUS BEYOND WHAT MAN CAN REALIZE EVEN IF IT IS ONLY A LITTLE CHILD WHO IS BEING OFFENDED. THE WORLD WOULD BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT

SUCH A PERSON. "It is better . . ." ^{CF. WHAT OUR LORD SAID ABOUT JUDAS IN MARK 14:21.}

It took the strength of a donkey to move the millstone; a man who had it around his neck could not possibly survive!

But then our Lord talks about how we can offend ourselves-- and again He states very specifically how men can be better off. Here He is thinking especially about those who do not know the Lord.

The meaning is this: We really do not need others to cause us to stumble; WE ARE SO PERVERSE AND SO SINFUL IN OURSELVES THAT WE WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SENDING OURSELVES TO HELL.

How?

By the effect that three members of our bodies can have on us:

- 1) The hand (v. 43)--which is used for doing.
- 2) The foot (v. 45)--which is used for going.
- 3) The eye (v. 47)--which is used for seeing, and knowing.

We all treasure our hands, our feet, and our eyes. We have two of each of them. But do you know, if you are without Christ, that you might be better off if you had only one hand, or one foot, or one eye.

What do you do with your hands?

Where have your feet been taking you?

What do you look at with your eyes?

Are any one of these, or all of them, responsible for keeping you from trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior? If so, your need of Christ is so great and the issue involved so important that it would be better for you to be without one or all of them if the alternative means that you are going to hell.

THERE ARE NOT MANY OF US, EVEN OF THOSE WHO KNOW THE LORD, WHO REALLY REALIZE THE UTTER TRAGEDY THAT RESULTS WHEN A PERSON CHOOSES SIN INSTEAD OF CHRIST. As v. 40 indicated, you cannot be neutral. You are either for Him, or against Him. There is no middle ground!

Hell is so certain, and so everlasting that not even a hand, or a foot, or an eye should be permitted to keep you from trusting the Savior.

Finally . . .

III. HOW THINGS CAN BE BETTER WITH EACH DISCIPLE (Mark 9:49, 50).

The Lord now uses the word, "fire," to make the transition that He wants to make to the word, "salt."

He does not say here that the people of God are salt, like He does in Matt. 5:13. He is talking here about being salt-ed!

Salt is used for:

- 1) Preservation.
- 2) Flavoring.

The child of God is to fill these roles in the world. How is he prepared for it?

By fire! What does fire represent? Consider the following passages:

- 1) Jer. 23:29, "Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

We are to allow the Word of God to sit in judgment upon our lives, and then, by the grace of God, to see that our lives are brought into line with the Word.

- 2) Matt. 3:11, "I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance, but he who cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire."

The Spirit of God produces a purifying work in our hearts and in our lives.

- 3) 1 Pet. 1:7, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."
- 4) 1 Pet. 4:12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you . . ."

It is through the Word, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and through our trials that we are being salted with fire.

When this happens we "have salt in ourselves" and we, lit., are at peace with ourselves. There is something about the fire that burns away at the selfish ambition that would put us in the chief place, and which prepares us to be concerned and to minister to others who stand in need of Christ.

Concl: The disciples were concerned about who they were; the Lord wanted them to be concerned with what they were. Only when the latter becomes pre-eminently important will we be salt to a perishing world which has no delight in Christ.

CF. Col. 4:6; PSA. 34:8.

FIRE - A
COMMON
FIGURE IN THE
BIBLE FOR
JUDGMENT.

A SINCERE ANSWER TO THE HYPOCRITES' QUESTION

Mark 10:1-12

Intro: Mark omits a great deal which happened in the ministry of our Lord between chapters 9 and 10. Luke 9:51-18:14 comes in here, plus part of John 7:2-9:54.

The Lord had been many places: Samaria, Bethany (with Mary and Martha), probably Jerusalem, Jericho, etc. He had engaged in other conflicts with the Pharisees. He had taught many things.

Mark omits all of this because it does not fit into the purpose for which he has written this Gospel.

Instead, he comes to the ministry of our Lord in Perea ("by the farther side of the Jordan"), and brings up one of the strongest, most controversial issues of the day: the question of divorce.

The reason that Mark emphasizes it is because the Gentiles had become particularly lax about this, and there was a growing laxity among the Jews (which is the reason why Matthew mentions it).

It obviously had to be an issue on which there was a great deal of division or the Pharisees would never have brought it up.

Thus, we have, first of all . . .

I. A VERY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE (Mark 10:1, 2).

It was an issue for two reasons:

- 1) This was the territory over which Herod Antipas ruled. His adulterous marriage with Herodias had brought about the death of John the Baptist. The Pharisees, in asking this question, must have hoped that it would at least discredit the Lord, and possibly lead to His death. They asked Him, not because they wanted to know, but because they were "testing him," i.e., they wanted to show the people that He was not the Person He claimed to be.
- 2) Among the Jews there were two prominent teachers: Hillel and Shammai. They lived in Jerusalem during the time of Herod, and both of them developed schools. They were opposed to each other on practically every subject. This was true of divorce.
 - a) The followers of Shammai believed in Deut. 24:1-4. They felt that unfaithfulness was the only ground for divorce.
 - b) Hillel was very lax, allowing divorce for almost any reason on the basis that Moses allowed it at all.

Therefore, the Lord seemed to be in trouble regardless of the

answer He gave:

- 1) If He spoke for divorce, then He was taking side against John the Baptist, and against Shammai.
- 2) If he spoke against divorce, then He was opposing Hillel and taking a stand against what Herod had done.

— II. HIS WISE ANSWER (Mark 10:3-9).

Several things are important here.

- A. The fact that He gave an answer. They were "testing Him," but He answered them anyway. Cf. 8:11.

It is important to see this about our Lord. He left men completely without excuse.

- B. He started His answer with a question (cf. v. 3).

This is a good way to deal with those who would dispute with us. Ask them some questions. Find out what they know. Take the offensive!

They had asked, "Is it lawful?" Cf. Mark 2:24, 26; 3:4; 6:18; 12:14. It was a question of the interpretation of the Mosaic Law.

— THE LORD DOES NOT DIRECT THEM TO THE SCHOOLS. HE DOES NOT MENTION EITHER HILLEL OR SHAMMAI. HE TAKES THE PHARISEES DIRECTLY TO THE WORD OF GOD.

This is where people go wrong today; they know what everybody is saying about the Word, but they do not know what the Word says. Moses' opinion was only important because it was through him that God had given His Word to Israel.

The answer was found in Deut. 24:1-4.

And the Pharisees answered the question so as to avoid trouble with either Hillel or Shammai--and even without contradicting Moses (although they did not give all of Moses' words). (See v. 4.)

- C. He pointed out a fact that should have been evident to them (Mark 10:5).

And this would have been evident to them IF THEY HAD DONE ONE THING:

- D. He indicated that they had not gone back to the foundation of this particular doctrine in Scripture. See vv. 6-8.

Here are a couple of good lessons in the study of the Word of God:

- 1) If you are going to understand any truth in Scripture, you must study all that the Word has to say on that particular subject. Even this morning, as we talk about divorce, we do not have the time to take up all that the Bible has to say on the subject. As long as there are two or more passages on any theme, one does not tell the whole story.
And yet people will commonly build their doctrines on just one passage.
- 2) Just as you must get all of the passages, you must recognize that the first passage always is particularly important!

And so, when we come to an apparent contradiction, we must look for the reason.

Why did not God say anything about divorce in Gen. 1, 2, while He did in Deut. 24?

The answer: Because something had happened in the meantime to harden the heart of man. This means to make it dried up, hard, tough, unresponsive.

And what had made it that way?

SIN!

The Lord knew that there would be times when, because of man's sinful heart, it would be impossible for two people to continue to live together. BUT HE ALSO WANTS MEN TO KNOW THAT THIS IS JUST ANOTHER EVIDENCE THAT THE BIBLE IS TRUE WHEN IT POINTS TO THE FACT THAT MAN'S BASIC NEED IS TO SOLVE THE SIN QUESTION.

There would be no divorces if man were not a sinner.

And yet, when you talk to people who are having trouble about marriage, they reject the idea that their relationship with God has anything to do with it!

SINCE GOD IS THE CREATOR, WE NEED TO GET GOD'S PERSPECTIVE ON MARRIAGE--and you have it in Mark 10:6-8. Cf. Gen. 1:27; 2:24.

This is God's perfect will for marriage. It is not a trial. It is for life.

And so, finally, in v. 9, we come to:

E. The Lord's answer. Emphasize "God" and "man."

The last three verses of our passage give us:

III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR THE DISCIPLES (Mark 10:10-12).

Matthew indicates that the Lord said this to the Pharisees too, but Mark singles it out for the disciples. Both are undoubtedly true.

V. 11 is stated from the man's point-of-view.

V. 12, from the woman's.

V. 12 shows the Gentile destination of this Gospel because the Gentiles were very lax about marriage and divorce.

The Law made no provision for the Jewish women to divorce their husbands, but this was beginning to come in, too.

As a general rule, without going into the exceptions, the Lord states very clearly the sin with which a person is charged before God who puts away his husband, or his wife, and marries someone else.

How lightly we take the things which in God's sight are extremely serious! And how far we have wandered in our own country. The laxity of our divorce laws are an indication, not of our enlightenment, but of our depravity!

Concl: What did the Law say about adultery? Two things:

- 1) In Ex. 20:14, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."
- 2) In Lev. 20:10, "And the man who committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he who committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."

How far Israel had wandered from the Word of God!

Why did God allow an exception? Because of sin AND because He wants us to realize that He is a God of grace.

The person who wants a happy life does not think about what he can do and get away with it (at least for a time), but he thinks about what God wants him to do.

Remember: This passage does not tell it all. But it does set the standard. So that, in this, as well as in everything else that touches our lives, we need to see the dreadful effects of sin, turn to the Savior, and, by the grace of God, live our lives doing His will.

THE DISPLEASURE OF THE LORD

Mark 10:13-16

Intro: From the Gospel of Mark alone we learn that there were many things which the disciples did which grieved the

Lord:

- 1) He must have been grieved when the disciples wanted to send the 5,000 away before they were fed.
- 2) He was grieved when they did not understand what He was talking about when He spoke to them about the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod.
- 3) He rebuked Peter when Peter rejected what He had to say about His coming death.
- 4) And when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration and spoke to His disciples who had not been able to cast out the demon, again He was grieved.

BUT NOTHING GRIEVED HIM MORE THAN WHAT THE DISCIPLES DID IN THE PASSAGE WE HAVE BEFORE US THIS MORNING. It is the only time that Mark or any other Gospel writer speaks of the Lord as being "much displeased." It is a very strong expression, and justifies us in referring to this passage as teaching us, The Displeasure of the Lord.

If we want to know how to please the Lord, then it will obviously help us to know what displeases Him. Therefore, this passage deserves our careful consideration.

A passage about children very naturally follows one about marriage and divorce. Just as husbands and wives need to understand vv. 1-12, so they need also to understand vv. 13-16!

In these four verses we have three things:

- 1) Parents (we assume) bringing their children to the Lord.
- 2) The disciples rebuking the parents.
- 3) The attitude, words, and action of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. PARENTS BRINGING THEIR CHILDREN TO THE LORD (Mark 10:13).

Probably parents are not mentioned because it must be assumed that they were the ones who brought the children.

What a testimony this is to the way the Lord attracted people

This is something which ought to attract the attention of every parent. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GETTING THE BEST FOR YOUR CHILDREN, THEN YOU CANNOT IGNORE THIS FACT: PARENTS IN OUR LORD'S DAY WANTED TO BRING THEIR CHILDREN TO THE LORD SO THAT HE COULD TOUCH THEM, TAKE THEM IN HIS ARMS, AND BLESS THEM, PRAYING FOR THEM!

What an example for every parents to follow!

The parents did not seek out the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the scribes, BUT THEY DID SEEK THE LORD WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

But the amazing thing in this whole account is in . . .

II. WHAT THE DISCIPLES DID (Mark 10:13b).

They "rebuked" those who were bringing the children.

The verb "brought" indicates that the people were coming, and coming, and coming--that they kept on coming. The line was long, and the disciples could see that this would take a long, long time!

So "his disciples rebuked those that brought" the children.

This not only carries with it the idea of censure, or rebuke, BUT IT ALSO MEANS THAT THE DISCIPLES RESTRAINED, AND, PERHAPS, EVEN THREATENED THE PEOPLE.

And--it would seem that they were being successful UNTIL the Lord intervened.

From a practical point-of-view there was never a time of greater blundering and failure than at this moment. The disciples should have known better, too, after what we have already had in Mark 9:36, 37. Here were men be trained to be Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the following verses show, they manifest that they do not understand their MISSION, but neither do they fully understand their MESSAGE.

Let us now look at . . .

III. THE ATTITUDE, THE WORDS, AND THE ACTION OF THE LORD (Mark 10:14-16).

A. The attitude (Mark 10:14a): "But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased."

This was a repetition of what our Lord felt in His heart when, just before The Flood, we find these words recorded:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. 6:5, 6).

It seems to us that it would be very natural for the disciples to know that parents should bring their children to Jesus, BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE. Man's heart is so depraved that, throughout the history of the Church, there probably would not have been much, if anything, done to win boys and girls to Christ IF our Lord had not spoken the words which we have in this passage.

What did the Lord say? Let us note very carefully, word for word . . .

B. The words of our Lord (Mark 10:14b, 15).

They come under four headings:

1. A positive command: "Permit the little children to come unto me."

This was for the disciples.

There is a special emphasis upon the Lord in all that we have had thus far. The parents were bringing the children to the Lord, so that He could touch them. Now the Lord says, "Permit the little children to come unto me."

This positive command is strengthened with . . .

2. A negative command: "Forbid them not." (The best MSS leave out, And.) This makes it even stronger. It is saying the same thing twice to get the point across.

They were to stop hindering the children from coming.

Why? Would you dare to ask a question like this? Our Lord answers this question before it is asked:

3. The explanation: "For of such is the kingdom of God."

First of all, what does the Lord mean by the term, the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God speaks of the work that God is doing in the world, a work which has to do with the salvation of men. Sometimes we see it in Scripture in its literal aspect (such as the kingdom that Israel is anticipating); sometimes we see it in its spiritual aspect--what God is doing to win the hearts of men. To enter into the kingdom of God is to be saved.

"Of such" means just exactly what the Lord goes on to say in v. 15.

So let us look now at . . .

4. The elaboration (Mark 10:15).

"Verily I say unto you"--authority, truthfulness, importance.

From what follows we learn these important truths about salvation:

- 1) No one is born in it.
- 2) Even little children need to be saved.
- 3) To enter, you must become like a little child.
- 4) You enter by receiving--not by doing.

Let us not get a mistaken idea here. It takes the same death of Christ to save a child as it does to save an adult. It takes the same convicting work of the Holy Spirit to save a child as to save an adult. BUT HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW UNSPOILED CHILDREN ARE, HOW RECEPTIVE, HOW EAGER TO LEARN, HOW ANXIOUS TO PLEASE, HOW TRUSTING, HOW DEPENDENT, HOW LOVING.

Adults, on the other hand, are sophisticated, disinterested, skeptical, indifferent, etc.

NO ONE WILL EVER BE SAVED UNTIL IN THE SIMPLE DEPENDENCE OF A LITTLE CHILD HE PUTS HIS FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO SAVE HIM.

And it is just as important for the servant of the Lord to remember this, as for the world to know it!

Now we are ready to see . . .

C. The action of the Lord (Mark 10:16).

If you were asked to give what you believe to be the most beautiful, the most touching, scene in Scripture, what would your choice be?

- 1) Creation?
- 2) Abraham offering Isaac?
- 3) Joseph reunited with his brothers, and later with Jacob?
- 4) Hannah with Samuel?
- 5) David weeping over Absalom?
- 6) The return of the prodigal son?

What would it be?

Surely one that would be among the top choices, if not

THE top, would be the one we have before us in v. 16: Our dear Lord, taking the children, one by one, in His arms, blessing them, praying for them.

How embarrassed the disciples must have been! What a wonderful thing to contemplate!

Concl.: The Lord used a failure, a dreadful mistake, to teach some very important lessons. Let me just mention three in closing:

- 1) We must not neglect the children. They need the Lord, too.
- 2) We who know the Lord must not forget that we are the child-
ren of God. Nothing pleases Him more than for us to keep that child-like spirit.
- 3) Let us not forget in this sophisticated age that v. 16 is still true. Let us not change the Gospel to reach men, but let men know that this is the only way that they can come.

THE MAN WHO WENT AWAY
Mark 10:17-22

Intro: The scene for this incident in the life of our Lord is portrayed by three verses in chapter 10: vv. 1, 17, 32. The Lord had left the eastern side of the Jordan and was moving in the direction of Jerusalem.

Just where this wealthy, young, devout Jew, a ruler in his synagogue, came to the Lord, we do not know. But the whole incident is so full of wonderful truth that John Mark inserts it (as Matthew and Luke do) for the tremendously important instruction which we find here.

It provides us with some wonderful principles for personal evangelism.

It shows us that not even our Lord was able to win every person He talked to.

And it teaches us that our Lord always adapted His approach to the person He was talking to.

We shall see more about these things as we go along.

First of all, let us notice . . .

I. THE MAN WHO CAME, AND HIS MANNER (Mark 10:17).

Matthew tells us that he was "young"--a term which indicates that he was between 24 and 40. Luke tells us that he was "a certain ruler"--which probably means one of the presiding officers in the local synagogue.

From Mark's description of his coming we would see that there was both urgency and humility manifested in his manner. Even Mark's use of the word, "one," indicates such a great concern that he came all by himself.

It is very similar to the time when Nicodemus came to the Lord.

What did he want to know?

He wanted to know this: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

ALL OF THIS IS VERY INTERESTING! Here was a man who must have been very intimately acquainted with the synagogue and the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, but he did not know how he could obtain "eternal life"--a term which is used only here in Mark, but which is found many times in John.

Mark, in 9:43, 45, wrote of entering into life, and in 9:47 of entering into the kingdom of God, but that is all the light Mark gives us on this. (But cf. John 3:3, 5, 14-17.) The Jews had to have had some understanding that there was personal preparation which needed to be made for salvation and for entering the Messianic Kingdom. The ministry of John the Baptist would indicate this.

But notice: HE THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING FOR HIM TO DO--TO DO ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL TO SETTLE THE QUESTION FOR HIM. "What shall I do . . . ?"

Instead of correcting him right away, the Lord approached him on the basis of what he would need to do. It is important for us to see this principle!

II. THE FIRST WORDS OF THE LORD (Mark 10:18, 19).

First of all, there is . . .

A. A question (Mark 10:18).

Even though we might think that it is unrelated, the Lord asked about an adjective which this wealthy, young ruler used. He had called the Lord, "Good Master," or, Good Teacher.

If you want to know the truth about eternal life, the first lesson that you have to learn is that, "There is none good but one, that is, God."

The word means:

- 1) One who is good by nature.
- 2) One who benefits people instead of corrupting them.
- 3) One who fulfills a service or ministry.

This rich, young ruler needed to know this or he would never be able to understand his own need.

But there is another point in this: Instead of denying His own Deity, the Lord seems to be probing to find out if this man had used the term, good, because he had detected a similarity between God and the Lord.

This, too, is absolutely essential. The question that was asked of our Lord struck at the very heart of His ministry, and it was something which only He could do.

B. The answer to the ruler's question (Mark 10:19).

Some people will begin to say immediately, WHAT A FLAGRANT DENIAL OF THE GOSPEL! But wait! The Lord is

answering the question in v. 17. IF YOU ARE TO GET TO HEAVEN BY WHAT YOU DO, THIS IS THE WAY! You have to be perfectly obedient to the Mosaic Law--all of it!

Read them. They all come from the second part of the Law--the part that deals with man's relationship with other men.

If salvation is by works, this is the way.

III. THE MAN'S RESPONSE (Mark 10:20).

We might be taken aback by his response, but the Lord did not contradict him.

Do you remember that Paul wrote to the Philippian church, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:6b). We must learn that there are some very, very moral people in the Lord who do not know the Lord. This ruler was very devout, scrupulously avoiding anything that would harm, in any way, his fellow man.

He must have been a very outstanding person!

BUT DO NOT MISS THIS: HE WAS STILL A VERY UNHAPPY, DISSATISFIED MAN WHO KNEW THAT HE WAS NOT RIGHT WITH GOD.

What a commentary this is upon the effect of our good works!

IV. THE LORD'S NEXT WORDS (Mark 10:21).

Now the Lord is going to move right in to tell this distressed man what he wanted to know. But before Mark tells us what the Lord said, He tells us what the Lord did:

"Jesus, beholding him, loved him."

This is the same word for love that is used in John 3:16. It is the kind of love which is there even when the person doing the loving knows all about the person he is loving.

This man's problem was not moral, but material. He had "great possessions"--a term which in classical Greek means land, property, estates.

He thought that the more you had, the happier, more secure you would be. He apparently did not know that the Lord had said,

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

But let us be perfectly clear here.

It is not a sin to be rich. Nor are we to think that all rich men must get rid of their riches in order to be pleasing to God. There are many wealthy men who know the Lord and who honor the Lord with their riches. BUT THERE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY MANY MAN IN THE WORLD WHO HAVE GREAT WEALTH, AND WHO ARE ALLOWING THEIR WEALTH TO STAND BETWEEN THEM AND THE LORD--WHILE THEY KNOW FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE THAT THEIR WEALTH DOES NOT MEET THE NEEDS OF THEIR HEARTS, OR PREPARE THEM TO MEET GOD!

Not every rich man needs to get rid of his wealth, BUT THIS MAN DID. MONEY EVIDENTLY WAS HIS GOD--even though he did not know it!

What did the Lord say to him? Three things:

- 1) Get rid of what is standing in the way of your salvation so you can be rich in heaven.
- 2) "Come" to me. Our Lord said on another occasion, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

We need Him. We must put our faith in Him. It is not a question of what WE are to do, but of what HE has done and will do for us when we trust Him.

- 3) "And follow me." "Take up the cross" is not in the best MSS. But taking up the cross (cf. Mark 8:34) is involved in following the Lord. They mean surrender to the will of God and walking each day in obedience to His Word.

THIS is not only how you can obtain eternal life, but the Lord took it a step further: THIS IS HOW YOU CAN ENJOY IT AS YOU MAKE YOUR WAY TO HEAVEN. And, it must also be said, that obedience to the Lord is the first great evidence that one has been truly born again.

V. THE MAN'S DECISION (Mark 10:22).

The only other time this word, "sad," is used in the NT is in Matt. 16:3 where we have a description of an overcast sky. Clouds suddenly came over this man's heart, and he "went away grieved," i.e., with inward grief, in mourning.

AND THE TRAGIC THING IS THAT MARK STATES IT LIKE HE NEVER CAME BACK AGAIN!

How appropriate are the words of the servants of Naaman the Syrian:

"My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13).

If the Lord had told the rich young ruler to do something, or to pay something, he would have been joyful. But when He told him what He did, the clouds settled in.

What a price to pay! The only alternative to eternal life is eternal death!

Concl: Is there someone like this man here this morning? Do you have a hungry heart? You know that things are not right in your life--that is why you came this morning. But there are things standing in your way. Perhaps it is sin, or your involvement in business, or money, or just your own pride. If it were a question of doing something, you would do it. BUT JUST TO COME TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE HAS TO COME DOES NOT SATISFY YOU.

ARE YOU LIKE THE YOUNG, WEALTHY, RELIGIOUS MAN IN OUR STORY THIS MORNING. NOTHING HE HAD, NOTHING HE HAD DONE, HIS POSITION IN HIS TOWN--NONE OF IT SATISFIED HIM, NONE OF IT GAVE HIM PEACE, NONE WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM RIGHT WITH GOD. BUT HE WOULD NOT LISTEN TO ANYTHING ELSE.

And so he went out--and, as far as we know, he never came back!

What would the consequences be? Eternal death. Eternal separation from God. Eternal damnation.

There is only one way to obtain eternal life. (Quote John 3:16.)

FIRST AND LAST WITH GOD
Mark 10:23-31

Intro: In Mark 9:30-10:31 we have a full division in Mark's Gospel. This is indicated by the fact that in 10:32 we get back to the same theme that we had in 9:30, 31, although the place mentioned is different.

Two thoughts dominate this passage (Mark 9:30-10:31):

- 1) Entering the Kingdom of God, or entering into life, or being saved.
- 2) Humility, as the indispensable characteristic of the Lord's people. It is required for entering; it is required for the greatest blessing after you enter.

In 10:31 we have "the first" and "the last" mentioned.

But they were also mentioned in 9:35.

By bringing these two passages together we see what the Lord was talking about, and that it runs right through this entire division in Mark's Gospel. Read it through at one sitting and you will be able to see the emphases which the Lord is making.

As we come to our passage for this morning, we realize that the Lord has just seen the rich young ruler turn and go away with great sorrow in his heart "for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:22).

After this the Lord turns to teach His disciples what this experience should teach them about salvation. From that we go on to a lesson about service.

I. THE LESSON ABOUT SALVATION (Mark 10:23-27).

We cannot fully appreciate this passage unless we understand how the Jews felt about riches. (Read Deut. 28:1-14.) Riches were to them indisputable evidence of God's favor upon the rich person.

Therefore, they were "astonished" in v. 24, and "astonished out of measure" in v. 26, when the Lord said what He did in vv. 23-25. What is expressed as a difficulty in vv. 23, 24 becomes an impossibility in v. 25. The reason: vv. 23, 24 refer to the human standpoint; v. 25, to the divine.

Note how tenderly the Lord addresses them: "Children."

This

"reflects the love and tenderness in his heart for the disciples. To Jesus they are indeed 'children' who still have so much to learn and require such careful instruction" (Lenski, 440).

And we must not explain away the illustration that the Lord uses in v. 25. The Lord is not speaking of a gate just big enough for a man to pass through a wall into a city; HE IS SPEAKING OF AN ORDINARY NEEDLE. LUKE CALLS IT A SURGICAL NEEDLE.

We say, But this does not make sense! EXACTLY! The Lord did not intend for it to make sense BECAUSE IT MAKES JUST AS MUCH SENSE FOR A MAN TO TALK ABOUT DOING SOMETHING TO PURCHASE, OR TO EARN, HIS OWN SALVATION.

This is why the disciples asked, "Who, then, can be saved?"

The Lord's answer: Read v. 27. WHENEVER YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT SALVATION, YOU MUST BE CAREFUL TO POINT OUT, "WITH MEN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE"! This is the first thing a person must learn if he wants to enter the Kingdom of God, i.e., if he wants to be saved. (The disciples question shows that to enter the Kingdom of God means to be saved. Cf. vv. 23, 24 with v. 26.)

BUT, in speaking to people about salvation, BE SURE TO TELL THEM ALSO, "BUT NOT WITH GOD; FOR WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE."

Do you know that this last statement comes out of the OT? And that there is another reference to it in the NT?

- 1) Gen. 18:27, concerning the promise that Sarah would have a son, Sarah herself laughed. But then the Lord said, "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."
- 2) Jer. 32:17, where Jeremiah is speaking of the work of God as Creator: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and outstretched arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."
- 3) Job 42:2, where we have what Job said after the Lord had spoken of His sovereignty and of His mighty works and wonders: "I know that thou canst do every thing . . ."
- 4) Luke 1:37, where Gabriel is telling Mary that she is going to have a son, just as barren Elisabeth was then six months with child, the assurance being . . . "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

IF GOD WAS ABLE TO BRING THIS UNIVERSE INTO BEING, IF GOD CONTINUES TO BE SOVEREIGN OVER THE AFFAIRS OF MEN AND NATIONS, IF HE CAN GIVE SONS TO SARAH AND TO ELISABETH WHEN IT WAS KNOWN THAT THEY WERE BARREN, AND CAN EVEN GIVE A SON TO THE VIRGIN MARY WHEN SHE KNEW NOT A MAN--THEN ALL OF THESE BE-

COME PROOFS FROM WHAT OUR LORD SAID THAT HE CAN SAVE MEN WHEN OTHERWISE IT IS ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE.

Remember the camel and the needles eye!

Cf. Isa. 55:1; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. Also, Eph. 2:8, 9.

The disciples had to understand this. And so must we. That is why we have these teachings following the rich, moral, devout, young ruler. None of these things, nor all of them put together was enough! And he knew it or he would never have come to the Lord!

But now, because of what Peter says in swinging the pendulum to the opposite side, we have . . .

II. THE LESSON ABOUT SERVICE AND REWARDS (Mark 10:28-31).

Peter's statement:

- 1) "Lo"--introduces something very important.
- 2) "We"--emphatic, as compared with the rich young ruler.
- 3) "Have left all"--a once-for-all departure, and they had never gone back to what they had left.
- 4) "And have followed thee"--a perfect, meaning that they started and had continued right up to the present.

Matthew says that Peter added,

"What shall we have, therefore?" (Matt. 19:27b).

Obviously Peter's statement and question reveal the wrong attitude. However, the Lord does not rebuke him immediately. Instead, he answers the question. Remember: He called them, "Children."

His answer is just as unbelievable, just as far beyond the realm of possibility, as that which we have already seen in the lesson about salvation.

It is introduced by the 7th time that John Mark uses our Lord's, "Verily I say unto you"--denoting importance, truth, authority.

"Left" is like "hate" in Luke 14:26--it means to love the Lord the most, to put Him first.

"For my sake, and the gospel's"--not for the reward, not to earn salvation, but to trust Him as Savior, and then to tell others about Him!

What is the guaranteed promise? It has two parts:

- 1) "An hundredfold now in this time"--for the present.
Figure out what this would mean to you! 100 mothers, etc.

"With persecutions"--How realistic the Lord is! But even these mean blessing. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:6, 7,

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations (or trials), That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

- 2) And this is the reason that the Lord goes on to . . .
 "And in the age to come, eternal life." Cf. Eph. 2:7.

He does not mean that we have to wait until then before we have eternal life. Cf. John 3:16; 5:24; 1 John 5:13,

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, . . ."

BUT HE DOES MEAN THAT IT WILL TAKE ALL ETERNITY TO REWARD YOU AND ME FOR TRUSTING HIM, LOVING HIM, AND SERVING HIM AS WE WALK WITH HIM.

But, in conclusion, the warning. Read v. 31. It goes back where this division of Mark's Gospel began (see 9:35).

Being first then did not guarantee that they would always be first. That would be determined by HOW they did WHAT they did, and not just the fact that they did it first.

See the parable in Matt. 20:1-16 which illustrates this.

Humility determines who will be first.

Concl: So there is something for all of us here:

- 1) The hope of salvation for all because it is a work of God.
- 2) The hope of rewards for believers because of the same gracious way God deals with those of us who know Him.

How our hearts should be filled to overflowing with praise and gratitude for such marvelous truths!

ON THE WAY UP TO JERUSALEM
 Mark 10:32-34

Intro: This is the third time that we have come to a passage like this in Mark's Gospel. The other two are found in 8:31 and 9:31.

If we knew nothing about the Gospel, this fact alone would make us realize that the events which our Lord spoke about on these three occasions were extremely important.

You may remember that John Mark began his gospel by writing these words,

"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

What is the Gospel?

Most people would respond to tell the world to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is the Gospel. But this is only a part of the Gospel--the last part!

Paul actually defines the Gospel in 1 Cor. 15:1-5. It is this:
 "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and . . . He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures, and He was seen . . ."

Of course, it is necessary to believe, to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, or the work which Christ did 2,000 years ago will mean nothing to us. But you cannot preach the Gospel without preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

With this background, it is extremely interesting as we consider these three passages in Mark 8, 9, 10 that our Lord said nothing about why He was going to die; He only spoke of the fact that He would die.

It is like understanding anything else--you have to understand the facts before you can possibly be in any position to interpret what they mean.

So, obviously, our Lord's purpose in all of these three passages is to get the facts before His disciples.

But, before we consider these verses in ch. 10, let us notice a contrast which is apparent in all three chapters--just before Mark records these words of the Lord Jesus Christ. EACH ONE IS PRECEDED BY A DISPLAY OF OUR LORD'S GLORY:

- 1) In chapter 8, the glory of His Person, i.e., the Christ.
- 2) In chapter 9, the glory of His power, i.e., in delivering the demon-possessed boy.
- 3) In chapter 10, the glory of His promises--extending even to

eternity. Cf. 10:29, 30 especially.

The contrast serves to emphasize both--the glory and the humiliation which ultimately leads back to glory in the resurrection. (Comment on the passage in each chapter--8, 9, 10.)

In the passage before us this morning we have basically the same things as before, with some additions and great details. Let us consider these verses carefully.

I. AN EMPHASIS UPON THE CITY: JERUSALEM.

What memories are attached to this city!

David was the one who established it as the capital of all Israel.

This was the city of the king--where he lived.

This was the place where Solomon built the Temple.

It was, therefore, the national and spiritual center of Israel.

You read about the city of Jerusalem in the Psalms, and in most of the prophets.

It is to the mount of Olives, just outside of the city of Jerusalem (and yet really a part of it) that our Lord is going to return.

This is where our Lord is now going. Mark writes, "And they were on the way going up to Jerusalem." And the first words of our Lord in this passage are, "Behold (an expression used to call attention to something important), we go up to Jerusalem." Jerusalem had not been mentioned in either of the two preceding passages.

II. AN EMPHASIS UPON THE SON OF MAN.

In the approximately 80 times that this title is used in the four Gospels, it is always and only used by the Lord with reference to Himself. Without trying to be, this is one of the special places where the writers of the four Gospels are in perfect harmony with each other.

We could call this our Lord's favorite title.

What does it mean?

- 1) It emphasizes the fact that He was a human being.
- 2) It indicates that He represents man. He never spoke of Himself as a son of Eve.

- 3) It also speaks of His redemptive mission in the world. Cf. Mark 10:45.
- 4) Finally, it even identifies Him as the Messiah. Cf. Mark 14:61, 62.

All of this gradually unfolds through the Gospels. Terms in the Bible are often defined by the way they are used, as well as by what they actually mean.

Thus, all of the meaning of the title, "the Son of man," is involved in what He was going to Jerusalem to do.

Is it any wonder that He walked ahead, by Himself, deep in contemplation and silence, until His disciples wondered at Him, and were struck with fear?

III. THE GREATEST EMPHASIS: UPON WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO HIM IN JERUSALEM.

Keep in mind the glory that precedes each one of these passages in the three chapters: 8, 9, 10! Can it be that such a Person, with such power, who could make such promises, be humiliated in such terrible ways? Does this not actually disprove His claims about Himself?

If you are in doubt as to the answer to these questions, wait until you have the whole account before you.

But notice to begin with that our Lord was going to the very place where the authorities could apprehend Him and do all of these things. He went to Jerusalem knowing that all of this would happen.

- A. He would be delivered into the hands of the Sanhedrin-- the chief priests and the scribes.

The emphasis is upon what MEN would do to Him. Judas would be primarily responsible for this.

- B. Their action: condemned to death. However, only Rome could carry out the death penalty.

See Pilate's question in Mark 15:14 relative to His guilt. His trial was illegal and the verdict without any reason whatever.

And so they delivered "Him to the Gentiles," i.e., the Romans.

- C. What the Romans would do. Here our Lord mentions four things:

1. "They shall mock Him." All of the future verbs emphasize the certainty of the predictions.

Cf. Mark 15:16-20. To mock means to play with a person like a cat does with a mouse. The object is to humiliate.

2. "And shall spit upon Him" (this follows the mocking in the Greek text). This showed their utter contempt, their absolute scorn. Under the Law, a person was shamed for seven days when someone spit on them. Cf. Num. 12:14.

Not satisfied with this, they would . . .

3. "Scourge Him." The scourge was made of leather thongs. Sometimes the end of the thongs held lead, spikes, and/or bones which tore the body of the one being scourged.

Cf. Isaiah's prophecy in 52:14. Cf. also Mark 15:15.

4. "And shall kill him." The humiliation and torture led ultimately to death--death by crucifixion! Cf. Phil 2:8.

We cannot go into the reasons for His death. That is beyond our Scripture this morning, but I must say why He died. Let me use the words of Isaiah the prophet:

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5, 6).

Finally, we have . . .

IV. AN EMPHASIS ON THE OUTCOME.

Did it all end in death? NO! The Lord here makes one of the most amazing predictions of all time: "And the third day He shall rise again." The time is set and the event is named. By RESURRECTION the Lord would overrule:

- 1) Rome.
- 2) The Sanhedrin.
- 3) Death.
- 4) Even sin!

The Gospel is never complete unless the preaching of the death of Christ is followed with the preaching of His resurrection!

Concl: And all of it came true just as the Lord predicted!

"One day they led Him up Calvary's mountain,
One day they nailed Him to die on the tree;
Suffering anguish, despised and rejected,
Bearing my sins, my Redeemer is He!

"One day the grave could conceal Him no longer,
One day the stone rolled away from the door;
Then He arose, over death He has conquered;
Now is ascended, my Lord evermore!

"Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever:
One day He's coming--oh, glorious day!

On that day when the Lord went up to Jerusalem with His disciples,
He was trying to tell them about a part of this. Luke concludes
his account with these words:

"And they understood none of these things; and this saying
was hidden from them, neither knew they the things which
were spoken" (Luke 18:34).

How tragic, and how unnecessary! Thank God we can rejoice in
these truths this morning, and, in the light of them, we can
approach the Lord's table to remember Him!

THE LORD'S WORK IN THE NEW YEAR
Mark 10:35-45

Intro: We are continuing this morning with our consideration of the Gospel of Mark, but I would like for us to think about this passage in relation to the new year: 1973. There are many things in this passage of Scripture which can be extremely helpful for us as the old year goes out and the new year comes in.

What are some of the lessons which can be helpful to us?

I. THE APPLICATION OF TRUTH WE ALREADY KNOW.

If you have been reading through or studying the Gospel of Mark and come to the passage which we have before us this morning, you will probably say to yourself, "I have read something like this before in this book!" And you would be right.

Turn back to 9:33-37.

How do you think the Lord feels about this? We move into a new area of our lives, and we talk and pray like there were certain truths we have never heard before--when the actual fact of the matter is that we know them very well!

And, it can be said that our application of the truth, or failure to do so, is never more evident than in the way we pray. Since Jesus Christ is Lord, and the disciples were making a request of Him, this is a prayer. BUT, IF WE EVER HAD AN ILLUSTRATION OF JAMES 4:2, WE HAVE IT HERE!

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Let us remember in 1973 that prayer and the Word must go together--making the Word of God the very foundation upon which we make our requests to the Lord.

II. THE HARMONY OF ALL SCRIPTURE.

How entirely out of keeping is the request of James and John (which Matthew attributes to their mother in Matt. 20:20) with the things recorded just before. See Mark 10:32-34.

Actually their request indicates that they had considerable understanding of Scripture. It is true that the Lord will one day be glorified, or, as Matthew (20:21) indicates, come in His kingdom. I hope you understand that.

But He was going to have to suffer, die, and be raised from the dead first.

How quickly the Lord brings them back to this truth in vv. 38-40!

On the meaning of drinking the cup, cf. Mark 14:36,

"And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee. Take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

And so it points to His sufferings on the cross.

On the meaning of baptism here (a special meaning), cf. Luke 12:50,

"But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I constrained till it be accomplished!"

So this refers to His sufferings to--being immersed in suffering and sorrow as He had been immersed in water by John the Baptist.

So, for them, as for the Lord, there must be a proper understanding of the truth. We are not promised glory here, but we are promised suffering--suffering for the sake of the Gospel, and for the Lord. See the following verses:

- 1) John 15:20,
"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also."
- 2) 1 Pet. 4:12, 13,
"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial . . ."
- 3) Phil. 1:29, 30,
"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on His name, but also to suffer for His sake, Having the same conflict . . ."
- 4) 2 Tim. 3:12,
"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

In 1973 may the Lord keep us from ever distorting the Gospel by any attempt to popularize it!

James was going to lay down his life for the Lord. Cf. Acts 12:2, speaking of Herod, Luke writes,

"And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword."

Years later John, with much greater understanding, would write,

"I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

But whatever the sufferings may be, we, too, can say with the Apostle Paul,

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

III. A TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORK OF THE LORD.

Note why the Lord says that He could not grant their request as He states it in v. 40--"it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."

In other words, This is not something yet to be decided; it already has been decided!

We do not choose our places of ministry, do we? If we think we do, then we need our understanding cleared up on this, too. THE LORD PUTS US WHERE HE WANTS US TO BE. HE DOES THIS NOW, AND HE DOES IT FOR OUR MINISTRY IN HEAVEN, TOO.

Therefore, selfish ambition is out!

Competition is out, too!

What honor and dignity and joy and peace can be experienced when we know we are where we are, doing what we are doing, because it is the Lord's will for us.

Let us remember this in 1973.

IV. THE PROBLEM OF BROKEN FELLOWSHIP.

Cf. v. 41.

Would it not be wonderful if we could be assured that during 1973 there would be no rifts, no broken fellowship, among those of us who know the Lord?

Here is one reason for broken fellowship: when our lives, our desires, get out of harmony with the Word of God and the will of God.

It was the beloved Apostle John himself who wrote,
 "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

V. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAN'S WAYS AND GOD'S.

Cf. vv. 42-44. "Accounted to rule" is, lit., seem to rule. In other words, things are really not like they look.

If you want to be "great" in God's eyes, and even "first" among the great, then you must become a "minister" and a "servant."

A "servant" is a bondservant, one who has no rights of his own. A "minister" is one who serves the interests of others instead of his own.

Read again our Lord's words in vv. 28-31--another illustration of the point made under I. this morning.

The way to be great before the Lord is to be humble; the way up is down!

VI. THE LIFE AND EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD.

How important it is to have the example of "great" men! All of us have been influenced by others. How important to be influenced by the right ones! Either through books, or in actual experience, walk with those who are "great" in God's sight. There have been many such people in my own life--our choir director at home, Dr. Chafer, Dr. Mitchell, and many, many others--some ladies, and often young people!

BUT THERE IS NO GREATER EXAMPLE THAN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

King David once wrote,

"I have set the Lord always before me" (Psa. 16:8a).

The prophet Isaiah wrote,

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3).

The Apostle Paul wrote,

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."
Cf. Phil. 2:5.

Mark 10:45 gives us the very words of our Lord Himself.
(Read them.)

The Apostle Paul and dear Dr. Luke have rescued from obscurity a most wonderful statement from the lips of our Lord, found nowhere else in the Scriptures,

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35b).

IF YOU WANT 1973 TO BE A HAPPY YEAR, THEN YOU MUST THINK IN TERMS OF WHAT YOU CAN GIVE TO OTHERS--NOT WHAT YOU MIGHT RECEIVE FROM OTHERS!

What did the Lord give? He gave His life. What for? That

you and I might be redeemed (which is the meaning of the word, "ransom") from our sin.

Think of our Lord as He is referred to in Heb. 12:2,
 "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our
 faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, . . ."

Concl: Two things as we close.

- 1) For some, 1973 will be the greatest year of all because it will be the year when they will come to know the Lord as Savior.

But, if you are here this morning and have never received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you do not need to wait for 1973. You can trust Him and be saved this morning.

However, you must understand this. You will be saved from the eternal judgment of God, NOT BY WHAT YOU GIVE TO THE LORD NOR BY WHAT YOU DO FOR HIM, BUT ONLY THROUGH WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU AND WANTS TO GIVE YOU.

"I give unto them eternal life" is what He said in John 10:28a.

Paul wrote in Rom. 6:23, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Why not receive eternal life by trusting Him today?

- 2) For those of us who know the Lord, Mark 10:45 is especially for us--a reminder of a principle which finds its greatest illustration in the life of our Lord. If we want to be happy and blessed of the Lord, then we must not live for what we will receive, but for what we can give to others.

The Lord may come in 1973. No new year's message would be complete without remembering this. But, until He does come, let us pray that, each day, through the testimony of our lives, we may be giving to people, by the grace of God, those blessings which have come to us from the Lord Himself. This is the way that 1973 can be the greatest year we have ever lived!

A BLIND MAN'S CRY
Mark 10:46-52

Intro: The Gospels do not give us a biography of Christ--even all of them together. Neither are they just a collection of stories taken from the life of our Lord. Nor are they a record of the messages which He preached.

Each Gospel was written with a different group in mind.

Each Gospel has its own distinctive characteristics. Even in relating the same story, one writer will include some things not mentioned by the others, and vice versa.

Each record is a continuous account. One thing leads to another. Such is the relationship between the passage we had last Sunday, and the passage we come to this Sunday. Our passage closed last week with these words in v. 45,

"For even the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Thus, Mark has gotten down to the basic reason for the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was to provide "a ransom" for men, i.e., redemption from sin.

It is quite reasonable, therefore, to expect that the following passage would have something to do with this. And it does--as a consideration of vv. 46-52 will prove to us!

This account is found in Matthew and also in Luke (Matt. 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43).

Matthew follows the same pattern which Mark does, i.e., Matt. 20:28 is like Mark 10:45.

Luke, however, does not record those words. Instead, he follows the account with the story of Zacchaeus. Then, at the end, he writes,

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

SO THE PURPOSE IS THE SAME IN ALL CASES: TO SHOW HOW THE LORD MINISTERED SALVATION TO MEN IN JERICOHO.

All of this would mean that we have more in the story of Bartimaeus than just the healing of a blind man.

To begin with, let us notice . . .

I. OUR INTRODUCTION TO BARTIMAEUS (Mark 10:46).

We know now that the Romans had built a new Jericho about a

mile south of the ancient Jericho. Thus, there is no discrepancy when Matthew and Mark write that the Lord was just coming out of Jericho, but Luke says that they were just coming into Jericho. One is talking about the new Jericho; the others are talking about the old Jericho. The miracle took place between the two cities.

Mark makes sure that we understand what Bartimaeus means. It means, son of Timaeus. In the Gk., the explanation of the name comes before the name. Therefore, Timaeus must have been somebody special--perhaps a wealthy Jew, perhaps even a believer in Christ. But the fact that Bartimaeus was the son of Timaeus made his condition all the more amazing. He was blind, and he was begging.

Blindness was a common affliction. Historians estimate that in some town as many as half of the population had eye trouble. Many were blind. This was because of:

- 1) The dust.
- 2) The glaring sun.
- 3) The poor sanitary conditions.
- 4) The contagious character of the diseases.

However, even though all of this was true, there seems to be the suggestion that Bartimaeus had fallen into all of this trouble because of some things that he had done.

II. THE MEANING OF HIS CRY (Mark 10:47, 48).

The fact that this is repeated is evidence of its importance.

Evidently the Lord had become known as, "Jesus of Nazareth." But to Bartimaeus He was much more. He was "Jesus, the Son of David."

From all that Mark has recorded so far, no one has called our Lord by this name! What does it mean?

It means that Bartimaeus believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah! The Syrophenician woman had used this term, but Mark does not record it (although Matthew does). Mark saves it until now because he is making a special point! And this is the only time that he gives us the plea, "Have mercy on me"--a common OT expression, especially in the Psalms, for a prayer addressed to God!

And Mark repeats it for emphasis!

How important it is in any day to find out what a person means when he speaks of Jesus. Sometimes people mean practically nothing at all! **BUT BARTIMAEUS MAKES IT CLEAR THAT HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH AND THAT HE IS ALSO GOD**

Where did he learn all of this?

Somehow the Lord had used his trouble to open his hearts-- the eyes of his heart, as Paul says in Eph. 1:18. Somehow he had gotten into the Scriptures--perhaps from what he had learned from his father. And the Spirit of God had taught him that the great Teacher and Worker of miracles was the Messiah, the Son of David who was also the Son of God.

The passage here would seem to indicate that Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, had been reduced to a helpless, blind, beggar before he became concerned about his spiritual sight.

And little did he know that Jesus Christ would come right down that road where he was begging. CAN ANYONE FAIL TO SEE THE SOVEREIGN HAND OF GOD IN ALL OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES?

III. THE REACTION TO HIS CRY (Mark 10:48a, 49).

- A. On the part of the people (Mark 10:48a). They rebuked him. They commanded him to be still. They did not want him to bother the Lord.

Please turn to Isaiah 55. Is it possible that Bartimaeus had come across this passage, and that this was the basis of his hope? Read vv. 1-7. Note:

- 1) "The sure mercies of David" (v. 3).
- 2) "Call ye upon Him while He is near" (v. 6).
- 3) All of v. 7.

Were these the promises that made him continue to cry out to the Lord?

- B. On the part of the Lord (Mark 10:49).

What a lesson on the way the Lord listens for the cry for help! (Read v. 49.)

IV. THE RESULTS (Mark 10:50-52).

- A. He came to the Lord as fast as he could come (v. 50). When the heart is prepared, all a person needs to know is that the Lord wants him to come, and he will come.
- B. The Lord asked him a question (v. 51a).

He obviously had many needs, and the Lord wanted him to put his request into words. How important it is to see this!

- C. The answer Bartimaeus gave the Lord (v. 51b). He calls

Him, "Lord," Rabboni. But in both Matthew and Luke it is kurios, Lord. In the context it has to mean a declaration of his faith in the Deity of Jesus Christ.

"Receive" means to receive again.

D. The Lord's statement (Mark 10:52).

Lit. it is, Go thy way, thy faith has saved thee. Luke records the same thing. It would seem that not only was physical sight was restored, but that Bartimaeus was saved.

In the perfect tense, SAVED, means a continuous salvation.

E. What ^{happened to} Bartimaeus (Matt. 10:52b).

He received his sight immediately, "and followed Jesus on the way."

Concl: There is no question but that this is a case of physical healing. But Mark wants us to know that it was just the evidence of a much greater healing--a healing of Bartimaeus' soul because of his faith in who Jesus Christ was and in what Jesus Christ came to do.

What a difficult path Bartimaeus was forced to take--perhaps because he could not be reached in any other way.

Matthew says that there were two of them. Do you not wonder who the other one was? Bartimaeus had evidently talked to him about the Lord so that when the Lord came the other blind man was ready too!

Two things are outstanding in this story:

- 1) The Lord knows how to reach us.
- 2) What we believe about the Lord Jesus Christ is the only foundation for a true faith--about His Person and His Work.

THE SAVIOR ENTERS JERUSALEM
Mark 11:1-11

Intro: It has always seemed to me a little out of place to call this a triumphal entry! If it were a triumph, the victory was shortlived. It would not seem unreasonable to believe that some of the very people who were shouting their acclaim in the passage before us this morning were shortly to join in the humiliation of our Lord as they taunted Him while He was dying on the Cross.

The triumph was to come later.

Here, instead, we have a time of manifestation--the Lord sovereignly manifesting Who He was! But it was not a time when He said it, nor just when His disciples said it, but when the multitudes in Jerusalem said it!

At least once before (and perhaps at other times), just after the feeding of the 5,000, John tells us in John 6:15 that the people came to "take Him by force, to make Him a king," but He would not allow them to do this.

The Lord has a time for everything. How often this is seen as we study the Gospels! And how important it is for us to remember this even today! We know now that He could not reign as a King until He had died, first of all, as a Savior. BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO KNOW THAT HE WAS THE KING WHO WAS DYING SO THAT THEY WOULD KNOW WHO TO LOOK FOR AS THEIR KING.

The importance of this event is to be seen in the fact that it is recorded in all four Gospels:

- 1) Matt. 21:1-9.
- 2) Mark 11:1-11.
- 3) Luke 19:28-38.
- 4) John 12:12-18.

What was the nature of this manifestation?

All of it has to do with the facts that He is the Messiah, He is the King, He is the Savior, He is the Lord.

How do we see this?

I. FIRST, IN HIS OMNISCIENCE. Cf. Mark 11:1, 2.

There might be some who would like to say that the Lord had this all pre-arranged with the owner of colt, but, when you see all that follows, it is not difficult to recognize that we have here a manifestation of the omniscience of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God!

Bethphage (only mentioned in connection with this event by Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and Bethany were located just to the east of the Mount of Olives. Which village the Lord had in mind, we do not know. From the fact that they went back to Bethany may be an indication (in v. 11) that they were, among other things, taking the colt back to its owner. But this point is not of significant importance in the story. WHAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IS THAT THE LORD KNEW JUST WHERE THE TWO DISCIPLES WOULD FIND THE COLT.

And what was especially important about this particular colt was that no man had ever ridden it!

This would immediately suggest to the disciples that there was special, sacred significance to what the Lord had in mind because this was an OT requirement for things to be used for the Lord! Cf. Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; 1 Sam. 6:7; 2 Sam. 6:3.

There are many evidences of our Lord's omniscience in the Gospels. Let me cite one: When the Lord greeted Nathanael with the words, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," Nathanael responded with, "How knowest thou me?" And the Lord told him, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:47-49).

How important it is to recognize this!

II. THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORD (Mark 11:3-6).

Here the Lord shows Himself to be a true Prophet. He not only predicted what would happen, but any resistance to the disciples was stopped with five words in the original: "The Lord has need of him."

Notice our Lord's claim to Deity.

This is all that it took to open the way.

And we should note that the Lord's knowledge and authority covers even the location of a donkey and the fact that HE had need of it! How much more of us!

III. THE FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE (Mark 11:7-10).

How important it is to check everything with Scripture!

We have this in our passage this morning in two ways:

- 1) By what the Lord did.
- 2) By what the people did.

A. By what the Lord did (v. 7): "He sat upon him."

This takes us to two chapters in the OT:

- 1) 1 Kings 1:38, 44. Solomon rode on his father's mule in confirmation that he was king. But there is no record in Scripture that any king of Israel or Judah rode on a mule until this event in the life of our Lord.

Therefore, He is claiming royalty, claiming to be the long-awaited Heir to David's throne!

- 2) Zech. 9:9,
"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

Thus, a 500 year old prophecy is being fulfilled.

And with royalty we see humility.

Matthew quotes this, and so does John!

However, this is cannot be separated from what the people did, voluntarily, joyfully--not realizing that they were confirming Scripture by their actions and words, too.

B. By what the people did (vv. 7-10).

Do not fail to see the sovereign hand of God in all of this!

- 1. They recognized Him as royalty and paid Him homage (vv. 7, 8).

The background is seen when Jehu became king of Israel. Cf. 2 Kings 9:13,

"Then they hastened, and took every many his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king."

- 2. They did what Isaiah said should be done. Cf. Isa. 40:3,

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

This had been John the Baptist's mission. How thrilled he would have been if he had lived to see this day!

In laying out the garments and spreading the leaves they were preparing the way of the Lord!

And yet they did it without being forced to do

it. What amazing evidence of what God was doing to manifest the true nature and work of His Son!

3. By what they said (vv. 9, 10).

Read, and then turn to Psa. 118:25, 26,

"Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord."

"Hosanna" means, "Save, we pray thee." Or, "Be propitious."

The Lord had said on a previous occasion,

"I am come in my Father's name" (John 5:43).

The people said,

"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

While they may have been thinking primarily about their salvation from Rome, the Lord had in mind their salvation from sin. And here they are using all of these glorious terms just like they understood it all. Undoubtedly there must have been people that day who really came to an understanding that He was the Messiah, the Savior, the Lord.

Concl: Cf. v. 11. NO ONE COULD KEEP HIM OUT. NO ONE COULD HINDER HIM. THE SOVEREIGN LORD, THE MESSIAH, ENTERED THE HOLY CITY AND THE HOLY PLACE AND "looked round about upon all things.

And then He went back to Bethany because it was not safe for Him to stay in Jerusalem overnight!

But that day Matthew says in Matt. 21:10 that "all the city was moved," "was stirred . . . shaken as by an earthquake" (Robertson, I, 167).

It was like when Solomon became king over Israel and "the earth split with the sound of them" (1 Kings 1:40b).

What an encouragement this ought to be to all of us that one day Phil. 2:9-11 will be fulfilled: "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father."

Do you know it now? There is abundant proof in the Word for any heart that is open to the Lord.

(Finish)

A FIG TREE AND A MOUNTAIN
Mark 11:12-14, 20-26

Intro: This morning we come to what happened on the Monday morning after our Lord's unusual entry into Jerusalem on the day before: Sunday. See v. 12.

But in order to have all of the account that applies we must go on to Tuesday morning. See. v. 20.

On both Sunday night and Monday night the Lord went out of the city of Jerusalem to spend the night, and, apparently, He spent both of these nights in Bethany--probably with Mary and Martha and Lazarus (who had just been raised from the dead a short time before).

So our Scripture this morning is divided.

We will come back next week, the Lord willing, to what took place in the Temple on Monday.

I. A STRANGE INCIDENT (Mark 11:12-14).

We have at least two evidences here of our Lord's humanity, and one manifestation of His Deity.

His humanity:

- 1) "He was hungry." Cf. Matt. 4:2. In John 4:6 He was weary.
- 2) He went over to the fig tree to find out if there were any fruit on the tree. Some explain this as simply an act that the Lord was going through. But if our Lord "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52), surely this was a genuine act to find out something which He did not know. Both of these seem inconsistent with His Deity, but it was all a part of His humiliation and a part of what He had to experience in order to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15).

His Deity: Cursing the fig tree so that it died. Cf. vv. 14, 20, 21.

The strange thing about this incident was that the Lord cursed the tree even though "the time of figs was not yet" (v. 13b). Why did He do this?

The answer: On the fig trees, the fruit precedes the leaves. Therefore, the fact that it had leaves would indicate that it had mature fruit. It appeared to be an unusual tree--much better than any other around. Figs were not due for perhaps two months. But a little investigation on the part of the

Lord indicated "nothing but leaves."

Now we must admit, if we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He would do nothing unless it had some reason. What is the reason for this?

Several OT passages use the fig tree to picture Israel. Cf. Hosea 9:10a,

"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig tree at her first time . . ."

Speaking of Israel, the Lord said through Joel in 1:7,

"He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree; he hath made it completely bare, and cast it away; its branches are made white."

Figs and grapes picture Israel in the sense that they were a delight to the heart of God.

BUT HERE THERE ARE NO FIGS!

It can only mean one thing--and the events of this very week would bear it out. IT LOOKED LIKE JERUSALEM WAS RECEIVING OUR LORD AS HER MESSIAH FROM THE TRIUMPHANT FESTIVITIES OF THE DAY BEFORE. BUT THE LORD KNEW THAT IT WAS "NOTHING BUT LEAVES"!

And so the tree is doomed: "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever" (v. 14).

Jerusalem was up to her old tricks again (as we have been seeing in Isaiah): She was pretending to be something she was not--a hypocrite. The Lord knew that much, and He used this tree to illustrate how He despises hypocrisy.

- II. A BEWILDERED DISCIPLE (Mark 11:20-21). Perhaps we should say bewildered disciples because often one spoke for all of them.

What Peter said amounts to a question. It means this: How could such a thing as this possibly take place in such a short time?

Just the day before it looked better than any other fig tree around. Its leaves were full and had good color. Just overnight it "withered away."

The fact that it was a question, and that it was bothering all of the disciples, is indicated at the beginning of v. 22,

"And Jesus, answering, saith unto them . . ."

Obviously the connection is not easy to see as we first read

the passage. In fact, it is impossible unless we have the whole context in mind.

III. THE ANSWER WITH MANY FACETS (Mark 11:22-26).

- A. The most obvious answer: Why are you amazed because a fig tree dies, when it is possible by the same power to move mountains.

Now let us keep this in mind: WE HAVE NO RECORD IN SCRIPTURE THAT OUR LORD EVER MOVED A MOUNTAIN AND THREW IT INTO THE SEA. NOR DO WE HAVE ANY RECORD THAT THE DISCIPLES DID ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

BUT, it could be done!

"This mountain" probably refers to the mount of Olives, the mount where the fig tree was growing.

And so this is the first thing that we need to recognize from this passage: With all that has been revealed of the works of God (or of Christ), we can be sure that they are able to do things greater than anything recorded!

- B. Another meaning: The one thing which made the disciples different from other Israelites was their faith--their faith in God!

The Lord is concerned with fruit--the fruit that backs up our outward profession and our outward activities.

Sunday had been a great day in Jerusalem--to the ignorant on-looker. TO OUR LORD IT WAS "NOTHING BUT LEAVES" BECAUSE IT WAS ALL OUTWARD; THERE WAS NOTHING INWARD.

The fruit that God is looking for is the fruit of our faith in God so that the work that is being done is an evidence of His power--not ours!

Hudson Taylor loved this verse. It could almost be referred to as his text. I refer to v. 22. He translated it, Hold the faithfulness of God!

And note the emphasis on believing in vv. 23, 24.

Believing is trusting in confidence that God will do what He has promised to do. He does not do whatever we want Him to do, but He is always faithful to His Word. And it is only His work in response to our faith that produces the fruit that delights Him like figs evidently delighted our Lord when He was here on earth.

- C. Still another meaning: The Lord was showing that, if there is to be fruit, there must be prayer.

By fruit we mean evidence of the power and blessing of the Lord in the lives of people. It is that which distinguishes the true work of God from hypocrisy.

Do you say prayers, or do you pray?

For the most part, the Israelites of our Lord's day said prayers. They did not know what it meant to come to God because you do not have anyone else to meet your need, nor did they know what it meant to come to God expecting that He would do something to meet that need.

Do you? Do I?

It is to be feared that there are a lot of leaves in the church today, but little fruit, because there is much activity, but little prayer!

- D. And finally: In vv. 25, 26 we have one of the major reasons for the lack of fruit among the people of God: we have too many problems among ourselves that we have never been willing to forgive.

This has to do with the inner man, doesn't it? You can say that you have forgiven someone while you continue to harbor resentment in your heart. And you always think about that problem whenever you see or hear about that person.

The Lord does not talk about going anywhere in this passage or seeing anyone; He simply says, "Forgive."

And why?

Because as long as you have a lack of forgiveness in your heart for someone else, you have a sin in your heart that has never really been acknowledged to God. HOW SMART SATAN IS! HE HAS SOMEONE DO SOMETHING AGAINST US, AND THIS CAUSES SIN IN OUR HEARTS--AND THE FRUIT STOPS GROWING!

CONCL: It certainly cannot be a coincidence that when our first parents sinned, that "they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Cf. Gen. 3:7. And men have been inclined to be hypocrites ever since.

None of this deceived the Lord then, nor does it deceive Him now. BUT, the only thing that can keep us from being fruitless hypocrites is "faith in God," which has to be through Christ and founded on the Word.

WAS THE
MOUNTAIN, SIN?
AND WAS ITS RE-
MOVAL, FORGIVE-
NESS? Cf. MIEAH
7:14.

THE AUTHORITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
Mark 11:15-19, 27-33

Intro: We have another divided passage (as we did last week).

Vv. 15-19 describe what took place in the Temple on Monday of the week our Lord was crucified; vv. 27-33, in the Temple on Tuesday.

Both events bring into question the authority of our Lord. That is the reason we have the Sanhedrin involved on both days. Cf. vv. 18, 27.

The Lord had been in the Temple on Sunday (v. 11), but at that time He only "looked round about upon all things." On Monday, however, the situation was different, and so we have . . .

I. THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (Mark 11:15-19).

Outwardly things might have looked like the people were doing as Moses had commanded the people in the OT, but it would not take long to discover that things were very, very wrong.

The Sanhedrin had a strangle hold on the people. They were required to purchase their sacrifices right there. The Sanhedrin had sold to certain ones the privilege of buying and selling in the Temple. The fact that "doves" are mentioned is an indication that they were robbing the poor, too. Cf. Lev. 5:7; 12:8.

The money-changers were there too. Evidently the Temple tax had to be paid in shekels, and so Jews coming from other parts of the world would have to get their money changed. This also cost money, and the Sanhedrin got its cut out of all of this.

More than this, v. 16 tells us that the Temple was being used as a short-cut by people who were going from one part of the city to another.

Thus, what a perverted idea people were getting about the Lord. Salvation was primarily a matter of works and especially of paying money. The Holy Temple was no longer holy. It had become like the market outside.

Note what the Lord did according to vv. 15, 16.

Then "He taught" the people as an explanation for what He was doing. He took them to the Scriptures: Isa. 56:7.

Every detail of v. 17 is extremely important.

V. 17:

- 1) Note first that He was teaching. He took them to the Word. It is only as people know the Scriptures that they will be able to know what God wants them to do.
- 2) He emphasizes the permanent character of the Word of God. It is not revised for every generation. "Is it not written," or, Does it not stand written as the unchanging Word of God?
- 3) The Word teaches that the Temple was God's house. Nobody there seemed to have that conception at all.
- 4) It was "the house of prayer"--for worship, for sacrifice to God, for all kinds of prayer--BUT NOT FOR FINANCIAL PROFIT!
Inestimable damage has been done to people because of the way the things of God have been perverted by those who claim to be the people of God, and especially by those who are supposed to be men of God.
- 5) "For all nations." God has always been concerned about the salvation of the Gentiles. It is generally believed that most of this business was taking place in the court of the Gentiles. Thus, it even perverted God's concern for Gentiles.

What had they done with it? The Lord spares no words. He exposes the whole mess. It was run by thieves. A den is a place where thieves hide out so as to escape detection. Religious thieves make the Temple their den because no one would think that you would find any thieves there!

What was the result? It was twofold:

- 1) "The scribes and chief priests" resented it! And there was nothing less than murder in their hearts.
But, in spite of this, they were afraid of Him.
- 2) "All the people were astonished at his doctrine." It is wonderful to see how people respond to teaching, and they were no exception!

And so the Lord left the city and (probably) returned for the night to Bethany.

The next day (Tuesday), after the explanation about the cursing of the fig tree, we have . . .

II. THE TRIAL BY THE SANHEDRIN (Mark 11:27-33).

The use of "the" 3x in v. 27 indicates that this was much more than just a chance meeting. They came to Him.

They just had one question: "By what authority doest thou these things?"

Matthew and Luke indicate in their Gospels that the Sanhedrin

interrupted the Lord as He was teaching and preaching the Gospel. SO THE SANHEDRIN MUST HAVE BEEN OBJECTING TO THREE THINGS:

- 1) What He had done in the Temple the day before.
- 2) His teaching.
- 3) His preaching of the Gospel.

Men in this position not only reveal their ignorance of the Word of God, but they also show their rejection of the Word.

Their question meant: Who ordained you?

One writer makes this comment:

" . . . there was no principle more firmly established by universal consent than that authoritative teaching required previous authorisation. Indeed, this logically followed from the principle of Rabbinism. All teaching must be authoritative, since it was traditional--approved by authority, and handed down from teacher to disciple" (Edersheim, II, p. 381).

So not only did the Sanhedrin see to it that only ordained men were teaching as Rabbi's, but they carefully supervised what they were teaching.

This holds true today in many places. You teach what you are told to teach.

Cf. what the scribes had said was His authority in Mark 3:22, "And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the price of the demons casteth he out demons."

But read, too, Mark 1:22,

"And they were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."

Also Mark 1:27,

"And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him."

The Lord answered with a question--BUT NOTE THAT I SAID, ANSWERED!

V. 30 - The authority of our Lord Jesus Christ is inseparably tied in with the ministry of John the Baptist--especially with His baptism.

This is why all four of the Gospel writers deal with the ministry of John the Baptist--AND PERHAPS WE HAVE COME TO

BEST REASON AS TO WHY MARK BEGINS WITH JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Did John have divine authority for what he did? "Was it from heaven, of of men?"

Read Mark 1:2, 3.

- 1) Where is it written?
- 2) Who is speaking?
- 3) Who is he speaking about?
- 4) Who was he getting ready for?

What was John's baptism? Who was it who baptized the Lord? What happened at His baptism?

What did John say about the Lord Jesus Christ?

- 1) Cf. John 1:15, 27, 30.
- 2) Cf. John 1:29.
- 3) About our Lord's baptism--cf. John 1:32-34, esp. v. 34.

The men of the Sanhedrin knew that they were on the horns of a dilemma--"faced with a choice between equally unfavorable alternatives" (Webster's New World Dictionary, p. 211).

Cf. Mark 11:31, 32.

Concerning John the Baptist, "All men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed." This would mean that he had been raised up by God, that God had authorized John to speak with a divinely inspired message for a time of great need in Israel.

And so they responded by saying, "We cannot tell," or better, We do not know.

The Lord had answered them. They had refused to answer Him one way or the other. So the Lord knew that further discussion would be but a hypocritical waste of time.

Concl: This question of authority is a question which every person has to face. What do you accept as authority?

- 1) Yourself?
- 2) Public opinion?
- 3) The church?

Or have you realized that all authority is ultimately in God, that He has expressed that authority in His Word, and that it has been expressed in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ--which makes Him the most important person who has ever lived in this world.

Note what the Word has to say about our Lord's authority:

- 1) ". . . the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6). Also, Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24.
- 2) In John 5:27 our Lord says that the Father "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."
- 3) Cf. Jn. 17:2, "As thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."
- 4) Cf. Matt. 28:18, "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
- 5) Finally, as Peter spoke of this in the house of Cornelius, we have these words: Acts 10:34-43.

Our Lord's authority is universal. It is from God. It is confirmed by the Word. His Word is final. His will is sovereign. His work provides man with his only hope of salvation.

To discover these truths and to enter believingly into them is the key that unlocks the treasures of God's blessings for men.

A PARABLE FOR PHARISEES
Mark 12:1-12

Intro: Our passage this morning is a continuation from chapter 11, vv. 27-33.

The word, "them," in v. 1 of ch. 12 refers to the Sanhedrin of 11:27.

In 12:12 John Mark tells us that the men of the Sanhedrin "knew that He had spoken the parable against them."

So it was not only for the Pharisees; it was for the whole Sanhedrin. And it was not only for them, but it was "against" them. It was a parable to show them what they had done, and what the leaders of Israel before them had done.

The importance of this parable is seen in the fact that it is recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. Cf.:

- 1) Matt. 21:33-46.
- 2) Luke 20:9-19.

I. THE FACTS OF THE PARABLE.

There probably was nothing which a man might possess which was a greater indication of wealth than a vineyard.

And--for a man to plant of vineyard, and then to let it out to others in return for a large percentage of the harvest, was a most common thing in our Lord's day.

Therefore, the parable which the Lord told was lifted right out of their own times and circumstances.

The preparation of a vineyard called for many things. Note the details in v. 1:

- 1) "A certain man," identified in v. 9 as "the lord of the vineyard."
- 2) "Planted" - It originated with him.
- 3) "An hedge" - To separate his vineyard from his neighbors, as well as to protect it from animals and from thieves. It might be a wall, or a hedge of thorns--the last being probably the most effective.
- 4) "The winefat," Old English for wine vat.

It was usually cut out of stone or rock, two circular areas which formed a figure "8" on the ground. One circle was larger and shallow; the other was narrower, but deeper. The first was for the treading out of the grapes; the second was to catch the juice.

- 5) "The tower" - for protection, so that the keepers could see off in the distance.

So far everything is true-to-life.

And so is v. 2.

But when we come to v. 3 and on down through v. 8 we come to the most far-fetched, the most fantastic, the most unbelievable story, that could possibly be told! IN TRUE LIFE VERSE 9 WOULD FOLLOW VERSE 3. (Read it this way.)

Quite obviously this departure from what would normally be expected is the main part of the parable.

II. THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE.

Anyone who is familiar with the Bible would think of Isa. 5: 1-7 as he begins reading this chapter. That passage is the key to this.

The owner of the vineyard is God.

The vineyard is Israel.

The husbandmen, or the tenants, are the leaders of Israel-- the judges, the kings, the priests, the elders, and right on down to the Sanhedrin.

The servants are the prophets. Cf. 2 Chron. 36:15, 16:

"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

Cf. also Jer. 25:3-7; Neh. 9:26:

"Nevertheless, they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets who testified against them to return to thee, and they wrought great provocations."

The "one son, his well-beloved . . . the heir" is our Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. the following Scriptures:

- 1) John 3:16.
- 2) Having just spoken of John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, cf. what the Father said at the baptism of the Son in Matt. 3:17.
- 3) Going back, cf. Gen. 22:2.
- 4) Rom. 8:32.

So now the picture is clear.

But before we go on to the conclusion, let us note how v. 1 was actually fulfilled in Israel:

- 1) Israel was planted by the Lord - Ex. 15:17:
 "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made of thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which they hands have established!"
 Cf. 2 Sam. 7:10,
 "Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people, Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more . . ."
- 2) The hedge of separation, cf. Lev. 20:24, 26,
 "And ye shall be holy unto me; for I, the Lord, am holy, and have severed you (or, separated you) from other people, that ye should be mine . . ."
 (v. 26). In v. 24b, "I am the Lord your God, who have separated you from other people."
- 3) Both the hedge and the tower - for protection: Psa. 121 (in part),
 "Behold, he who keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper . . . The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

And think of how all of these truths apply to the Church as well as to Israel.

COULD THERE BE A GREATER DISPLAY OF THE GRACE OF GOD?

Taking the question from Isa. 5, "WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE MORE TO MY VINEYARD, THAT I HAVE NOT DONE IN IT?" (v. 4a).

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY PARALLEL SITUATION IN ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY?

What could be the only outcome? "What shall, therefore, the lord of the vineyard do?" Read v. 9. The word translated, "destroy," is the same as the word, "perish," in John 3:15, 16. THE LORD WILL NOT DESTROY THE VINEYARD, BUT THE LEADERS ARE DOOMED.

III. ADDITIONAL CONFIRMATION (Mark 12:10, 11).

Will you note how the Lord tries first one way and then another to reach the hearts of the Sanhedrin? If they do not get the point of the parable, perhaps they will see it in Scripture.

He asks, "Have you not even read this Scripture?" (NASB). It is from Psa. 118:22, 23--THE VERY PSALM FROM WHICH THE

HOSANNA'S OF THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY WERE TAKEN - "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mark 11:9).

Israel is now pictured as a building.

The Lord Jesus Christ, rejected by Israel for any part in that building, has been made "the head of the corner"--the most important stone, architecturally, in the whole building because it governed every angle in the building. It was placed first, and every other stone was adapted to it, got its position from the head stone.

But, who did this? Did Israel? NO!

"This is the Lord's doing."

If it had not been for God,
 --there would have been no Israel.
 --there would have been no "head of the corner."
 --there would have been no salvation.

And, in a coming day, Israel will say, "And it is marvelous," amazing, wonderful, passing human comprehension, "in our eyes."

Individual men, even the leaders of Israel, can reject the Lord, but NO ONE CAN NULLIFY HIS PROMISES NOR HIS PURPOSES.

IV. THE OUTCOME AT THAT TIME (Mark 12:12). Note all the verbs that Mark uses, ending with "they left Him, and went their way."

What a tragedy!

Concl: Notice that,

--in vv. 1-5 we have the past;
 --in vv. 6-11 we have what was then and still partly is, the future.
 --in v. 12, what was then, the present.

Is there anything like the grace of God?

And how absolutely it is beyond our understanding that the Lord would be trying to reach the Sanhedrin while He knew that they wanted to kill Him--AND WOULD!

But why is it here? THINK ABOUT HOW IT APPLIES TO YOU. WHAT IS THE LORD DOING TO MANIFEST HIS GRACE WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN JUDGMENT LONG AGO?

For those of us who know the Lord--we must never forget the truth of vv. 10, 11.

ONE QUESTION, TWO ANSWERS
Mark 12:12-17

Intro: After the Lord had spoken the parables to the Pharisees (only one of which is given by Mark), the Pharisees went away to devise a plan as to "how they might entangle Him in His talk" (Matt. 22:15). They were afraid to take Him themselves, but perhaps they could get Him to say something "so they might deliver Him to the power and authority of the governor" (Luke 20:20b).

One of the most amazing things about this account is that the Pharisees sent their disciples back with some of the Herodians.

Once before Mark mentioned the Pharisees and the Herodians together: Mark 3:6. This is the last time that he mentions either of them.

Let us look for a moment at . . .

I. OUR LORD'S OPPONENTS.

A. The Pharisees.

Historians have estimated that there were probably about 6,000 in our Lord's day.

They were outwardly devoted to the Mosaic Law. But they also had their oral traditions which were supposed to explain the Law, but, in many cases, nullified it. Cf. Mark 7:1-13.

Their life was primarily an external formality. They were ritualists, but also hypocrites.

They were devoted to the national interests of Israel, but this devotion was not motivated by their love for God, but by a hunger for power. THE MOST SCATHING WORDS OF DENUNCIATION WHICH OUR LORD SPOKE HERE ON EARTH WERE DIRECTED TO THE PHARISEES!

AND--they were always in conflict with the Herodians. But when enemies have a common enemy, those enemies can become allies for the conflict. That is what had happened here!

B. The Herodians.

They were a political party, not a religious sect.

They accepted the Herods as the rightful rulers of Israel. They were ambitious politically, and probably were not

partically devoted to Herod. They were opposed to the Lord because they believed that He was a threat to Herod.

Summary: Thus, Israel was divided. Both groups were popular with certain people, but both groups were forced to accept the inevitable: taxation by Rome. But the Pharisees were popular primarily with the people, while the Herodians were popular with the government of the Herods. But taxation was clearly an issue. No man could express his opinion without making enemies as well as friends.

II. THEIR SUBTLE APPROACH (Mark 12:13-15a).

The expression, "to catch Him in His words," means that they were hunting our Lord like you would hunt animals. They were setting a very neatly prepared trap, and they hoped, at last, to take Him.

Luke tells us that they were "spies, who should feign themselves as righteous men" (Luke 20:20).

Mark tells us, however, that the Lord knew "their hypocrisy," i.e., that they were just putting on an act. But they were raising one of the hottest issues of the day.

Note: We have the preachers and the politicians conspiring together when the issue they raised was not primarily what they were concerned about.

Now--whenever a person wants to conceal his real motives and his real objective, it is best to mix in a little bit of the truth. This is what the Pharisees and the Herodians did in v. 14--and this was all according to their plan!

What they said about the Lord Jesus Christ was perfectly true:

- He always taught "the way of God" (emphatic). This means that He was teaching them how God wanted them to live.
- He never deviated from the truth. There was a marvelous consistency about His teaching.
- He did not regard the person of men, or, lit., He did not see the face of men! He never changed the truth to please the people who were listening to Him; to Him, truth was truth, and He taught it that way.

WHAT A LESSON THIS IS FOR ALL WHO TEACH THE WORD OF GOD!

And notice that the Pharisees and Herodians began by calling Him, "Master," or, Teacher. They did not really accept Him as a Teacher, but they wanted to give the impression that they were interested in becoming His disciples!

Nicodemus used the same term with the Lord in John 3:2, but what a difference there was!

In John 7:14, 15 we read,

"Now, at about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"

III. THE QUESTION: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"

"Lawful" means here, right in the sight of God, consistent with the Word of God.

Note what the Lord did with the denarius. This was the poll tax which was under question. It had to be paid every year. It was levied against individuals, and the Jews hated it more than any other tax. To the devout Jew it meant recognizing the authority of Caesar and rejecting Jehovah as Israel's King.

So this issue is placed squarely before the Lord. Now He seems to be on the horns of a dilemma.

IV. OUR LORD'S TWO ANSWERS (Mark 12:17).

A. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

He does not hold back on the truth for the sake of any person's favor. His answer is an unequivocal, YES!

Peter echoes these words of our Lord,

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme, Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Pet. 2:13-15).

And Paul agrees:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God . . . For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing" (Rom. 13:1, 2a, 6).

If a child of God wants to do the will of God in this

matter, then he can do only one thing: PAY HIS TAXES!

One of the most blasphemous things that is happening in our day is the impression that some people are giving that our Lord was a political revolutionary. HE WAS NOT! With the present meaning of the word, that term should never be used of our Lord. We may not agree with all that is going on; that is not the issue. The issue is this: If we want to do the will of God regarding government, then we are to be in subjection to our government. If our Lord, and Peter, and Paul, would write this when Rome was in power, then it need not be changed for any other government.

But this is not all.

B. " . . . and to God the things that are God's."

The commentaries practically ignore the fact that the Lord said this--and yet this is perhaps the most important part of what He had to say.

WHERE IS
GOD'S IMAGE?
ON MAN!

One of the interesting things about this statement is our Lord's use of the word, "Render." It is different from mere giving (see v. 14). It means to pay, as in the payment of a debt. We owe our taxes to our government, but there are also some things which we owe to God.

Do you see how the Lord is reaching out to these men? They asked an insincere question, but He answered it anyway. AND HE ANSWERED MORE THAN THEY ASKED BECAUSE HE WANTED THEM TO KNOW THAT A MAN COULD MEET ALL OF HIS OBLIGATIONS WITH RESPECT TO GOVERNMENT AND STILL NOT TAKE CARE OF THE GREATEST OF ALL ISSUES: HIS OBLIGATION TO GOD!

What was the Lord referring to? What is included in our debt to God?

The complete answer could not be given this morning, or even in a week.

But let me give you three examples in closing so that you will know what to look for as you read the Word of God. These three should include, and do include, every person who is here this morning. They are:

1) Mark 12:28-30, right here in our chapter. But place John 5:23 along with this:

"That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, who sent Him."

Cf. John 14:21.

- 2) Mark 12:31. But you cannot love your neighbor as yourself until you love God with all your heart. This follows the other. As in our passage this morning, our Lord could not just give one answer without giving two.
- 3) 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. Also Rom. 12:1, 2.

Concl: I trust this morning that the issue which the Pharisees and Herodians raised with our Lord is clear to each one of us. A Christian who disobeys his government dishonors the Name of the Lord.

But I trust that the second issue is just as clear.

They are not in conflict at all. There are debts that we owe to government, and there are debts that we owe to God. They are spoken of in this way because we have no choice but to pay. A debt is an obligation which must be settled. There is no room for argument or discussion. The man who refuses to pay his taxes must take the consequences. The man who fails to recognize that he also has a debt to God which must be paid will suffer eternal consequences.

A TWOFOLD IGNORANCE

Mark 12:18-27

Intro: We have been seeing different groups, opposed to the Lord Jesus, coming in succession to get Him to say something that would turn the people against Him and/or turn the government against Him:

- 1) First, the Sanhedrin (Mark 11:27-33).
- 2) Then, the Pharisees and the Herodians (Mark 12:13-17).
- 3) Now, the Sadducees.

With the exception of the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees, these groups were not friendly toward each other, but they were united in their hatred of the Lord and in their desire to do away with Him.

Let us note every detail in the account before us this morning.

I. THE SADDUCEES AND THEIR QUESTION (Mark 12:18-23).

A. The Questioners (Mark 12:18).

Before we note who they were, be sure to note their dramatic entrance. It is like they were saying, The others have failed. What would you expect? But look at what we will do to Him. We are the champions. And we have a question that no one can answer!

But who were the Sadducees?

Two passages in Acts help us:

- 1) Acts 5:17,
"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation."
- 2) Acts 23:8,
"For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both."

Thus,

- 1) They were a priestly sect, an elite group, very strong, but not too influential with the people.
- 2) They were rationalistic--Campbell Morgan (Mark, p. 264) calls them flippant rationalists.

They rejected the resurrection because they did not believe that Moses had ever mentioned it. They also rejected the traditions of the elders, holding, as we would, that only the written Word was authoritative. Some say that they only accepted the books of Moses;

others say that they accepted the entire OT. Whichever was true, Moses and his books were their chief authority. This is the reason you have the emphasis on:

- 1) "Moses wrote" (v. 19).
- 2) The Lord calls the Word of God, "the scriptures," that which has been written.
- 3) Our Lord's question: "Have ye not read in the book of Moses . . . ?" (v. 26).

The origin of the name, Sadducees, is not certain, but there is strong evidence that it goes back to Zadok who was the high priest during David's reign, the one who anointed Solomon as David's successor!

Mark says, "They asked Him." This means more than just a question which the Lord could answer, or not answer. It means that they were insolently demanding that the Lord answer their question--which they felt would deal a death-blow to the doctrine of the resurrection!

- B. The Scriptural basis for their question (Mark 12:19).

See the emphasis that they give to Moses instead of to the Lord. "Moses wrote."

They are referring to Deut. 25:5, 6, without pretending to quote it:

"If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry outside the family unto a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him as his wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the first-born whom she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother who is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel."

It is always impressive when people use the Scriptures, BUT our Lord will show before we get through this passage that we need to note HOW they use the Word of God. It is possible to teach the Word of God in such a way that the resulting doctrine is heresy.

- C. The proposed problem (Mark 12:20-22).

You can sense that the Sadducees has used this before-- and with great success!

It is obviously a made-up story, but conceivably it could happen. If any doctrine of Scripture can be subjected to any true test, and fail, then it should be seriously questioned.

The ridiculous illustration was designed to make the doctrine of the resurrection appear even more ridiculous. No one had been able to give them an answer before.

Seven brothers had had one wife. None of them had had children. Then the woman died.

D. The question (Mark 12:23).

Evidently the Sadducees felt that if one had had a child, then there would have been no case for them. But they felt that they had an air-tight case to present to the Lord.

II. THE LORD'S ANSWER (Mark 12:24-27).

A. The real problem--in the form of a question (Mark 12:24).

AS THE LORD DID WITH THE SANHEDRIN, AND THEN WITH THE PHARISEES AND THE HERODIANS, HE WILL ANSWER THEIR QUESTION, BUT HE WILL ALSO GET TO THE REAL QUESTION THAT THEY NEED TO FACE.

The real problem was that the Sadducees were suffering from a twofold ignorance:

1) "Ye know not the scriptures."

Be sure to remember this. The fact that a man can quote Scripture, or show some knowledge of the Bible, does not mean that they know what they are talking about.

2) "Ye knew not . . . the power of God."

No knowledge of the Scriptures is true knowledge if it leaves me with deficient views of the power, the sovereign omnipotence, of the living God!

The reason the Sadducees denied the supernatural as they did was because they did not really believe in or knew God as He is revealed in Scripture.

Note the following illustrations from Scripture:

- 1) Paul said to King Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8).
- 2) When Sarah laughed when the Lord told Abraham that she would have a son in her old age, the Lord asked Abraham (because he, too, could have been affected by Sarah's unbelief), "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14a).
- 3) Just this past week many of us have been reading in Num. 11 about how God promised the Israelites meat in the wilderness. When even Moses found it impossible to believe, the Lord responded with, "Is the

Lord's hand become short?" Or, as the NASB has it, "Is the Lord's power limited? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not" (Num. 11:23).

And it did--with quail stacked two cubits high all around the camp of Israel!

- 4) Or, remember what we read in Mark 10:27 when the Lord was talking about how hard it was for rich men to be saved: "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."
- 5) My wife and I read this week that prayer offered by the early Church when they had been threatened by the Sanhedrin "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). Their prayer began this way: "Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all them in them is" (Acts 4:24b).
- 6) Read Psa 46 with its "be still, and know that I am God" (v. 10a). Just before the Psalmist had written, "The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted" (v. 6).
- 7) Cf. Eph. 3:20, 21.

ALSO ACTS
5:38,39

YOU CANNOT KNOW THE SCRIPTURES WITHOUT KNOWING THE POWER OF GOD. IF YOU ARE DEFICIENT IN ONE, YOU WILL CERTAINLY BE DEFICIENT IN THE OTHER.

But note another very interesting thing: The Lord said that they erred. Cf. vv. 24, 27. What does this mean? It means that someone had led them astray, someone had deceived them, had led them into error.

What does this mean?

It means that man naturally will believe in God, in His power, and even in life after death, UNLESS someone has specifically taught him and deceived him into NOT believing it! What insight this gives us into man's understanding of the truth--what he knows even apart from the revelation of Scripture! It is so great that Paul concluded that every man was "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20b).

The atheist or the rationalist really has his workout out for him!

- B. The twofold answer--for their twofold ignorance (Mark 12:25-27).

Again, as in the past, note the Lord's graciousness in answering the questions His enemies presented to Him.

1. Concerning the power of God (Mark 12:25).

How do you answer rationalists? With the truth of God's Word. If they are to be reached, it is the Word that the Spirit of God will use to bring conviction--not human reason!

The Lord here reveals something which had never been made known before. This is further evidence of His Deity. God has not made known everything. He knows many things we do not know. Instead of just stopping with resurrection, the Lord even went beyond to say that God was going to do even more than they thought with our resurrection bodies. When there is no sin, there will be no death, and with death, there will be no need for more children. So, in that respect, we will be "as the angels who are in heaven."

You never heard of angel marriages, nor of angel children! A new order will be in effect when we get to heaven. The Sadducees were ignorant of this!

Let us not be led into error by the assumption that we know everything!

2. Concerning the Scriptures (Mark 12:26, 27).

Did Moses ever refer to resurrection?

Yes!

How?

By using for the first time the Name with which the Lord made Himself known to Moses at the burning bush: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

When you and I read this in Ex. 3:6 and 15, we can see part of the truth. BUT NOTE WHAT THE LORD SAYS, "And as touching the dead, that they rise, have ye not read . . . ?"

A "dead" person is a person whose body is in the grave. In order for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be spoken of as "living," they would have to be resurrected!

Concl: How soundly the Lord answered and silenced the Sadducees! Matthew adds: "And when the multitude heard (this), they were astonished at his doctrine" (Matt. 22:33).

Are you overlooking anything in the Word? Do you really know the Lord, and His power? Let no man deceive you; what you are inclined to believe is really true, and confirmed by Scripture!

WHAT GOD WANTS MOST OF ALL
Mark 12:28-34

Intro: At this point in the Gospel of Mark and in the life of our Lord He was being subjected to a series of questions by different groups of Israelites who stood in opposition to Him. Today we come to question #4. The first three and the questioners were:

- 1) The Sanhedrin had asked Him in Mark 11:28a, "By what authority dost thou these things?"
- 2) The Pharisees and the Herodias asked Him in Mark 12:14b, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"
- 3) The Sadducees asked Him in Mark 12:23, after telling about seven brothers who were all married to the same woman in succession without any of them having children by her, "In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife."

In turn, the Lord had not only answered them, but He had soundly defeated them in their attempts to trick Him into saying something that would discredit Him and give them some basis for an accusation against Him.

Each one had failed.

Now we are ready for . . .

I. THE FOURTH QUESTION (Mark 12:28).

Only Matthew gives this besides Mark. The passage sometimes given as a parallel from Luke does not fit into this situation. Cf. Luke 10:25-37.

Matthew says that it was "a lawyer," which could have meant a scribe, and also says that he was "testing Him" (Matt. 22:35).

Mark does not give us the impression, however, that this scribe was as hostile in his attitude as the questioners before him had been. There seems to be a sincerity about his question, although from the fact that Matthew tells us that our Lord's answer to the Sadducees had drawn the Pharisees and the Sadducees together, they undoubtedly hoped that the scribe's question would accomplish what theirs had not!

It would also appear that the Lord may have been asked this question on other occasions. It was one of the main questions discussed by the Jews in our Lord's day.

This is it: "WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF ALL?"

Before we look at the question, let us discover what we can

about the scribes. Who were they?

Three things of importance need to be noted:

- 1) It was their business to interpret the Law for the people.
- 2) Therefore, they were always investigating the intricate matters of the Law--as this one seems to be doing here.
- 3) Because of the nature of their work, "they were enrolled in the Sanhedrin" (Thayer, p. 121). And they were closely associated with the Pharisees.

This scribe had heard the discussion, or disputation ("reasoning" can mean both or either), and had been impressed with the answers the Lord had given.

Therefore, he wanted to know the first commandment.

The Jews recognized 613--248 positive, 365 negative. They also pointed out in connection with these laws that 613 was the number of the letters in the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, that 248 was the number of parts in the human body, and that 365 was the number of days in the year--all of which means nothing.

But how could you tell what was the most important of all of these? THIS WOULD BE IMPORTANT!

People often ask, Where do you begin in the Bible? What do I need to learn first? What book should I start with?

One common answer to Question #4 was to note either the penalty or the blessing which was promised. And this is not a bad answer. We note that some violations were punishable by death. Others were not. This would tend to make those which brought on the death penalty more serious and more important than others.

Using this as a basis the Jews had come up with the idea that the following were extremely important:

- 1) Laws that had to do with the offerings.
- 2) Laws that had to do with the Sabbath.
- 3) Laws that had to do with circumcision.

Obviously a "commandment" was:

- 1) A prescribed rule which had to be obeyed. It could not be changed in any way.
- 2) It was something which man had to do. So we can see where their attention was centered--not on what the Lord might do for them, but on what they had to do for the Lord.

Note: By our Lord's answer we see two very illuminating things:

- 1) The answer was in the Scriptures--as are all of the answers to life's most important questions.
- 2) The answer was in a very familiar Scripture--one which every devout Jew quoted morning and evening as a part of his devotions.

How often even today people already have the answer that they are seeking and do not know that they have it! E.g., John 3:16.

The answer has three parts:

- A. A doctrinal part (Mark 12:29).

Originally God had said by Moses to Israel, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."

What this meant is repeated by the scribe in v. 32b:
"For there is one God, and there is no other but he."

So Jehovah is not only God, but He is the only God. HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS FOR EVERY JEW TO KNOW THIS AND TO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS TRUE.

If you do not believe this, you will not be prepared for what follows.

- B. The theological part--the part that has to do with God (Mark 12:30).

It is amazing that:

- 1) We would read what we do here--and what the Jews read in Deut. 6:4, 5, and that . . .
- 2) God would even have to say anything like this!

Can you believe it? THE ONE THING THAT GOD WANTS ABOVE ALL ELSE, THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT IN ALL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, IS FOR US TO LOVE HIM!

"Love" is a deliberate, intelligent choice of God, causing us to pursue Him, and to give ourselves to Him.

God is not seeking blind love, ignorant affection. You cannot really love a person until you know him, until you find out if he appeals to you. Then you seek him, and let him know that you want to give yourself to him. This is the kind of love God wants. And it must, therefore, follow that the better we know Him, the more we will love Him. This is true of any real love--BUT IT IS NOT TRUE OF THE KIND OF LOVE WHICH IS NOTHING MORE THAN

LUST!

This is behind Paul's words in Phil. 3:10.

But what does this involve? Our Lord explains with four phrases:

1. "With all thy heart." Note that the word, "all," is given 4 times.

"Heart" simply means it must be an inward, genuine feeling, as opposed to that which is outward pretense and simulation. The scribes and the Pharisees were notorious for their hypocrisy.

2. "With all thy soul." Our love for the Lord must be with feeling, with emotion. "Soul" can be false too, but it is safe when it is preceded with "heart." The Lord wants us to love Him, and act like it. There is life to real love!

3. "With all thy mind." The Lord adds a part which neither the Hebrew Old Testament, nor the LXX, nor the scribe used in v. 33.

"Mind" comes from two words in the original which lit. mean, through the mind, i.e., THE UNDERSTANDING, THE REASONING, THE INTELLIGENCE, BY CAREFULLY THINKING IT ALL OUT!

This is where the truths of the Word of God come in. This is where experience helps us--ours, and the experience of others, i.e., what we see, what we hear about, what we read, etc.

If you are a thinking Christian, you will love God more and more!

4. "With all thy strength." This means that you are to devote all of your energies to express your love for God.

But, look! The Lord is not through. Before He finishes, He gives a second commandment which is so closely related to the first that they cannot be considered separately . . .

- C. The anthropological part--the part that has to do with man (Mark 12:31).

It is the same word for "love," but it has man as its object. How amazing to see these two brought together in this way by our Lord!

CF. ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING'S,
"How do I love thee,
Let me count the
ways . . ."

Who is my "neighbor"? He is anybody near enough for me to help--whether believer, or not!

How is my love to be extended to men? As I love myself. We need to care for people, to be interested in them, to think in terms of helping them. Study the life of our Lord in this connection.

Cf. Rom. 13:8-10; 15:1, 2; Gal. 5:13, 14; Jas. 2:8. The Lord is quoting from Lev. 19:18, but this verse is referred to in all of the above passages.

And the above writers merely repeated in similar words what Matthew says our Lord repeated at the end: "On these hang all the law and the prophets." Cf. Matt. 22:40.

What does this mean? It means that all of the Old Testament (and now the New Testament) is written to tell us how to obey these two basic commandments.

Cf. 1 John 4:20, 21.

III. THE SCRIBE'S RESPONSE (Mark 12:32, 33). THE TRUTH IS CLEAR TO THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE OPEN.

It is enthusiastic, cordial, supportive. He agrees wholeheartedly with the answer that the Lord has given. To do this "is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

IV. THE LORD'S RESPONSE TO THE SCRIBE (Mark 12:34).

The scribe was close to salvation, but not in! How do you start to love the Lord? By trusting Him as your Savior. Cf. John 3:5; 10:9.

Did he ever enter into salvation? We do not know.

But what we do know is that the Lord was so convincing that day with all four questions that no one dared to ask Him anything else because they were only strengthening His case and weakening their own!

Concl: Can any of us read this passage this morning without letting the light of the Word shine on our own lives? There is a message here for those of us who know the Lord, and a message for those who do not know the Lord. Nothing we will ever hear will be more important. This is the first, the greatest, the sum of all, the beginning of all. Let the Lord Himself use His own words in your life to bring you to the place where your greatest joys are to be found in loving Him, and loving others as the Lord gives the opportunity.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

Mark 12:28-34

Intro: We are taking a second week on this passage of Scripture. Last week we looked at What God Wants Most Of All--the first commandment! (Read vv. 29, 30.)

This morning we come to the second commandment.

A careful reading of the passage will show that the inquiring scribe did not ask for two; he only asked, "Which is the first commandment of all?" (v. 28b).

The Lord completely passed by the 10 commandments, and took the one which we find in Deut. 6:5. This must have been surprising, although later the scribe said that he agreed with what the Lord said.

But it must also have been surprising for the Lord to give two commandments instead of just the one He was asked for.

Let us take just a moment to make sure that we understand . . .

I. THE MEANING OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

What does it mean to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . .?"

A. It means, first of all, that He is your God.*

This is where so many get off to the wrong start. He is not your God until you have come to know His Son as your personal Savior.

It was our Lord who said in His prayer to God, the Father, in John 17:3,

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Earlier, in the Upper Room, our Lord had said to His disciples,

"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Cf. John 14:6.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus."

The Apostle John wrote,

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that

hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11, 12).

So we must recognize, first of all, that you cannot love God if you do not know Him, and you can only know Him through Christ.

B. The actual meaning of what it means to love God is stated in both the Old Testament and the New.

1. Deut. 10:12, 13,
"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?"

2. Deut. 11:1,
"Therefore, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his ordinances, and his commandments, always."

3. Deut. 11:22, 23,
"For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves."

Or, in the New Testament:

4. John 14:21, 23,
"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

TO LOVE HIM MEANS THAT WE ARE LIVING OUR LIVES IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD--not to what we think it says, but to what it really says!

Have you been reading the Word this week to find out what He wants you to do? Are you living your life that way? Does the Word settle it for you? There is nothing more important in your life or mine. It is the foundation of

everything else! This is why our Lord quizzed Peter as He did in John 21:15-17, asking him three times, "Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me more than these?"

In Luke 6:46 we have our Lord's question, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

So, to love the Lord means:

- 1) That you know Him through Christ.
- 2) That you are doing His will in your daily life--not as something added, but as your daily life. And since the Lord Jesus Christ is Deity, we must give Him the same loving obedience that we give to the Father.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND COMMANDMENTS.

Two things need to be said here.

- A. The first is incomplete without the second. This is the reason that the Lord had to give two instead of one.
- B. The second is impossible unless we obey the first one first.

If you talk about putting first things first, this is a prime example.

We hear a lot about loving our fellowman today, but little about loving God. The second will not work without the first, and the first is impossible without our Lord Jesus Christ!

So, you cannot love God without loving your neighbor, nor can you love your neighbor as yourself without loving God first.

III. THE MEANING OF THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

Perhaps it sounds a little selfish to say, "Love thy neighbor AS THYSELF," but this is just what our Lord said.

Paul gives very similar instructions to husbands in Eph. 5: "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. . . let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself" (vv. 28b, 33a).

How can this be reconciled with Mark 8:34, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself . . .?"

When the Lord said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself";

He was stating a principle.

The principle is stated also in Matt. 7:12,

"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

So, this would mean that, if I love my neighbor as myself, I will treat my neighbor as I would like for him to treat me if the circumstances were reversed.

And who is my neighbor? This very question was asked of our by "a certain lawyer," and His answer was the parable of the good Samaritan! My neighbor is anyone I am close enough to to help.

But can we check this meaning of the second commandment in any other way?

Yes, we can go back to its original setting in Luke 19:18. What do we find there?

We find that the 18th verse concludes a section about neighbors which began in v. 13. Listen to the passage:

"Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until morning.

"Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord.

"Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor (i.e., take his life): I am the Lord.

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not allow sin upon him.

"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but then shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord."

If we were the neighbor in the above instances, we would be delighted for people to treat us in these ways. Then we are to do the same to our neighbors.

— IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

A. Matthew 22:40. Matthew concludes his account this way:

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the

prophets."

"Hang" means "is summed up" (Thayer, p. 360).

B. Rom. 13:8, 9.

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

And then after mentioning some of the 10 commandments, Paul concludes,

". . . and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

C. Gal. 5:14, 15.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

D. James 2:8. He calls it "the royal law."

"If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well."

Such evidence is overwhelming. All of the practical instructions of the whole Bible are just a commentary on this one commandment found in Lev. 19:18--i.e., the practical instructions that relate to men.

WHEN YOU TAKE THE TWO TOGETHER YOU SEE THAT ALL OF THE PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS OF ALL OF THE WORD ARE SUMMED UP IN THESE TWO.

Concl: The account in Mark 12 has a heart-breaking conclusion. He knew so much, but he had nothing.

He was "not far from the kingdom of God," but he was not in.

Did he ever get in? No one on earth knows. I trust that he did. It was decided long ago.

But, if he did not . . . may I venture a reason?

It was probably because he felt from this that it was just a matter of something that he could do!

If you try to obey these without first coming to the Lord, you will soon find that you are trying the impossible. It is only through trusting Jesus Christ, FIRST, as Savior, that you will ever be able to begin to attain to what it takes to love the Lord and to love your neighbor.

IS THE MESSIAH ONLY THE SON OF DAVID?

Mark 12:35-37

Intro: We have seen how various groups of Jews have come to the Lord in what evidently was a plot, carefully planned, to discredit Him in the eyes of the people by asking Him questions!

- 1) The Sanhedrin had asked Him, "By what authority doest thou these things?" (Mark 11:28).
- 2) The Pharisees and the Herodians asked Him, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" (Mark 12:14).
- 3) After telling him a long story about seven brothers who all had the same wife, the Sadducees asked, "In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife" (Mark 12:23).
- 4) Probably the only sincere question that was asked was the scribe's questions in Mark 12:28, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

Thus, we can see that this was an assault against our Lord.

But, as A. T. Robertson remarks, it was "a colossal failure" (IV, 370) because Mark concludes this passage by saying, "And the common people," or, the great crowd, "heard Him gladly." They liked to hear Him. There is no mention that many or even any turned to the Lord--and our passage this morning may explain why--but, nevertheless, the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, with the scribes, all failed!

BUT, IN SPITE OF THIS, THE LORD CONTINUES TO TRY TO REACH THE HEARTS OF HIS ENEMIES AS WELL AS OF ALL THE PEOPLE! This seems to be the primary reason for His question to them.

We can be concerned about the temple,
 about taxes,
 about life after death,
 even about the commandments,
 and yet miss the real issue which is presented to us all through the Scriptures.

I. OUR LORD'S QUESTION (Mark 12:35).

Let us look at this question carefully: "How say the scribes that Christ," or, the Messiah, "is the Son of David?"

(EXPLAIN WHAT THE MESSIANIC HOPE OF ISRAEL WAS. CF. ACTS 1:6.)

Our Lord seems to have had at least two ideas in this question:

- 1) What is their authority for teaching this?

Evidently people in that day were like people are in our day: no one was inclined to question why their preachers said what they said; their authority

was simply that they said it. After all, were they not scribes, with proper training and proper credentials? Who would dare to question what they had to say?

The Sanhedrin had raised the question of authority; now the Lord is asking His own question about authority.

But there is a second part to it?

- 2) What is their authority for teaching that He is only the son of David, and nothing else? The question would apply, not to what they were teaching about our Lord, but about what their Messianic teaching was.

Nothing had any greater authority behind it than that the Messiah would be of the family of David.

1) Cf. 2 Sam. 7:12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 24-29.

2) Cf. Isa. 9:7,

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

3) Cf. Isa. 11:1, 10,

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse," who was the father of David, "and a Branch" (a Messianic term) "shall grow out of his roots . . . And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, who shall stand for an ensign of the peoples, to him shall the nations seek, and his rest shall be glorious."

4) Cf. Jer. 23:5,

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth."

But our Lord's question was this: Did the people know why the scribes taught this? Where did they learn such things? AND, were they sure that the scribes were teaching ALL that they were supposed to teach about the Messiah, the Christ?

People need to ask that question today. Where do our teachers get what they teach? What is their authority? Do they have it right? Are they teaching all that they should be teaching, or are they only giving us a part of the truth?

Have you ever asked and answered questions like these?

As we go on to v. 36 we find that there the Lord gives . . .

II. THE REASON FOR HIS QUESTION (Mark 12:36).

The reason is a statement from their own Scriptures, actually from a Psalm of David--the 110th! The Psalm begins with the verse in question.

Now the Lord is doing some very interesting things here.

- 1) First he emphasizes who the human writer was: "David himself"--very emphatic. (This is repeated also in v. 37.) Anything that David wrote carried weight with the Jews.
- 2) But our Lord cites this as something which David "said, by the Holy Spirit."
In other words, this was not just David's word; it was the Word of God, inspired by the Spirit of God Himself.
- 3) Obviously, the Lord is citing their authority. It was not in men, but in a Book: the Old Testament Scriptures.

If there was any contradiction between the Word of God and the teachings of the scribes, it was not the Word that was to be questioned, but the scribes.

HOW TRUE THE SAME IS TODAY!

What did the Holy Spirit have David write?

The original language gives the idea that God told David a secret--a secret which enabled David to see what went on between the Godhead before creation itself. (This is probably to enlarge upon the God who is to be loved, according to Mark 12:30.)

YOU HAVE IN THIS ONE VERSE EVIDENCE OF THE THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY.

David said, "The Lord said to my Lord." The first Lord is obviously God, the Father; the second Lord has to be God, the Son. They are both Deity.

What follows, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool," or, until I put thine enemies under thy feet, was clearly a part of their Messianic hope.

Thus, we come to this amazing discovery: NO ONE COULD POSSIBLY QUALIFY AS THE MESSIAH BY JUST BEING THE SON OF DAVID (David had had many sons, or descendants); HE ALSO HAD TO BE DEITY!

What an amazing discovery! And what a tragic omission

for the scribes to be guilty of! THEY HAD BEEN ONLY TOLD PART OF THE TRUTH AND, THEREFORE, THEY COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE REACHED THE RIGHT CONCLUSION.

The Messiah must not only be the son of David; He must also be God.

The Lord is laying the foundation for them, if they will hear, of His Deity and His humanity.

But now this goes on to another very amazing question with which Mark concludes this section:

III. OUR LORD'S FOLLOW-UP QUESTION (Mark 12:37).

Will you read this question carefully?

The Lord does not say, If the Messiah is David's son, how can He be David's Lord, but He does say, If He is David's Lord, how can He be David's son?

In other words, the emphasis is upon His Deity. That is where you have to start. The scribes only had a part of it, and it was the lesser in importance. The Messiah had to be God.

At this point in Israel's history, after 1,000 years since David lived, David had thousands of sons, or descendants. BUT EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM WAS DISQUALIFIED ON THIS ONE POINT EXCEPT OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS BOTH GOD AND MAN!

Concl: What purpose did the Lord have in asking these questions?

As always, His primary reason was to reach the hearts of men so that they would turn to Him. Nothing is more amazing about the grace of God than the way He pursues men in order that He might save them.

But let me be a little more specific:

- 1) Basic to the problem of the people was that they were too willing to accept what the scribes said. THEY DID NOT LOOK INTO THE SCRIPTURES--our ultimate authority for all that we are to believe about God, and do.

There is nothing that is more needed today than for people to go directly to the Word of God. The issues are too great. Do not accept what any man says about God, or Christ, or salvation, or the church, or anything else. Hundreds of young people are turning their backs upon the church today who do not have the slightest idea from the Word of God as to what the church is.

- 2) The scribes were partly right, but their lack of truth was leading them and their followers into the most disastrous error. They had come to expect a merely human Messiah--but not one who was God first, and then man!

As long as I have lived, this has been the controversy that has raged among those who profess to be Christians. And it is still with us today--the error of the scribes, a human Savior.

David Brown, in the JFB commentary, has a very illuminating statement regarding this problem. He says,

"None who repudiate this doctrine," i.e., of the Deity of Christ, "have been able to retain their hold of almost any of the cardinal doctrines of Scripture" (V, 190).

If Jesus of Nazareth had not been the Son of God, He could not have been either the Messiah or the Savior.

- 3) Our Lord wanted the Sanhedrin, the scribes and the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, and that whole, great crowd of people to know that He is the sum and substance of all that has to do with man's relationship to God.

Is it not amazing how we can talk about the temple, or taxes, or life after death (prophecy), or divorce, or even the commandments, the Sabbath, baptism, churches, and a million other things that have to do with the Bible, AND YET NEVER GET AROUND TO TALKING ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

He is the One we need to be talking about!

And not until we know who He is will we be impressed with His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and the fact that the Father said to Him,

"Sit thou on my right hand, until I put thine enemies beneath thy feet."

Are you making the mistake that countless multitudes in Israel made--and from which they never recovered? Oh, listen to the Savior's words. He is at the Father's right hand today. He is coming some day and the world and all the universe will see Phil. 2:9-11 fulfilled, just as David said it would be.

You will know then, if you do not realize it now, that there was nothing more important that you believed than what you believed about Jesus Christ, and that you never made any decision that could even begin to compare with your decision concerning Him.

DIVINE INSIGHTS INTO HUMAN HEARTS

Mark 12:38-44

Intro: As chapter 12 closes, the picture that we have changes completely. The scribes,
the Pharisees,
the Sadducees,
the Herodians, and
the Sanhedrin are all gone!

This change really began in v. 35.

We see the Lord with the people now--and He is teaching.

In our passage this morning, the first thing we have is A WARNING; the second, AN EXPLANATION.

I. THE WARNING (Mark 12:38-40).

This is a very abbreviated form of what Matthew devotes an entire chapter to--chapter 23.

Our Lord never spoke stronger words of condemnation than He did concerning the scribes and the Pharisees. Israel was in trouble spiritually because of the dreadful condition that existed in the hearts of the leaders of the day.

In a preceding chapter Mark told us about the Lord's concern for the people and what the Lord did about it. Cf. Mark 6:34,

"And Jesus, when he came out (of the boat), saw many people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things."

Trouble among the leaders is always especially serious because it affects the lives of everyone who is under them.

In His teaching, what did our Lord say about them?

Before we note the details, let us pay attention to the word, "Beware."

- 1) It is a word which means, lit., that they are to look away from the scribes, to turn their backs on them, to leave them. The people would not change the leaders, but the leaders were in the right place to change the people.
- 2) It indicates that the Lord wanted His people to be perceptive, discerning, discriminating. He wanted them to have insight--not just to follow the scribes because they were scribes.

"Love" here is not the same word as in vv. 30, 31, but there

is a connection. Here it is the word, will; it speaks, not only of what the scribes wanted to have but, of what they were determined to have.

Any persons life is sure to be affected by his goals.

When you look at the list of things the Lord mentions, you can see that it works from themselves to God--with the people in between.

A. Regarding what they wear (Mark 12:38m): "who love to go in long clothing."

These were the garments worn by priests and kings, garments which distinguished them as men of eminence, and which set them apart from the rest of the people. "Go" is the Greek word for walk.

B. Regarding their titles, and what men call them in public (Mark 12:38b): "and love salutations in the market places."

Matthew (23:7) says that they loved to be called, Rabbi.

C. Regarding the way they were honored at special occasions (Mark 12:39).

1. In the synagogues (v. 39a).

2. At the feasts (v. 39b).

ALL OF THE ABOVE HAVE TO DO WITH THE ATTITUDE OF THE SCRIBES TOWARD THEMSELVES.

THE NEXT IS A SAMPLE OF THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PEOPLE. This is evidently referred to because, if they would do this toward a group that Moses had so much to write about in the Law as deserving special attention, then you know that no one was safe with the scribes.

D. Regarding the widows (Mark 12:40a).

"Devour" means:

- 1) To take away by force.
- 2) To take for themselves, when supposedly it was for the Temple.
- 3) To waste and squander until there was nothing left!

BUT THE DEPTH OF THE DEGRADATION OF THE SCRIBES IS SEEN IN WHAT OUR LORD SAYS . . .

E. Regarding their relationship to God (Mark 12:40m): "for

The people would be inclined to believe that anyone who prayed, and who prayed as long as the scribes did, and who prayed publicly like they did, would have to be a person you could trust.

But this was all "a pretense." It was all a part of the show.

What is the conclusion?

"These shall receive greater condemnation." They are not going to get by with anything. The Lord will one day bring everything into account. Have we noticed this the way we we should?

The Lord spoke of being judged for "every idle word" (Matt. 12:36). In Romans 2, Paul says that God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (v. 6), and that "God shall judge the secrets of men." Cf. 2 Cor. 5:10.

This applied to the scribes perhaps even more than to the people.

There is a word of warning here for leaders, and a word for the people. Looking at it from either point-of-view, the warning must be taken very seriously.

But there is more here:

II. AN EXPLANATION REGARDING GIVING (Mark 12:41-44).

When the Word of God is not being taught, then everything is corrupted. How wonderful it would be if we could only recognize this!

Our Lord is sitting quietly watching the people as they come to bring their money for the Temple treasury. MANY rich were casting in MUCH. The point seems to be that the scribes had taught that the more you brought, the greater your blessing would be.

Sometimes in the Word we have the subject of giving approached from what it means to us. E.g.,

"Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Phil. 4:17). Also, v. 19.

At other times we see what it means to God:

"But I have all, and abound, I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18).

We rob people of blessing when we do not let them see giving

as it is taught in the Word.

What did the Lord teach here?

Look at the contrast: scribes who were thieves,
a widow who gave all she had.

She gave about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cent in copper; many others were able to give much more in gold. But the Lord says that she gave more than anyone else because He judged her gift on the basis of what she had left.

Will you note that the Lord knows even what we give--and why we give. Mark indicates that our Lord sat there for some time and watched intently as the people came with their offering for the temple.

He did not reprove the rich, but He wanted this widow woman to know that the rewards which were coming were greater than she could ever realize. She had not been taught very much by the scribes, but the Lord knew her heart and saw in her gift a love which moved His own heart as He saw her cast in all that she had.

Concl: Do you not wonder, as you read this, what happened to the widow which Mark mentions here. Was she one who was with the apostles in the upper room in Jerusalem while they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit?

Was she one of the poor believers who benefited from the gift which Paul took to Jerusalem?

Had she lost her home to the scribes, and yet continued to give?

We do not know.

But one thing we can be sure of: the Lord took care of her. And He saw in her gift a love which moved His own heart. OUR MOTIVE IN GIVING SHOULD NOT BE FOR WHAT WE WILL RECEIVE, BUT BECAUSE OF OUR LOVE FOR THE LORD. BUT NO ONE CAN POSSIBLY MISS BLESSING WHO HONORS THE LORD WITH WHAT HE HAS.

This whole passage teaches us in a very clear way that our attitude toward giving is a clear evidence of the condition of our spiritual lives.